

P.T.S.D. – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Resulting from the Traumas
of
Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse



It is only the abuser/perpetrator that values your silence

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions ([Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#)) includes unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.

While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.

Type of Trauma check all that apply: _____ physical abuse _____ sexual abuse _____ exposure to domestic violence
_____ exposure to alcohol or drug use _____ verbal abuse _____ bullying _____ natural disaster

Re-experience

- intrusive upsetting memories of the event
- flashbacks acting or feeling like the event is happening again
- nightmares of the event
- feelings of intense distress when reminded of the trauma
- intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating)

Avoidance and numbing

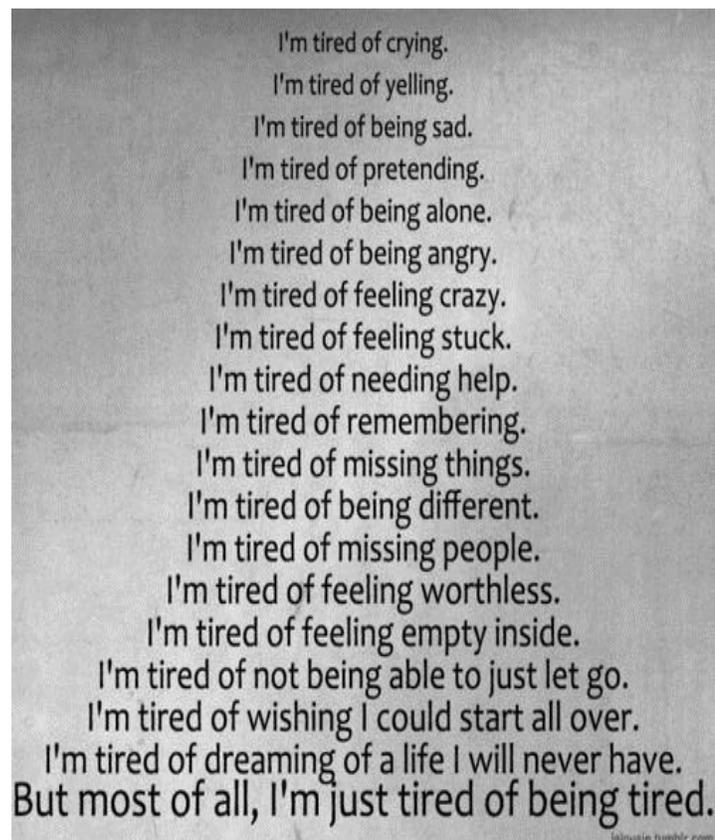
- Avoiding activities, places, thoughts or feelings that remind you of the trauma
- Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma
- Loss of interest in activities and life in general
- Feeling detached from others
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Sense of a limited future; (don't expect to live a normal life span, get married, and have a career.)
- Suffer from isolation (solitude, wanting to be alone, hiding, reclusion)

Increase anxiety and emotional arousal

- Difficulty falling
- Difficulty staying asleep
- Irritability
- outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper vigilance "red alert"
- Feeling jumpy/easily startled

Other common symptoms

- Guilt
- shame
- self-blame
- Substance abuse
- Feeling of mistrust and betrayal
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings
- Physical aches and pains



Re-experience:

I blacked out
When slammed on the
Hood of the squad car
I saw nothing
I saw No one

I never heard his voice
But I could feel the presence of a man
behind me
forcing me
pulling at my left arm
I could not break free,
I hit the pavement
struggling

Don't touch me
my innocence was once stolen
I was not going to let it happen again

Darkness
I see the boy downstairs
Tugging on my night gown
Laying on top of me...
Siblings did not wake.

Darkness
I see me
Hidden in older brothers room
Like little sisters do
Undercover he won't find me
Neighborhood friends found me
No one
Four sets of hands...

No more sneaking a peek
No more coping a feel
No more tickling
no more fondling

Wait "no, stop"

My eyes are burning, maced
tears drop from my face
Down on the pavement is cold
My ribs ached
Hands held in place
Knee at the base of my neck

Why are they hurting me
what did I do...
What do they want...

Darkness
It's big boy cousin
Quiet country side
Home alone ... when he sits down
Beside me.
Hand placed into his shorts
Stroke, stroke, stroke
Breast squeezed around penis

Wait, no stop

Dear God
Why is this happening to me
Violated as I wept
the police were supposed to keep me safe
I could not escape the feelings, the memories of
being raped

I heard their voices
I saw nothing
I saw no one

Darkness
Knife at the base of my neck
Out of body a common escape
When constantly being raped
Triggered Flash backs
I blacked out
When slammed on the
Hood of the squad car

Curled up on the pavement
Fighting to be safe
Blinded
Hand cuffed
Body aches

I heard their voices
I saw nothing
I saw no one

I blacked out

Avoidance and numbing:

Believe in Me

I cry every night
Before I go to bed
And every morning
As I drive to work

It is a part of
My healing process
It is giving myself
Permission to feel
The pain.... Deep and
Imbedded with in me.

My writing
My speaking
My poetry
Has been a transcending
Part of who I am

But I am a woman
So full of fear and
Mistrust
Not just for the world
Around me but
A lack of trust in
Who I am and with
What decisions
I make.

I say my failures in
Life, love and relationships
Stem from a cycle
Of abuse and post
Traumatic stress.

When I think of
My relationships
I feel like I often
Have one foot
Out the door...

It last for as long
As I let it...to
Eventually be let
Down and disappointed

Don't get me wrong
I did have an invested
Interest but a future it
Could never be...

The safety of my child
Is what is always real
For me...

To never let what
Happen to me
Happen to her...
But it did

Even just one time
Hurts me more and
More each day...as
I continue to heal
And look for real
Love

You see there is no man
Out there that can
Truly love me
For me...

Because I only show them
Apart of me...
The empty part...
The bruised and
Abused part.

To get close to me
Is to get close to my
Family.

I am learning to trust in
Myself more...but hyper
Vigilance sometimes
Controls me....

Tough love is easy
It's for your best interest
Yet it is emotion-less.
I am a sensitive soul
When it comes to the well

Being of others... but to
Love myself is entirely
A different kind of love ...
One that has included
Sex...weed... and alcohol
To fulfill my emptiness...
With what was taken away
From me.

What makes it even sadder
Was my perpetrators were
Never strangers... that is
Why I can't love him
Unconditionally...
Eventually he would want
To make us a family.

I don't know if I can
Trust myself to trust
Him as a secondary parent
To my daughter... when she
Already has an absent father.

I cry every night
Before I go to bed
And every morning
As I drive to work

Struggling to trust to
Believe the world is
Not as scary as it really
Seems... that love is not
Inevitable...I just have to
Open up and believe...
Believe and trust in
Me.

Increase anxiety and emotional arousal:

FEAR

Do you know what it is to be afraid...
Your senses become hyper vigilante

A loud scream
A thousand hands
A stench of vomit and urine
Cascaded with shadows
Vile acid burning
Scorching any possible release
Your life drains from your body

Do you know what is feel to be in terror...
Your senses become hyper vigilante

The quietest sound
a loud scream
only you can hear.

The gentlest touch
one of a thousand hands
pounding against your flesh

The smells of home cooked meals
a stench of vomit and urine fills
your nasal passage

The sight of beauty
cascaded with shadows
reaching out to get you.

The sweet taste of candy
turns to vile acid
burning your throat

Scorching any possible
release of sound.

To close your eyes
Flashes of images
A puzzle of past trauma
Abuse...

The sounds bore through your
Head like a jack hammer on over load

Sweet gestures go unheard

The touch of your skin cold, wet, clammy
As the sweat consumes your heat
Loving touches go unfelt

The smells of his must cramp you stomach with
Memories of deep penetration
The smell of summer violates your senses

The sight of darkness allows you to
Escape the visions of his vile face
As puzzle pieces merge together

The taste of him blood oozes from your lips
as you bite Down
drowning out the cries of joyous music
Bitter taste

Your senses hyper vigilante
The quietest sound
The gentlest touch
The smells of home cooked meals
The sight of beauty
The sweet taste of candy

To close your eyes
As you gasp for breathe
Puzzle pieces fit together
As you build on life without fear

Initial PTSD reactions are often the “Calm before the storm” the victim may present as calm and mild tearfulness, numb, full of denial and avoidance with increase depression.

When you suffer from Domestic Violence and Sexual abuse you are judged and questioned.

Why didn't you leave
Why didn't you tell
Why didn't you stop it

Not Having a Choice:

- You lived under his voice and depended on him financially
- Your abuser wove a web of fear and entrapment around you
- You were confused
- you were too young and did not have good options or a strong support system
- You live in a culture where the victims role is still questioned in the crime
- You keep your secrets tucked in a safe place trying to forget
- You're told no one would believe you

Domestic Violence is any kind of behavior verbal, emotional and/or physical that one person in a relationship uses to gain power and control over another. It can happen in any relationship; dating, partner, glbtq relationship, caregiver, roommate or family member. Domestic Violence can and often includes rape.

I love u, I hate u
by Colleen Williams

You say you love me but you hit me.
The same eyes that you looked into
are now black and blue.

When you were hitting me
I looked at you in your eyes,
you were so angry
because I caught you in more lies.
You lied and cheated on me;
what am i worth if there is infidelity?
i told you how I felt;
one blow to my face was what I was dealt.
You got upset at me when I tried to fight back;
you would hit me harder - flashbacks.
Memories, every song that plays on the radio
reminds me of you.

You think it's Easy

You think it's easy
To just up and leave
You think I want to live
Like this
You don't understand what
It's like.

He was my first love
The father of my children
I thought he loved us
Enough
to change

But now I know better.
I tried to leave once
And ended up in the
Hospital for three nights

When I got back home
My six year old daughter
Had a broken arm
He said it was an accident
And they believed him

But I know better
To see that fear
In my child's eyes
Told me to find another
Way.

I participated when DCF
Came knocking at my door
I jumped through their
Hoops but it didn't help
You see
this ...It's from the knife he
used
When he left me bleeding
And unconscious
On the bedroom floor

Twelve different hospitals
In over a year... they
Thought he was great...

The man of the year...

No visible bruises ...
Must keep the police
Away.

You think it's easy.
You think I want
To live like this.
This man is crazy
Restraining order
That's a joke.... All it
Did was bring an even
Crazier monster back.

Why is my 12 year old
Son so quiet... his father
Threatened him with a gun
"Stop crying ... be a man!"

The shelter we went to
Is burnt to the ground
They can't prove he did it
But I know the truth...
now I have to live
With it.

You think it's easy
You think I want to
Live this way.
He's crazy and no one
Has been able to keep Him
away.

My last baby died
Before he took
His first breath...
His daddy thought
I cheated because
I smiled at his co-worker

Nearly sentenced to death
I had no choice I had to
stay

This is not the way
I want to raise my Kids...
it was not cute
When my son placed
His hands around my
Neck... like his daddy
Often did.

You think it's easy
You think I want to
Live this way.

It's not easy
But it's the only
Life we have
If we want to live

You see he's crazy
And no one can lock
Him up
No one can keep him
Away.

You see he's crazy and
His father made him
This way

Sexual abuse is any sort of non-consensual sexual contact. Sexual abuse can happen to men or women of any age. Unwanted touch, unwanted sexual encounter, one unwanted inappropriate touch is abuse. There is touching and non-touching sexual abuse.

Touching sexual abuse:

- Having any of your private parts touched
- Being fondled
- Being penetrated genitally, through sodomy or intercourse
- Being asked to sit on the laps of an adult and having the adult rub their genitals against your skin
- Having an adult rub against you or touch you in any way that makes you uncomfortable and refusing to stop when asked to
- Having to watch an adult masturbate

Non touching sexual abuse

- Being asked to view pornographic material
- Having pictures taken of you in sexual poses
- Being spoken to with sexual intonation: you look like a slut, you must be screwing around, look at those firm breast
- Being walked in on repeatedly in the bathroom or your bedroom
- Having an adult leave the bathroom door open repeatedly when they are inside
- Being asked by an adult if they can check out your breast or genitals
- Being forced into conversations about sex

Have you ever felt victimized?

first time
college experience
the pressures to conform
new experiences
"drinking, drugs"
boys - girls

advantage taken of
the newness that is me
attentive with an agenda
breast touched
legs caressed
the ability to be in control
hand slapped, pushed away
the knowledge to know
if I don't take myself out of
this situation....

that first experience
can turn into the worst
experience

what happens if
I loss control -- my mind, body, and soul
what happens when
I don't have the confidence
to take care of me

accepting the littlest
gestures as
attentive, loving, giving
what should have
never been

Taken without force
but undeniable manipulation

PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) is not a sign of weakness, the only way to confront the traumas that have happened to you and learn to accept it as part of your past.

It is natural to want to avoid painful memories and feelings, numbing yourself and pushing away the memories is a coping mechanism used as a child being an abused, an adolescent being abused and adult being abused when the abuse is ongoing and continuous. It is when you get away from the abuse you need to cope, heal and live. You have already survived.

It is a time to fix your relationships, your ability to function and enhance your quality of life.

Types of treatment

- Trauma focused cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Family therapy
- Medication
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)

In treatment you will:

- Explore your thoughts and feelings about the trauma
- Work through feelings of guilt, self-blame and mistrust
- Learn how to cope with and control intrusive memories
- Address problems PTSD has caused in your life and relationships.

Self-help tips:

1. Reach out to others for support
 - a. Join a PTSD, Domestic Violence or Sexual abuse support group
 - b. Do not rely on family and friends to have the answers they understand the cycle less than you
2. Avoid drugs and alcohol
3. Change you sense of helplessness
 - a. Use your strength and coping skills
4. Spend time in nature
 - a. Peace and relaxation
5. Use various forms of Art for Healing
 - a. Journaling
 - b. Poetry
 - c. Singing and dancing

The graphic features the words "find your voice!" in a stylized font. "find" and "your" are in a bold, black, sans-serif font. "voice!" is in a larger, blue, cursive font. A blue dot is placed above the "o" in "your", with three black lines radiating from it to the right, resembling a sound effect or a lightbulb.

Poetic

Poetry mimics all genres of art
A tone of lyrical notes
Flows through the ear
Captured attention
Sweet melody

A dance so intense
drawn in
partnership using
one to lead and
the other

Pulse beats like
drums echoing
the dance hall
mind encompassed
rhythm and beats
art knows no limits

Free style in the streets
mind, heart and soul
emotions explode
pure and raw

Poetry mimics
all genres of art
spoken, instrumental,
physical movements
interpretations
of feelings
receiving a message
not to be judged
embraced and understood
the story is truth
life's experience



Your opinion does
not change
reality but it
just may change
your bias

Dancers moving to
the beat... to
the notes of
someone else's
song
capturing the essence of
the message
adding a personal spin
poetry in motion
healing and community
sharing

Partners mover forcefully
across the stage
in sync moves
connect
music, master lyricist
mimics all forms of
art

Listen to the tone
in the notes
see the moves
along the dance floor
the strokes of a painting
the shadows behind the
drawings

Poetry invites you
to get to know
a poet

You are not alone

You never realize how alone
You really are
Until you open your eyes

Find no one sitting there by your side.

You never realize how alone you are
until ... You start to cry
and no one comes
To wipe your tears.

You never realize how alone you are
Until you wake from a bad dream
and all you are Greeted with is darkness
Night sounds and over whelming fear.

You never realize how alone you are
until you begin to Reach out
want to be a burden to others.

You never realized how alone
You **were** until you've reached out
asked to be helped... but even then
You are still lying awake ... alone.

Alone and in pain, not
Wanting to disturb anyone else's
Day or night,
Not wanting to burden them,
Trouble them, or allow them to see your pain.

You are alone because you choose to be alone.
All you have to do is pick up the phone.
I understand **you are used to doing it all alone**,
You must realize...
You are not alone.

Resources: To get help –

For sexual assault:

Getting medical care would include having a rape kit. There are specialized SANE hospitals that have SANE Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners called in. The SANE nurse can examine and collect evidence.

Sane Hospitals in the Boston Area include:

- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- Boston Medical Center
- Brigham and Women's Hospital
- Cambridge hospital
- Children's Hospital
- Mass General hospital
- Newton-Wellesley Hospital

SAIN interviewers are often contacted. A Sexual Abuse Intervention Network facilitates interagency cooperation in order to minimize secondary trauma to children victims of sexual abuse. The goal is to reduce the number of interviews the victim has to endure. The interview is conducted in a non-leading manner by a trained forensic interviewer in a child friendly environment. Participating agencies included Department of Children and Families (DCF) Law enforcement, children advocates and others watch the interview on a closed circuit TV. Question from other participants can be transmitted to the interviewer.

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
Cambridge, MA 02139
Business: (617) 492-8306
Hotline: (617) 492-7273

A New Day/ Health Imperatives
Brockton, MA 02301
Business: (508) 588-2045
Hotline: (508) 588-8255

Rape Crisis Centers offer FREE services for adolescent and adult sexual assault survivors - and for people who care about survivors of all ages.

Trained rape crisis counselors:

- Provide 24/7 hotline counseling, information, and referral
- Will go with survivors to hospitals and/or police stations 24/7
- Will go with a survivor to court
- Provide one-to-one counseling and support group counseling
- Provide primary prevention education; professional training; outreach

Go on this website to find centers in your area:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/dvip/violence/rape-crisis-centers.html>

For domestic violence: 24 hour hotline *Safe Link 877-785-2020*

Elizabeth Stone house
Roxbury Ma.
Support Groups call
Roxanne Charles 617-409-5403
Groups in Spanish call
India Arroyo 617-409-5400

CASA Myrna
P.O. box 180019
Boston, Ma. 02118
617-521-0100
www.casamyrna.org

GLBTQ Domestic Violence Project
955 Mass Ave PMB 131
Cambridge, Ma. 02139
617-354-6056 office
800-832-1901 24 hour support
www.glbtdv.org

Respond
P.O. Box 555
Somerville, Ma. 02143
617-625-5996 office
617-623-5900 24 hour hotline
www.respondinc.org

GETTING OUT of a domestic violent relationship.

Leaving can be a **dangerous** time, batterers can become upset and more dangerous, and creating a safety plan can be a valuable tool.

- choose a safe place to go
- choose people who you trust and who can help you if you leave
- leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents and clothes with someone you trust
- purchase a calling card or get a 9-1-1 phone from a local women's shelter.
- memorize emergency phone numbers or keep them on a small card in a safe place
- practice getting out of your home safely
- avoid altercations in rooms with no exits
- teach children not to get in the middle of a fight
- teach children how and when they should call 9-1-1
- teach children a safe place to go during a violent incident
- keep copies of restraining/protective orders and keep them with you all times
- if you move to another town or state, remember the protective order is still valid. It is a good idea to register the order with the new police department including a photo if possible
- it is easy for abusers to track you identity on your computer; try using public computers, change passwords and clear your browsing history always.
- for help putting safety plans in place consult an advocate from your local domestic violence program
- for emotional support find someone you can talk to freely and openly; joining a support group at your local domestic violence program.

Safety Plan Host Agencies

A New Day	Brockton Ma	508-588-2045
Greater Boston Legal Services	Cambridge, Ma.	617-603-1803
New Hope Inc.	Attleboro, Ma	508-226-4015
South Shore Women's Resource Center	Plymouth, Ma.	508-746-2664