

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

### WHAT IS POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER?

Sometimes a traumatic event is so severe and overwhelming that it can shatter a person's life. Violent acts such as natural disasters, serious accidents, serious injury or long-term trauma can lead to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It begins by witnessing, experiencing or being threatened with serious danger – a danger so terrifying that it causes long-lasting fear, horror and helplessness.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PTSD?

#### Reliving the Experience

- Sudden, very real memories of the traumatic event that interfere with daily activities
- Flashbacks of the event that seem so real you feel you are experiencing the trauma again
- Recurring nightmares about the traumatic event
- Painful emotions, like uncontrollable crying, anger or fear, caused by reminders of the event

#### Staying Away from Reminders of the Trauma

- Going out of your way to avoid objects, situations, places, people or thoughts that remind you of the event
- Forgetting an important part of the trauma
- Feeling distanced from family and friends
- Difficulty feeling emotions
- No longer enjoying or participating in activities you previously liked to do
- No positive expectations for the future.

#### Feeling on Edge or on Guard

- Difficult falling/staying asleep
- Irritability and outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Being nervous and easily startled

For some people, these symptoms may not surface immediately and can occur months or even years after the traumatic event has occurred. Oftentimes the symptoms are triggered by a situation that resembles the original trauma-such as when a person who survived a serious car collision passes a bad accident

on the highway, or when someone whose life was destroyed by a hurricane watches an approaching storm.

### WHO GETS PTSD?

About 8% of people in the US have PTSD in their lifetime. Both men and women experience the same symptoms, but it is clear that there are twice as many women as men who suffer with the disease.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF

You can get help by talking to your healthcare provider, visiting your local health clinic or hospital, or contacting one of the organizations listed on this page. Seeking help is the first step to regaining control of your life.

**Accept Support** Don't go through it alone-people do care. Accept support from your family and friends, a member of the clergy or a local support group. Meet regularly with your healthcare provider. If your healthcare provider has prescribed medication, be sure to follow directions about when and how long you should take your medication.

**Be Kind to Yourself** Find ways to relax and manage your stress. Regular exercise can help you do that. (Check with our doctor before starting an exercise program.) Do your best to get enough sleep and eat healthy, balanced meals. Avoid making any big changes in your life and accept that there may be some setbacks.

**Get Involved** Take advantage of all the available resources to learn about PTSD and its treatment.

*We all feel the pain of those personally affected by tragic events.*

*If you are experiencing any difficulties during this tragic time please call your Employee Assistance Program for Assistance.*

**EAP can help by calling  
1-800-245-8332**