

Flashbacks, Nightmares, Frightening Thoughts, or

by Paddy Kutz, Executive Director, Mental Health America of Licking County

Emotional numbness, sleep disturbances, irritability, angry outbursts, lack of trust, depression, substance abuse, hyper alertness, feeling on edge, anxiety. The list goes on and on and none of it is good. Constant fatigue, poor concentration, withdrawing into self, impatience, suicidal and/or homicidal thoughts, headaches, stomach complaints, dizziness, and chest pain.

These conditions are associated with PTSD, post traumatic stress disorder, and are the results of being exposed to a terrifying event or ordeal such as war, child abuse, rape or mugging, survivors of accidents, disasters or some other traumatic event.

Effective treatments have been developed to help people recover from PTSD. It is important for us to be aware of these symptoms so you can encourage people to get counseling and support.

Symptoms typically begin within three months of a traumatic event, although occasionally they do not begin until years later. No one should have to live with the symptoms listed above. The important thing to remember is that there is help available.

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy (cbt), a kind of talk therapy. Medications have also been shown to help ease the symptoms of depression and anxiety and to help promote sleep. Depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol or other substance abuse are not uncommon co-occurrences for people with PTSD.

Discuss with your doctor your experiences with violence, recent losses and other traumatic events, especially if symptoms are recurring. When PTSD is diagnosed, referral to a mental health professional that has had experience treating people with the disorder is recommended. You may call me at 788-0302 or email at: paddykutz@alink.com for such a referral.

Don't live in misery after being traumatized, reach out. Secrets keep us sick and Mental Health America of Licking County can educate you and make the referral for recovery.

MHALC is a member agency of United Way, Community Mental Health & Recovery Board, NAMI and Mental Health America.