



# *ABBA Ministries*

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*Illuminating Life through Scripture*

## **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

### Definition:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a collection of symptoms people often develop following extraordinarily stressful events such as rape, murder, war, domestic abuse, accidents, natural disasters (earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, etc.), and abortion. While some people quickly recover and are seemingly never bothered again, others find that their lives have been forever changed by their experiences. It is also common for some to think that they have adjusted to their experiences only to have symptoms reoccur years after the initial trauma.

### Symptoms:

Common symptoms of PTSD include: persistent and intrusive thoughts, memories, dreams, or reliving experiences; avoidance of meaningful social contact; increased irritability, difficulty in concentrating or sleeping, constant guardedness toward potential threats, and jumpiness or exaggerated responses to any events that resemble an aspect of the original trauma (such as a woman who breaks into a sweat every time she gets on an elevator after having been assaulted in one).

People with PTSD often report that nothing happening in their lives today can ever compare in importance to what they have gone through in the past. This chain to the past creates other difficulties associated with PTSD, including chronic employment instability, multiple marriages and divorces, increased passivity, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and anxiety. They also often remain "trapped in time", constantly looking for some way of escaping a traumatic past event.

### Causes:

Several factors determine whether or not one develops PTSD after experiencing a traumatic event. Severity and duration of trauma is important, but not as important as the individual's perspective on the event (including whether the person was an observer, participant, or perpetrator), one's pre-existing ability to cope with difficult situations, and social support after the trauma. Immediate debriefing and the willingness of one's family and friends to discuss the event (no matter how horrifying this is for those who have to listen) is important in determining whether or not someone develops PTSD.

### Treatment:

Individual and family psychotherapy can be helpful in rebuilding a person's sense of competence, self-control, integrity, personal accountability and willingness to enter into meaningful relationships. Rap or peer support groups help individuals with PTSD discover that their emotional responses and attempts to adjust to life are similar to those of others and that they are not unique in their survival, worth, or guilt. Some medications are also available to control symptoms of PTSD and allow affected persons to live more normal lives.