

## PTSD: What it is, What to look for, & How to help

*Brina Tiemeyer, LMSW, CAADC-DP – Wedgwood's Director of Clinical Services*

Most of us will experience at least one trauma in our lifetime that could lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We must see PTSD, and other trauma-related disorders, as mental health issues that face many survivors of human rights violations and other forms of abuse, neglect, and violence. There are factors that put you at risk of experiencing a trauma, many of which are not under your control.

### What is PTSD:

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition that develops following a traumatic event characterized by impairment to daily functions.

### PTSD Statistics:

- ▶ 15% - 43% of girls and 14% - 43% of boys go through at least one trauma.
- ▶ Children and teens who have had a trauma, 3% - 15% of girls and 1% - 6% of boys develop PTSD.
- ▶ PTSD affects 3.6% of the U.S. adult population.
- ▶ 8 million Americans live with PTSD.
- ▶ 37% of adults diagnosed with PTSD display serious symptoms.

### Risk Factors For PTSD:

- ▶ Long-lasting trauma
- ▶ Childhood sexual abuse
- ▶ Other childhood trauma
- ▶ A job where you're exposed to trauma, such as a military position
- ▶ Lack of a sound support system
- ▶ Seeing someone get hurt
- ▶ A history of substance abuse

### What to Look For:

- ▶ Having nightmares or trouble sleeping
- ▶ Racing thoughts or Rumination
- ▶ Avoiding places people or things
- ▶ Feeling scared for no reason
- ▶ Feeling out of control
- ▶ Not being able to remember parts of what happened
- ▶ Having trouble concentrating at school, work, or home
- ▶ Being on guard to protect yourself; feeling like something bad is about to happen
- ▶ Jumping when there is a loud noise
- ▶ Feeling anger
- ▶ Feeling shame
- ▶ Feeling guilt
- ▶ Feeling sadness grief and/or loss
- ▶ Feeling bad about yourself
- ▶ Having physical health problems and complaints

### How to Help:

- ▶ You build resiliency by creating safe spaces within your circle where individuals feel believed, supported, and capable.
- ▶ You also can reinforce resiliency factors by holding space for conversation no matter the uncomfortable nature of trauma topics.
- ▶ Recognize that PTSD is treatable and encourage/normalize treatment

PTSD is a treatable mental illness, and many experiencing it are not alone. Seeking help from a mental health professional is a first step. Healing from trauma can be difficult, but it is possible. If you are experiencing PTSD, seek help from available resources. And if you know someone who is experiencing PTSD, encourage them to do the same. Contact Wedgwood Christian Services today at 616.942.7294

[www.wedgwood.org/services/counseling-services](http://www.wedgwood.org/services/counseling-services) | 616.942.7294