



Post-traumatic stress disorder has several symptoms associated with it. Basically, a teen that has PTSD will experience anxiety and depression persistently due to a psychological traumatic event. Events such as rape, abuse, natural disasters such as earthquakes, gang violence or a car crash can lead to PTSD. In addition, certain personalities, attitudes and biochemical reactions to stress can make a teen more likely to develop stress disorders that lead to PTSD. According to research, PTSD lasts about 3 years on average if treatment is sought and five years without treatment¹. This is evidence that treatment for PTSD is critical to the emotional well-being of the individual who suffers from it. So how do you support a teen that has PTSD? It is important to remember that a teen with PTSD can create an atmosphere of greater distress than an adult. This is because adolescents are already dealing with several hormonal changes and a psychological disorder can accentuate any emotional disturbances already being experienced. Studies show that family and social support are very critical and necessary in order for a teen to overcome PTSD. More specifically, supportive family members can assist sufferers in examining their impact on others. In addition, family support can create an environment of improved communication and problem solving skills. Further, it helps if a teen participates in social groups with other teens who are suffering from PTSD. Mutual support groups such as these share feelings, insight and deal with guilt about coming to terms with what some teens have done in order to survive and cope with PTSD.

Talking about feelings and reactions to events with others creates an open environment for expression as well as trust. Cognitive therapy is also a very effective treatment for PTSD. This type of therapy can help a teen bring out deep-seated beliefs and feelings about the event, come to terms with it and trust again. Support comes in many forms. One important caveat to remember is to suspend judgment of teen's actions that have this disorder. Out of control behavior is typical and can be dangerous and this is why it is important to seek help right away. Teens with PTSD are prone to flashbacks and extreme negative behavior. Patience, openness, understanding, knowledge of PTSD and a belief that things can and will get better are all supportive attitudes and should be practiced on a regular basis. I personally believe in the miracle of spiritual healing and therefore I always recommend some type of breathing exercise, prayer or meditation and even chakra or energy healing. This can especially help with the anxiety associated with PTSD. Spiritual support opens the door to greater peace of mind and a teen may be more likely to trust the process of healing. Teens that believe they have the option of giving their suffering over to a higher power for complete healing usually stay open to spiritual support for other stress-related situations. As you can see there are many ways to support a teen with PTSD. The most important thing to remember is to believe that it doesn't last forever and there are many options available to treat it. If you are suffering from PTSD, trust the process of healing and allow the loved-ones in your life to stand beside you and offer their support.

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ⁱ Ronald J. Comer, Fundamentals of Abnormal Psychology, 5th edition (New York: Worth Publishers, 2008), 139