

Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD falls under the heading of an anxiety disorder. With C-PTSD, this anxiety disorder forms as a result of prolonged, repeated experiences of INTERPERSONAL trauma. It is important to note there is no genetic feature to any form of PTSD, and that PTSD is considered an environmental disorder. This means C-PTSD is caused by the environment we are in and NOT who we are.

A hallmark feature of complex PTSD is that no one event caused the PTSD; rather it is the accumulation of many instances of physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse and/ or neglect.

Symptoms of C-PTSD can include all of the symptoms of PTSD, as well as prolonged feelings of terror, worthlessness, helplessness, and deformation of one's identity and sense of self. There are 6 areas that are impacted by C-PTSD:

- Emotional Regulation: ability to manage distressing emotions is decreased and their response to these emotions may not fall in to the range that is generally considered typical.
- Consciousness: forgetting the traumatic event (protective mechanism), reliving traumatic experiences, lapses in attention/ability to concentrate
- Distorted Perception of Perpetrator: May not see the Perpetrator as a harmful/unsafe person. Often perceive the traumatic event as their fault (protective mechanism) resulting in a change in self-perception
- Self-perception: the way that the person with C-PTSD sees themselves may be very different from how the people around them perceive them. Often feel shame, guilt, hopelessness and inadequacy. Often view the traumatic events as their
- Relations with Others: often view others as untrustworthy; this can lead to isolation and reduced capability to ask for help.
- System of Meaning: Their understanding of the world and how it runs can change, leading to a lack of faith or trust in the safety of the world.