

How You Can Help Someone Heal From Trauma

- **Take good care of yourself.** It is so common to put all your energy into helping your loved one (and children) and forget about self-care! Make sure you are sleeping, eating right and exercising. Consider doing something to re-charge you! Spend time with a friend, join a support group, take a hot bath. If you are having trouble eating or sleeping, consider talking to a doctor or therapist.
- **Maintain a routine for you and your family.**
- **Learn as much as you can about PTSD. Communicate** to identify (with your loved one) potential triggers (e.g., helicopters, war movies, thunderstorms) and anniversary dates of painful memories.
- **Respect your loved one's space and limits.** Understand that his/her emotional withdrawal and irritability may be part of PTSD – and not you or your relationship.
- **Encourage safer outings** (i.e. quiet dinner with friends, low key places, parks). Start during non-peak hours for short periods of time, then gradually build as outings get easier.
- **If your loved one is having flashback,** gently remind them of where they are and what is going on. Avoid “shaking them out of it.” Suggest grounding strategies, such as a cold pack or deep slow breathing with eyes open to remain in the current moment.
- **Encourage healthy coping strategies,** but avoid trying to be his/her therapist. These strategies include exercise, leisure, game time, deep breathing, positive self talk, SWOPS, soothing music, watching a funny movie. Offer to do the activities with your loved one.
- **Do not pressure your loved one to talk about the traumatic experiences or what they are working on in therapy.** Let them decide when and how much to share. Then listen without judgment. It is normal for survivors to want to share with other survivors or a therapist before sharing with family. They may fear sharing details about the events because they are afraid of judgment or being seen differently by you.
- **Do not “sneak up” behind your loved one.** Give them a heads up first
- **Do not tolerate abuse of any kind** – financial, emotional, physical or sexual. Although someone may try to “blame” their wrongdoing on PTSD, it is not OK to rationalize harmful behavior. Trauma survivors are still responsible for their behavior. If help is needed, find a couple's counselor or call the National Domestic Violence hotline 1-800-799-SAFE(7233) for support.
- **Take any comments about suicide seriously** and seek professional help immediately. Crisis hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If they are immediate danger call 911.