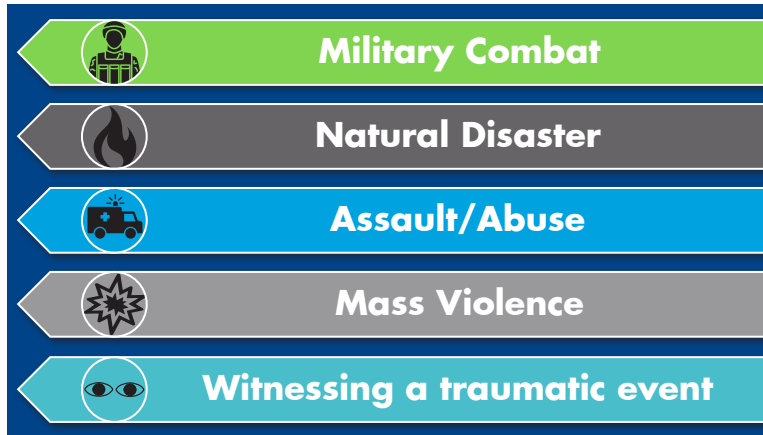


Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a brain disorder that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying traumatic event. A traumatic event in this context refers to threatened loss of life, actual loss of life, a serious injury, physical or sexual violence, or learning that such an event happened to a close family member or friend.

Common examples of traumatic events include:



An event may be traumatic for one person and not for another. Not everyone exposed to a traumatic event will develop PTSD.

A person with PTSD experiences intense fear and other symptoms during and long after the traumatic event has ended. Symptoms may start immediately after the event or, in some cases, months or even years later. Symptoms of PTSD can vary but generally fall into the following categories:



Intrusive experiences: Having flashbacks, nightmares or distressing dreams.



Changes in mood and thoughts: Inability to remember details of the event, feeling guilty or ashamed or losing interest in activities.



Avoidance: Avoiding reminders of the event, situations similar to the event, or even talking about the event.



Increase in arousal and reactivity: Feeling angry or irritable, being overly watchful and having difficulty sleeping.

Supporting Residents with PTSD

Once a PTSD diagnosis is confirmed by a qualified clinician, collaborate with the resident and their family to provide education about the disorder, identify strategies to manage their symptoms, include the strategies in the care plan and communicate them to the team. Facility staff should connect the resident to appropriate mental health treatment services and community resources. High-quality, free apps, such as PTSD Coach may also be helpful.

For additional information and resources, visit www.nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org.

References:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
American Psychiatric Association, What is Post traumatic Stress Disorder