

The Link Between Trauma and PTSD

Some Traumatic Events Are More Likely to Lead to PTSD Than Others

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Trauma and PTSD go hand-in-hand. A number of traumatic events are connected to PTSD, such as combat, [rape](#), natural disasters, and motor vehicle accidents. In fact, to be diagnosed with PTSD, a person must have experienced some kind of traumatic event.

However, not all events are connected with the same level of risk for developing PTSD. In addition, the level of risk connected with a particular event is not the same for men and women.

A group of researchers interviewed 5,877 people from communities across the United States and looked at the rates with which certain traumatic events led to PTSD among the men and women interviewed. Their findings are reviewed below.

Risk Rates for Men

For men, the traumatic event most likely to be connected with PTSD was being raped. Approximately 65 percent of men who said that this was the most upsetting traumatic event they had experienced developed PTSD as a result of this event.

Other traumatic events that had a high likelihood of leading to PTSD for men were:

- combat (38.8%)
- childhood neglect (23.9%)
- childhood physical abuse (22.3%)
- being sexually molested (12.2%).

Risk Rates for Women

There were some similarities between men and women in the traumatic events that were most likely to lead to PTSD. Similarly to men, the traumatic event most likely to be associated with PTSD for women was being raped. Approximately 45.9% of women who said that this was the most upsetting traumatic event they had experienced developed PTSD as a result of this event.

Other traumatic events that were more highly connected to the development of PTSD for women were:

- being threatened with a weapon (32.6%)
- sexual molestation (26.5%)
- being physically attacked (21.3%)
- childhood physical abuse (19.7%)
- childhood neglect (19.7%).

Why Did Some People Develop PTSD and Others Did Not?

Just experiencing a traumatic event does not mean that PTSD will definitely develop. Other factors play a role in whether or not someone eventually develops PTSD following the experience of a traumatic event. These factors include, for example, the number of traumatic events experienced in a lifetime, the extent with which a person's life was threatened during an event, family history of mental illness, and the amount of social support following the experience of a traumatic event.

An Important Point to Remember

It is important to remember that even when a traumatic event does not lead to PTSD, it **does not** mean that the person is not affected in some way by the event. PTSD is just one condition that can develop after experiencing a traumatic event.

Instead of PTSD, after experiencing a traumatic event, a person may develop major depression, another anxiety disorder (such as panic disorder), or symptoms of PTSD that do not quite meet the requirements for a diagnosis (but are still distressing nonetheless).

Sources:

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