



## Dr. Henry writes about post traumatic stress disorder

The startle response is one of the classic symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The diagnostic criteria are:

1. The individual was exposed to a life threatening event or injury or a threat to one's physical integrity, and the individual's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
2. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one or more of the following ways:
  - a. recurrent and intrusive recollections of the traumatic event,
  - b. distressing dreams of the event,
  - c. feeling that the event is actually recurring again as evidenced by flashback episodes, illusions, and hallucinations,
  - d. intense psychological distress when exposed to symbols or cues related to the event,
  - e. a physiological reaction to the same symbols or cues in item d.
3. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the event and numbing of general responsiveness not evident before the traumatic event, indicated by three or more of the following:
  - a. efforts to avoid feelings or thoughts associated with the traumatic event,
  - b. efforts to avoid people, places, or activities that recall the event,
  - c. inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma,
  - d. diminished interest and participation in significant activities,
  - e. feeling of detachment or estrangement from others,
  - f. restricted range of affect (feelings limited),
  - g. sense of foreshortened future, pessimistic.
4. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal not present before the traumatic event, indicated by two or more of the following:
  - a. difficulty falling or staying asleep,
  - b. irritability or outbursts of anger,
  - c. difficulty concentrating,
  - d. hypervigilance,
  - e. exaggerated startle response.
5. Duration of the disturbance for more than one month.
6. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

PTSD is divided into acute and chronic types. PTSD is chronic if it lasts more than 3 months. It can occur with delayed onset, meaning the symptoms begin six months or longer after the event.

The above diagnostic criteria is taken from *Kaplan's textbook of Psychiatry, 1994 edition*. In regard to PPS, one could be experiencing all types of PTSD, acute, chronic, and delayed. Also, the PPS could be a provocation for PTSD related to the original acute polio infection, especially in those who had polio as

young children and have little conscious memory of the event, or have fragments of memory such as being separated from parents.

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[▲ Top of Article ▲](#)

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[Networking](#)

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