

## PE Homework: Session 2

Patient ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box as you complete each item. Write any comments, questions, or problems in the space at the bottom of the form.

Read the Handout “Common Reactions to Trauma”.

Review the list of avoided situations on your in vivo hierarchy and add any additional situations.

Begin in vivo assignments. Use the exposure recording form to fill in SUDS levels before and after the exposure. Remember to stay in the situation long enough for your anxiety to come down. The target situations for this week are:

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Practice calm breathing for 10 minutes, three times a day.  
(Use a recording at first, then begin to practice on your own.)

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

Listen to the recording of the therapy session one time.

Come early to the next session to complete self-report forms.

Other:

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## Common Reactions to Trauma

A traumatic experience is a shock to mind and body. If you experience a trauma, you may react in ways that are distressing, disruptive, and confusing. **Not everyone reacts the same**, but some reactions are common. These reactions can affect the way you think, feel, and act in ways that are unexpected and unwelcome.

As you review these common reactions, think about how they might apply to your experiences. Have any of your **feelings, thoughts, or behaviors** changed since the trauma?

### Fear and Anxiety

- **Triggered by cues**
- **Out of the blue**
- **Constant worry**
- **Panic**

Anxiety is a common and understandable reaction to danger. It can often last long after the trauma. The world may seem more dangerous than before. You may experience it as a nagging worry or as a feeling of panic in certain situations. You may find that your anxiety is triggered or cued by things that remind you of the trauma, or it may hit you out of the blue.

### Re-Experiencing the Trauma

- **Unwanted thoughts**
- **Flashbacks**
- **Nightmares**

As your mind tries to make sense of what happened, you may experience unwanted thoughts about the trauma. If these are particularly vivid or hard to distinguish from reality, they are called flashbacks. Nightmares are also common. This is your mind's way of trying to understand and process what happened.

### Avoidance

- **Thoughts**
- **Feelings**
- **Situations**
- **Activities**
- **People**

Avoidance is a way to reduce trauma-related distress in the short run. You may avoid thinking about the trauma or avoid situations that remind you of it. You may also avoid people or activities that now seem risky because you have come to believe the world is more dangerous than before the trauma.

### Increased Arousal

- **Agitation**
- **Jumpiness**
- **Easily startled**
- **High alert**
- **Poor sleep**

When threatened, our bodies are on high alert, and our reactions are focused on survival. For some, this means fighting the threat; for others, fleeing the dangerous situation; and for some, freezing, in an attempt to evade detection. Those feelings of high alert can remain after the trauma. You may feel agitated or jumpy and be easily startled. You may have difficulty unwinding or relaxing, and sleep may be disturbed.

### Anger and Irritability

- **Anger**
- **Irritability**
- **Impatience**
- **Over-reactions**

You may feel justifiably angry because of the trauma. You may also feel angry about how others acted during the trauma or reacted to you afterward. You may also find that you are irritable and easily angered by things that are unrelated to the trauma. Some people find that they have less patience, lash out at those close to them, or overreact to small annoyances.

## Sadness and Depression

- **Sadness**
- **Depression**
- **Hopelessness**
- **Loss of interest**
- **Emotional numbness**

Trauma can involve loss, whether loss of a loved one, loss of health and well-being, or loss of your former way of life. While it is normal, even healthy, to feel sad after a loss, these feelings can be overwhelming and sometimes interfere with recovery. You may have crying spells, lose interest in things you used to enjoy, or feel as if you've lost connection to important people in your life. You may also feel hopeless, numb, or that life is no longer worth living.

## Shifted Self-Image and World View

- Self=
  - **Worthless**
  - **Incompetent**
  - **Weak**
- World=
  - **Untrustworthy**
  - **Dangerous**
  - **Unpredictable**

The trauma can affect how you feel about yourself. You may believe that you are weak or incompetent because you experienced a trauma, or because you now have PTSD symptoms. You may also see the world and others more negatively. You may feel you can no longer trust people, or that the world is extremely dangerous and unpredictable.

## Guilt and Shame

- **Guilt**
- **Shame**
- **Self-blame**

Feelings of guilt or shame can also interfere with recovery. You may feel ashamed about your reactions during or after the trauma or for having PTSD symptoms. You may feel guilty for not preventing the trauma, responsible for its occurrence, or for acting or not acting in certain ways. This reaction can be particularly troubling if the trauma caused you to behave in ways that are in conflict with your sense of what is right.

## Behavior Changes

- **Increased substance use**
- **Increased risky or unhealthy behaviors**
- **Avoiding social situations, intimacy, closeness**

You may notice an increase in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking or drinking more than you did before, using drugs, driving aggressively, getting into physical altercations, or neglecting your health and safety in other ways. It may be harder to connect socially with friends and family or be in intimate situations with a partner. This can cause you to miss out on relationships, occasions, or experiences that are important or meaningful to you.

