

Signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Cats are helping some veterans heal from their inner wounds. Here are some of the symptoms of the disorder.

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Some veterans experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder benefit from assistance therapy cats. For many veterans coming home from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the conflict continues within them even though the shooting has stopped. This affliction is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Specially trained assistance therapy cats are helping these veterans overcome this disabling condition so they can live normal lives.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is when a person — in this case a veteran — experiences high levels of stress after going through a traumatic event, like combat. There are different criteria, which help to diagnose this disorder. They include:

Criteria A — The person has experienced the following conditions:

1. The person's life was threatened, or the person witnessed other people's lives threatened or actually killed.
2. The person's response involved intense fear or horror, and he or she felt helpless

Criteria B — The person re-experiences the traumatic incident in at least one of the following ways:

1. Has recurring images of the event
2. Dreams of the event
3. Hallucinates that the event is recurring
4. Feels intense distress when having experiences which are similar to the trauma
5. Normal physical functioning changes when exposed to something that reminds him or her of the traumatic event

Criteria C — The person avoids anything resembling the trauma and becomes numb in at least three of the following ways (which they did not become numb to before):

1. Avoids thoughts, feelings or conversations related to the trauma
2. Avoids people, places or activities that bring back memories of the trauma
3. Can't remember important aspects of the trauma
4. Has less interest in important activities
5. Has feelings of being detached or separate from other people
6. Is unable to have certain feelings (such as difficulty expressing love)
7. Does not expect to have much of a future

Criteria D — Has at least two of the following experiences:

1. Difficulty falling or staying asleep
2. Irritability or outbursts of anger
3. Difficulty concentrating
4. Easily aroused
5. Easily startled

Criteria E — Duration of the symptoms in B, C and D for more than one month

Criteria F — Symptoms cause an inability to function either socially or occupationally.

For a person to be diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder they are supposed to have a history of two of the previous criteria and have symptoms from criteria B, C and D.

These definitions are based on the American Psychiatric Association (2000) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR (Fourth Edition) Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association

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