

TWENTY SIGNALS THAT SAY, "I'M STUCK!"

Some people, particularly those who avoid dealing with their emotional reactions, may find themselves increasingly re-living their trauma. It may seem to them that little is resolved in the first weeks following the incident. An individual should seek professional consultation if the following reactions persist longer than a month and interfere with his or her ability to function:

TWENTY SIGNALS

1. Intrusive images: distressing memories, thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks.
2. Distress at exposure to events that resemble or symbolize the event.
3. Avoids thoughts and emotions connected with the incident, or activities or situations that arouse memories of the trauma.
4. Numbing or restricted range of emotional responsiveness.
5. Excessive stress reactions.
6. Hyper vigilance
7. Overreaction \ under-reaction \ risk taking.
8. Increased irritability, anger or rage.
9. Obsession with the incident. Thoughts of the incident are easily triggered—one seems stuck in the past and has difficulty looking toward the future.
10. Feelings associated with past events. The combined emotional impact of old and new situations may seem so overwhelming that one's ability to deal effectively with any incident seems to suffer.
11. Self-doubt, guilt, second-guessing of oneself, feelings of inadequacy, obsession with perceived mistakes
12. A growing sense of isolation "No one understands what I'm experiencing...I feel lost, abandoned, and different than others."
13. Intense or sustained feelings of depression, grief, loss of control.
14. Mental confusion: Increased distractibility, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, poor judgement.
15. Development of suspiciousness in dealing with others.
16. Relationship problems. Withdrawal from others, increasing difficulty with peer/supervisory/family relationships.
17. Decline in work performance. Increased absenteeism, burnout, and decline in productivity and quality of work.
18. One may have little or no noticeable initial reaction to the incident, but reactions are triggered months later.
19. Self-destructive behavior: Substance abuse, poor judgement and inappropriate decisions.
20. In rare cases, suicidal thinking may result from feelings of depression, guilt, despair, and anger with oneself.

When a person experiences a traumatic stress reaction, current behavior may change substantially from previous normal behavior.

If the person continues demonstrating effects of traumatic stress, consulting with a mental health professional can help in working through the emotional reactions.