<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp>

*DSM-5* Criteria for PTSD

Full copyrighted criteria are available from the American Psychiatric Association (1). All of the criteria are required for the diagnosis of PTSD. The following text summarizes the diagnostic criteria:

**Criterion A (one required):** The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, in the following way(s):

* Direct exposure
* Witnessing the trauma
* Learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to a trauma
* Indirect exposure to aversive details of the trauma, usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, medics)

**Criterion B (one required):** The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced, in the following way(s):

* Intrusive thoughts
* Nightmares
* Flashbacks
* Emotional distress after exposure to traumatic reminders
* Physical reactivity after exposure to traumatic reminders

**Criterion C (one required):** Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli after the trauma, in the following way(s):

* Trauma-related thoughts or feelings
* Trauma-related reminders

**Criterion D (two required):** Negative thoughts or feelings that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s):

* Inability to recall key features of the trauma
* Overly negative thoughts and assumptions about oneself or the world
* Exaggerated blame of self or others for causing the trauma
* Negative affect
* Decreased interest in activities
* Feeling isolated
* Difficulty experiencing positive affect

**Criterion E (two required):** Trauma-related arousal and reactivity that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s):

* Irritability or aggression
* Risky or destructive behavior
* Hypervigilance
* Heightened startle reaction
* Difficulty concentrating
* Difficulty sleeping

**Criterion F (required):** Symptoms last for more than 1 month.

**Criterion G (required):** Symptoms create distress or functional impairment (e.g., social, occupational).

**Criterion H (required):** Symptoms are not due to medication, substance use, or other illness.

**Two specifications**:

* [**Dissociative Specification**](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/Dissociative_Subtype_of_PTSD.asp)**.** In addition to meeting criteria for diagnosis, an individual experiences high levels of either of the following in reaction to trauma-related stimuli:
	+ Depersonalization. Experience of being an outside observer of or detached from oneself (e.g., feeling as if "this is not happening to me" or one were in a dream).
	+ Derealization. Experience of unreality, distance, or distortion (e.g., "things are not real").
* **Delayed Specification.** Full diagnostic criteria are not met until at least six months after the trauma(s), although onset of symptoms may occur immediately.

[https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/symptoms#](https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/symptoms)

# PTSD Symptoms in Children Age Six and Younger

Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation:

* direct experience
* witnessing the events as they occurred to others, especially primary caregivers (Note: Does not include events witnessed only in electronic media, television, movies, or pictures.)
* learning that the traumatic events occurred to a parent or caregiving figure

The presence of one or more of the following:

* spontaneous or cued recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic events (Note: Spontaneous and intrusive memories may not necessarily appear distressing and may be expressed as play reenactment.)
* recurrent distressing dreams related to the content and/or feeling of the traumatic events (Note: It may not be possible to ascertain that the frightening content is related to the traumatic event.)
* reactions as if the traumatic events are recurring; the most extreme being a complete loss of awareness of present surroundings. (Note: Such trauma-specific reenactment may occur in play.)
* intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues
* marked physiological reactions to reminders of the traumatic events

One of the following related to traumatic events:

* persistent avoidance of activities, places, or physical reminders
* people, conversations, or interpersonal situations that arouse recollections
* diminished interest or participation in significant activities such as play
* socially withdrawn behavior
* persistent reduction in expression of positive emotions

Two or more of the following:

* irritable, angry, or aggressive behavior, including extreme temper tantrums
* hypervigilance
* exaggerated startle response
* problems with concentration
* difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep

Also, clinically significant distress or impairment in relationships with parents, siblings, peers, or other caregivers or with school behavior not attributable to another medical condition.