

DEALING WITH FLASHBACKS

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) develops when an event occurs that completely overwhelms the mind's capacity to deal with it in the moment. The disturbing event can get stuck in memory with the images, sounds, smells, touch, feelings, and body sensations that occurred at the time of the trauma.

As the mind tries to process and come to terms with the traumatic event, the person may experience *flashbacks*. Flashbacks are memories so vivid that it feels as if the original experience is happening again *now* rather than just being remembered. Flashbacks are often only fragments of memory and thus can be very confusing.

Treatment for PTSD resolves the trauma so that the symptoms dissipate. EMDR is a very effective treatment for PTSD. Go to www.emdr.com for more information.

In the meantime, while you are seeking treatment, the following suggestions can help you to cope with flashbacks:

- ≡ Tell yourself you are having a flashback.
- ≡ Reassure yourself that you are safe now; this is only a memory.
- ≡ Remind yourself that the worst is over and that you survived.
- ≡ Breathe deeply and slowly; imagine pushing the air way down low in your abdomen.
- ≡ Comfort yourself by wrapping up in a blanket, or asking for a hug.
- ≡ Get grounded by stamping your feet.
- ≡ Re-orient yourself to the present by inhaling a strong fragrance like lavender or tea leaves.
- ≡ Get support by sharing your thoughts and feelings with a family member or friend.
- ≡ Take time to recover from the flashback: take a nap, a warm bath, or some quiet time.
- ≡ Be patient with yourself; it takes time to heal.
- ≡ Know that you are not crazy. You are healing.