

POST PANDEMIC STRESS

April 2022

Police Mutual

According to the World Health Organisation, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused mass trauma and the impact will last for many years to come. With everyone in the world being affected.

There are variations in terms of the impact that this has had on individuals, you may have lost a family member, friend, neighbour, or colleague to the virus. Your spouse, partner or family member may have lost their job or business adding pressure to finances, you may not have been able to visit your relative in a care home, your children may not have been able to go to school, college or Uni, and you may have been forced to stay home in very difficult situations.

The pandemic has led to diverse mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. For some, the trauma of what they have been through or seen may have led to them being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These include people who have suffered from serious illness and potential death, blue light workers, health, or care givers, who have witnessed others suffering and many deaths, as well as the added risk of them potentially taking the virus home to their families.

As well as PTSD, psychotherapist Owen O'Kane, has created the term post-pandemic stress disorder (PPSD), as a way of describing the mental impact of living through the pandemic, stated that 'like all traumas, the impact will show when the pandemic is over.' PPSD is not yet a recognised mental health condition, however, some experts strongly believe it should be.

For others the trauma of the pandemic will be concerning social isolation and loneliness, which may be ongoing due to working from home or being vulnerable and not wanting to go out. There has also been strains on relationships, between couples and parents and children, with families spending so much time together, working from home and home schooling, whilst worrying about health and finances and with little time alone.



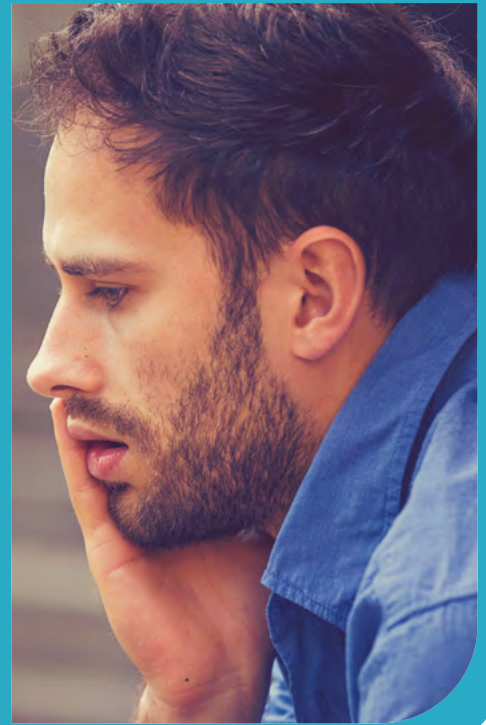
What are the signs of post-pandemic stress disorder?

Symptoms of PPSD vary from person to person but are similar to PTSD and may include:

- anxiety
- low motivation
- low energy
- disrupted sleep
- tiredness
- feeling of hopelessness
- changes in appetite
- feeling numb
- feeling powerless
- anger
- increased irritation and agitation
- flashbacks
- catastrophising
- withdrawing socially
- feelings of struggling to cope
- not wanted to do anything
- worry of touching surfaces or objects due to fear of infection

For someone who has previously experienced anxiety or depression, the symptoms could be worse.

If you are regularly experiencing these symptoms, you should seek support.



It's important to regularly check your own mental wellbeing, you can do this by asking yourself the following questions:

- How do I feel today, physically, and mentally?
- How did I sleep last night?
- Am I eating a balanced diet and drinking enough water?
- How stressed do I feel?
- Do I have helpful coping strategies in place?
- Am I having unhelpful thoughts?
- Do I have someone to talk to if I'm struggling?

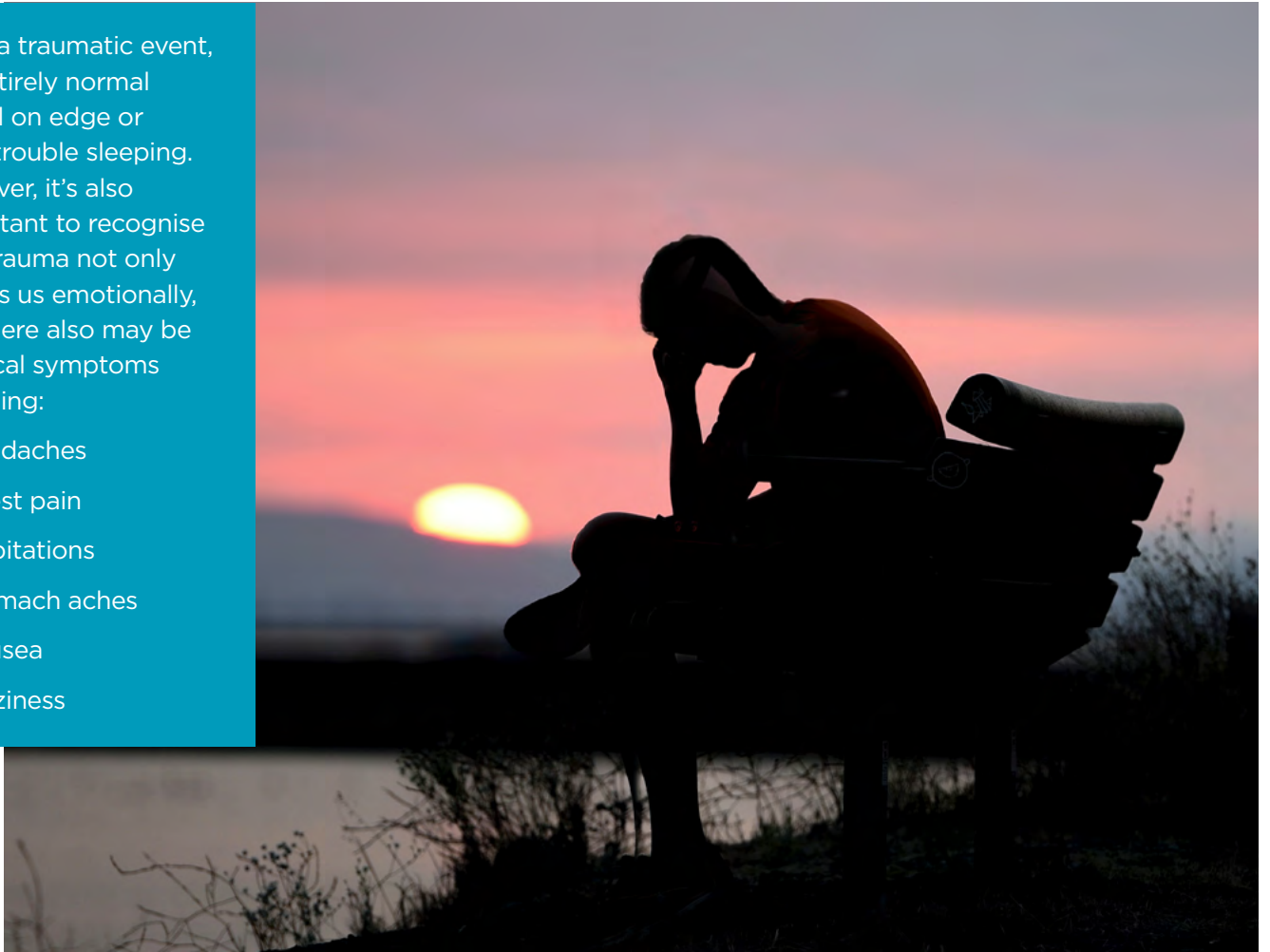
By doing these regular checks you will be aware of any changes in your mental health and can put things in place to help.

It's important to think about your own wellbeing and if necessary, put measures in place to reduce any stress you are feeling. For more details, read our stress awareness guide [here](#) and our mental health guide [here](#).



After a traumatic event, it's entirely normal to feel on edge or have trouble sleeping. However, it's also important to recognise that trauma not only affects us emotionally, but there also may be physical symptoms including:

- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Palpitations
- Stomach aches
- Nausea
- Dizziness



How to cope

Here are some tips, that may help if you are struggling:

- Share your feelings with friends and family members
- Try breathing exercises or **Mindfulness**
- Try the 6 ways to feel happier [here](#)
- Join a support group
- Enjoy exercise especially in nature or with others
- Follow a daily routine
- Spend time doing things you enjoy

If you feel you need to raise your self-esteem, read more [here](#)

If you are struggling to sleep read our [guide here](#).



It is worth remembering that there is nothing abnormal about experiencing psychological difficulties after going through a traumatic life event. There is help available. If your bad days outnumber your good days, contact your GP who should be able to offer help, such as therapy or medication. The pandemic has been a challenging life experience for most people, so there isn't any shame in asking for some support.



Where to get help:

[NHS](#)

[Samaritans](#)

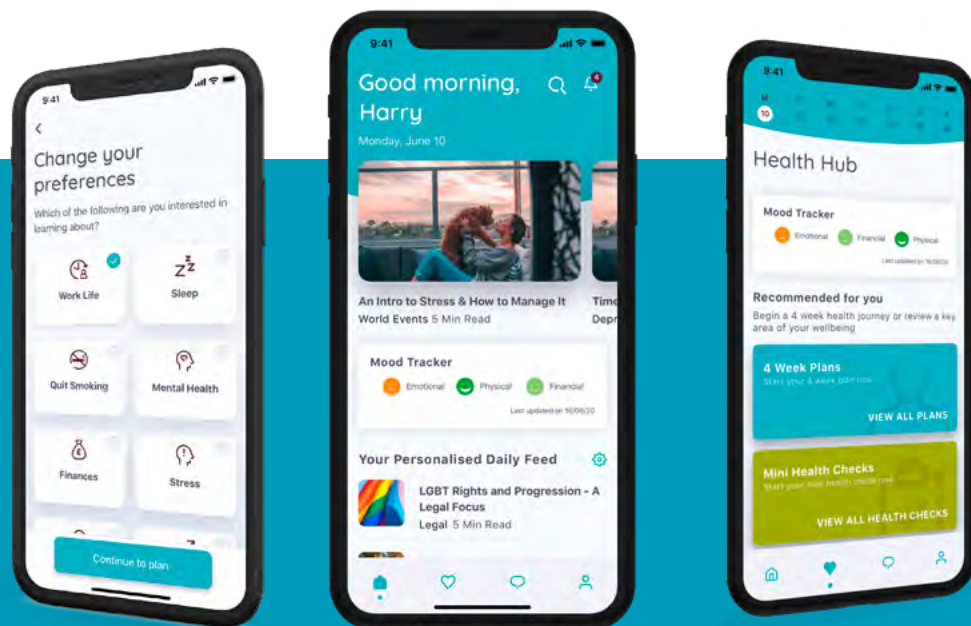
[Mind](#)

[AnxietyUK](#)

[Mental health org](#)

Our **Care Line** Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support. Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

Health & Wellbeing e-portal: <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk> **Username:** [policemutual](#) **Password:** [careline](#)



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