

# TRAUMA

Trauma is defined by the American Psychological Association as “any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, disassociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person’s attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning.”

## Causes of Trauma

- Surviving or witnessing a terrifying and dangerous event
- A situation where you thought you might be killed
- Learning that someone close to you experienced violence
- Extreme exposure to aversive details of a traumatic event
- Exposure to combat
- Sexual or physical abuse or assault
- Any other violent crime
- Accidents
- Natural disasters

## Signs of Problematic Trauma Resonse

- Flashbacks to and feeling like the terrible event is happening all over again
- Nightmares of the terrifying event
- Avoiding reminders of the trauma
- Being “jumpy”, easily startled, and upset when something happens without warning
- Remaining constantly aware of your surroundings and scanning for potential threats to safety
- Difficulty trusting or feeling close to other people
- Intensive irritability and being quickly angered
- Insomnia and muscle tension

# TRAUMA

If you experience some of these concerns after experiencing trauma, you may have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is a real illness that can be treated with therapy and/or medication. PTSD often starts within about one month of the terrible event. Acute stress disorder can begin within 3 days of the trauma, and may progress into PTSD. For some people, signs of PTSD do not show up until years later. It can happen to anyone at any age. Not everyone who experiences trauma will develop a disorder. Most people who go through a traumatic event will not develop PTSD. About 5 out of every 100 adults (or 5%) in the U.S. has PTSD in any given year. In 2020, about 13 million Americans had PTSD. -National Center for PTSD, 2024.

The SMSU Counseling and Testing Center has mental health professionals who can meet with you to talk about concerns ranging from adjustment difficulties to major mental health challenges. Services are confidential and free to students. We are open year round, Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm.

After hours crisis services are available through:

- Western Mental Health Center at 507-532-3236
- Avera Marshall Emergency Room and/or 911
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call 988)
- Crisis Text Line (Text HOME to 741741)

**MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING CENTER**

BELLOWS ACADEMIC 156 | 507-537-7150 | MENTALHEALTH@SMSU.EDU