

Assessing Risk and Resilience Factors & Symptoms for Trauma History

Risk factors

- Experiencing dangerous events and trauma
- Having a history of mental illness
- Seeing people hurt or killed
- Feeling horror, helplessness, extreme fear and threat of loss of life
- Having little or no social support after the event
- Dealing with extra stress after the event, such as loss of a loved one, pain and injury, or loss of a job or home.
- Domestic violence, poverty, and/or homelessness
- Having first-degree relatives with mental illness, including PTSD
- Having first-degree relatives with depression
- Having been abused or neglected as a child

Resilience factors that may reduce the risk

- Seeking out support from other people, such as friends and family
- Finding a support group after a traumatic event
- Feeling good about one's own actions in the face of danger
- Having a coping strategy, or a way of getting through the bad event and learning from it
- Being able to act and respond effectively despite feeling fear.

Symptoms

Actions, behaviors, or feelings can trigger or exacerbate trauma symptoms. The patient needs to be asked about symptoms, including nightmares and flashbacks, difficulty connecting with everyday life, and emotional numbing. Criteria can be identified to help staff make trauma history assessments. Symptoms may be internal or external and may be seen as:

Internal:

- Rage/anger
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Memories of a traumatic event
- Feeling alone
- Feeling abandoned
- Feeling frustrated
- Feeling out of control

- Feeling vulnerable
- Palpitations or racing heartbeat
- Pain
- Muscle tension

External:

- A disagreement
- Seeing or hearing about a traumatic event through the media
- Watching a television show or movie that triggers memories
- Certain smells or sounds
- Ending a relationship
- An anniversary of a specific event
- Holidays
- A specific place
- Seeing someone who triggers memories
- Seeing someone who is going through a traumatic event

Source: NIMH & Mayo Clinic