



Midlothian  
Health & Social Care  
Partnership

# *Courage to Continue*



*Making sense of trauma*

# Courage to Continue

## *Making sense of trauma*

*Over the next 6 weeks, we'll come together to learn about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how it can affect our mind and body.*

Session 1	<i>Making sense of PTSD</i>
Session 2	<i>Coping with difficult symptoms</i>
Session 3	<i>Being on high alert</i>
Session 4	<i>Avoidance</i>
Session 5	<i>Thoughts, mood and relationships</i>
Session 6	<i>Moving forward</i>

This course will introduce *strategies* to help deal with common difficulties associated with PTSD.

To get the most out of this course, please come *prepared* each week so that you are more likely to learn and remember more.

This booklet is designed for you to go through over 6 weeks and not all at once!



SUCCESS IS NOT FINAL  
FAILURE IS NOT FATAL  
IT IS THE COURAGE TO  
CONTINUE THAT COUNTS  
*Winston Churchill*

Before each session, please read the relevant session in this booklet. There are also *strategies to try out* and *videos to watch* – these can be shared with friends and family as well.

Please set aside *1 hour* before each session to do this.

If everyone has the opportunity to do this before we meet, our group sessions can focus on *discussing questions* and *practicing various helpful strategies*.

Each face to face session will last *1.5 hours*.

## Staying safe

If you become distressed please skip to one of the helpful strategies mentioned (*e.g. breathing practice*).

It can be helpful to *take a break*, and do something you find *calming*. We'd encourage you to *come back* to the booklet, videos and strategies when you're able to.

Please also bring this up at the next group session, as others may have had similar experiences.

Here are some emergency numbers if needed:

Your GP - \_\_\_\_\_



NHS 24 – 111

Mental Health Assessment Service -  
0131 537 6000 (24 hours)



**SAMARITANS**

The Samaritans - 116 123 (24 hours)

Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87 (6pm – 2am  
Mon – Thurs, Friday 6pm – Monday 6am)

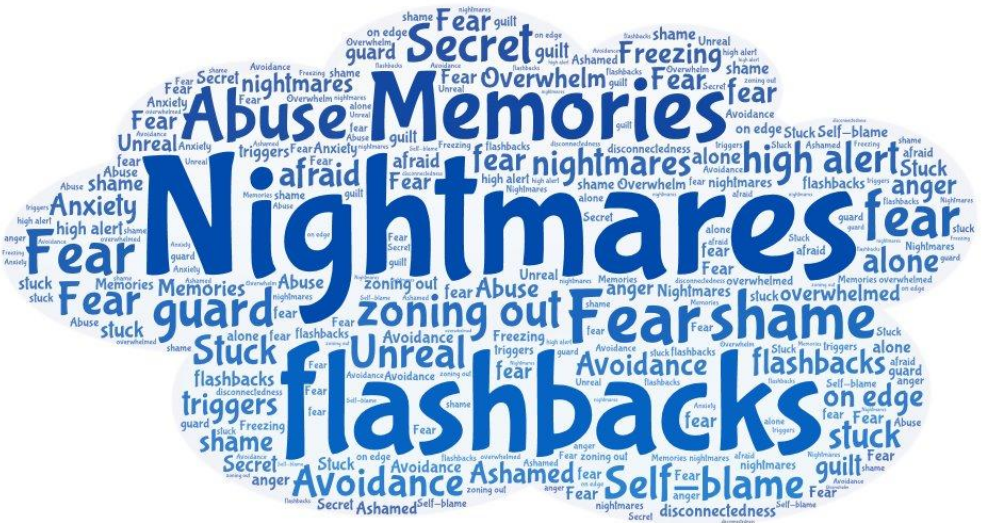


Shout (crisis text line): text 'shout' to 85258

# Session 1

## Making sense of PTSD

*What is PTSD?*





Post-traumatic stress disorder (or PTSD) is the name given to a group of symptoms that many people experience after traumatic events.

These could be events which have happened directly to us or that we have witnessed, e.g.:

- Physical or sexual assault / abuse
- Emotional abuse or neglect
- A road traffic accident
- A natural disaster

Sometimes we can feel quite *stuck* and find it hard to make sense of what is happening to us.

# Common symptoms of PTSD

- **Re-experiencing symptoms**

- Upsetting memories
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Zoning out (dissociation)
- Feeling physically and emotionally upset when reminded of the trauma



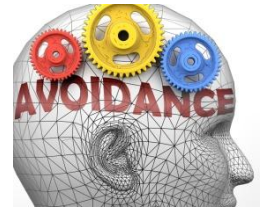
- **Being on 'high alert'**

- Fear – always looking out for danger and being more easily startled
- Problems sleeping
- Problems concentrating / poor memory
- Feeling angry



- **Avoidance symptoms**

- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Trying not to think or talk about what happened
- Feeling numb - like you have no feelings



- **Negative thoughts and mood**

- Feeling depressed, withdrawn, irritable
- Isolating yourself
- Blaming yourself and others
- Negative thoughts about yourself and the world



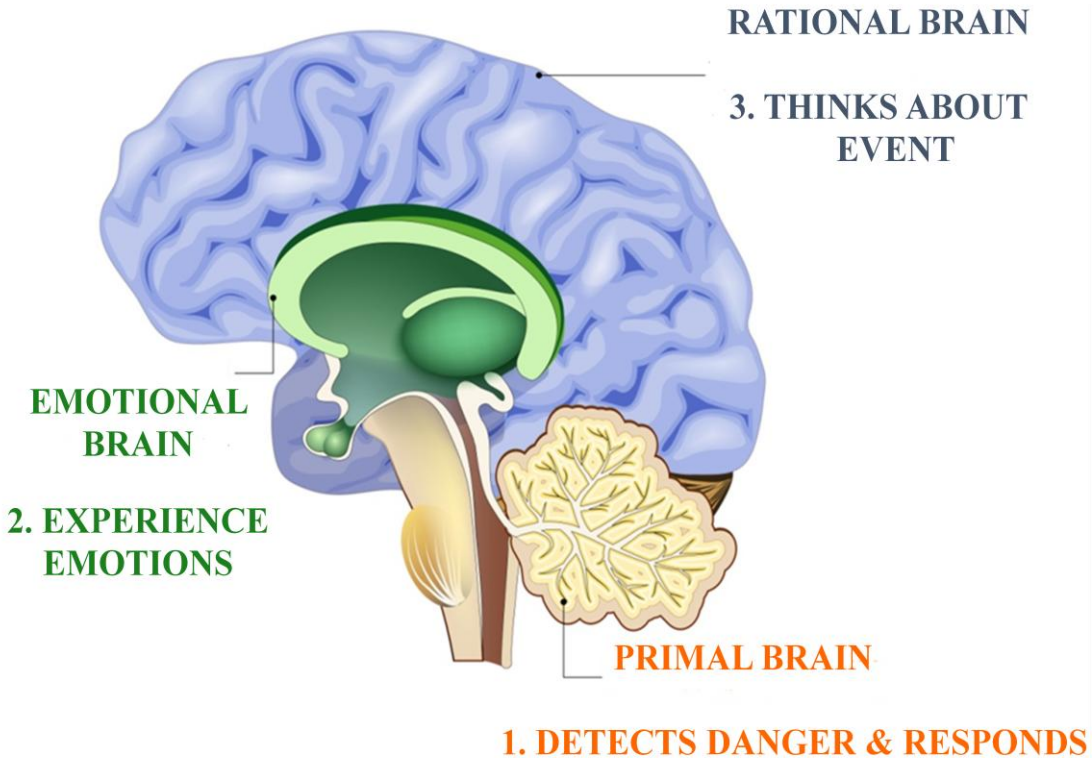
- **Other common reactions to trauma**

- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Self-blame and self-criticism
- Difficulty trusting others
- Difficulty with sexual relationships
- Using alcohol or other substances



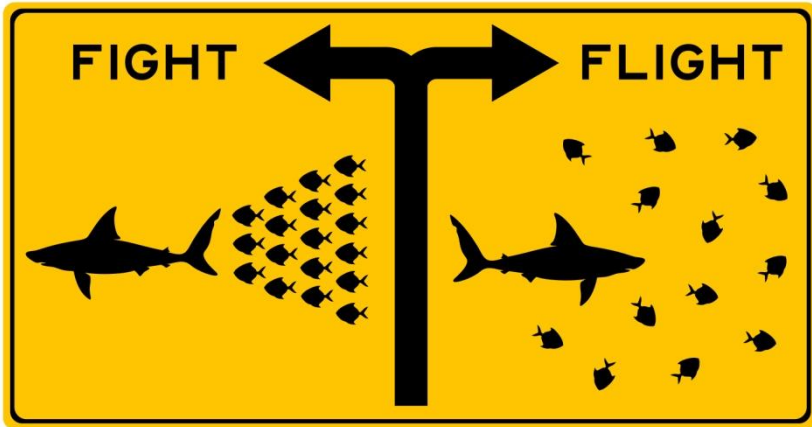
# Our Threat System

Our brain has evolved over millions of years and does the following in threatening situations:



Common PTSD symptoms are our brains *best effort's* to deal with overwhelming threatening events. It can be *difficult to switch off this thinking* part of our brain.

## Defensive options for our threat system



**Fight:** fight off danger

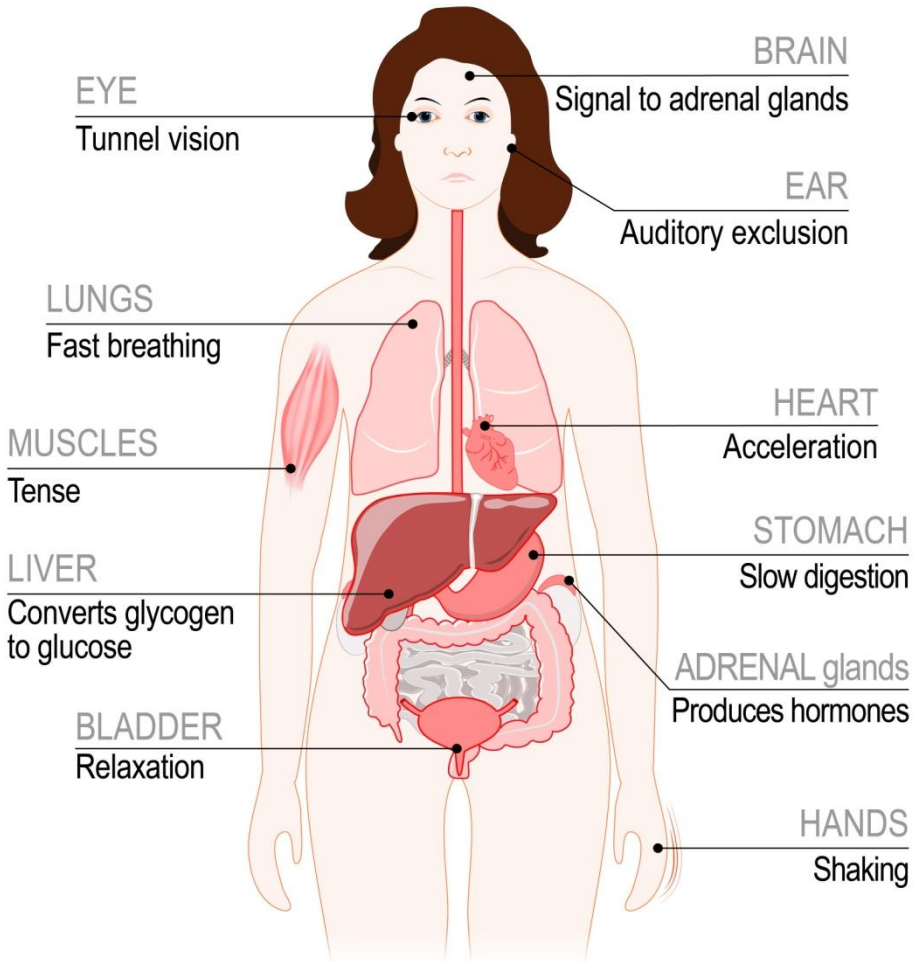
**Flight:** run away from danger

**Freeze:** stay still and the danger might go away

**Appease:** close down, hide, not say anything

**Dissociate:** turning inward and zoning out

# Fight-or-flight response



Please watch the video on *our threat system* to find out more.

# Everyday memories vs. trauma memories

## Everyday memories

- Organised
- Have a beginning, middle and end
- Control when they're recalled
- Can be updated
- We know they're in the past

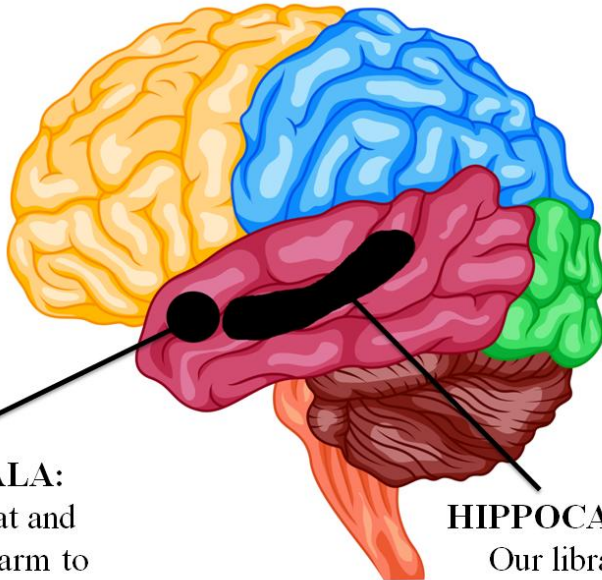


## Trauma memories

- Disorganised
- Fragmented
- Triggered by situations
- Can't control when memory comes to mind
- Doesn't *feel* as though they're in the past
- Frozen in time



Please watch the video on *everyday and trauma memories* to find out more.



**AMYGDALA:**  
detects threat and  
sets off an alarm to  
prepare our body for  
action

**HIPPOCAMPUS:**  
Our librarian.  
Collects and sifts through  
information like  
*who, what, when and where*

## **Understanding how your PTSD symptoms affect you is a helpful first step**

Tick the symptoms that have affected you *at least twice in the last week*.

- Upsetting thoughts or memories about the event that have come into your mind against your will
- Upsetting dreams against your will
- Acting or feeling as though the event were happening again
- Feeling upset by reminders of the event
- Bodily reactions (e.g. fast heartbeat, stomach churning, sweatiness, dizziness) when reminded of the event
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Heightened awareness of potential dangers to yourself and others
- Being jumpy or being startled at something unexpected

*Trauma Screening Questionnaire (Brewin and colleagues, 2002).*

## Focus on your breath

Controlling your *breathing* is a helpful way to tell our brain and body that *everything is okay*.

With practice, focusing on our breath can make us feel more *connected* and *calmer*.

Please listen to the *soothing rhythm breathing* audio track to guide you through this practice.



