



TREATMENT INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD is a syndrome that can develop after a person has been exposed to a traumatic event. A trauma is any situation that a person may perceive as horrifying or life-threatening. Examples of trauma include events as varied as combat, childhood abuse, rape, a terrorist attack, being in a car crash, or witnessing a murder. Sometimes PTSD develops soon after the trauma; sometimes it begins even years later. There are three groups of symptoms that comprise PTSD. In re-experiencing symptoms, the person re-experiences the traumatic event through intrusive memories, nightmares, flashbacks, and reactivity to trauma-related cues. In avoidance and numbing symptoms, the person avoids stimuli related to the trauma and/or experiences emotional numbing. Avoidance symptoms can involve avoiding thoughts, feelings, activities, places, or people associated with the trauma. In numbing, the person may have difficulty experiencing a full range of emotions, may lose interest in activities, use alcohol or other substances to numb feelings, and may feel detached from others. In hyperarousal symptoms, the person may experience trouble falling or staying asleep, increased irritability and anger, difficulty concentrating, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response.

Rationale for the Treatment

This treatment was specifically designed to address the functional impairments that often occur in individuals who have experienced trauma. Researchers and clinicians report that individuals with PTSD often have problems in two key areas-- dealing with emotions in safe and healthy ways, and dealing with interpersonal situations effectively.

Overview of the Treatment

In this treatment, there are eight 45-60 minute sessions that will take place once a week for eight sessions. There is flexibility in





the treatment such that you can have more sessions if you and your therapist decide that would be helpful, and you will determine the pace of the work.

The treatment will focus on learning skills for dealing with distressing feelings and for improving interpersonal situations. The first goal is to develop emotional awareness and build skills for handling negative feelings and managing distress. A second goal of this phase is to learn how to improve your interpersonal skills by learning how patterns you learned in early relationships continue to guide your current relationships. Time will also be spent on how to use emotion regulation skills in relationships, specifically how to manage certain emotions that can at times interfere with or overshadow your relationship goals.

