

# Understanding Trauma and Stroke Recovery: Pathways to Healing and Rehabilitation

Exploring key aspects of healing and emotional  
support

# Agenda Overview

- Fundamentals of Trauma and Stroke
- Understanding Triggers and the Fight or Flight Response in Recovery
- Recognizing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Psychological and Emotional Support in Recovery



# Understanding Trauma

Trauma refers to emotional injury caused by exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being. Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior, nature, or any serious physical injury.

# Understanding Triggers and the Fight or Flight Response in Recovery

# Identifying Common Triggers



## **Sensory Reminders**

Sensory reminders such as sounds or smells can evoke distress and anxiety after trauma or stroke.

## **Stressful Situations**

Stressful events or environments often act as triggers causing emotional distress post-trauma or stroke.

## **Importance of Recognition**

Recognizing triggers helps individuals and caregivers prepare and respond effectively to reduce anxiety.

# The Physiology of the Fight or Flight Response

## **Automatic Threat Reaction**

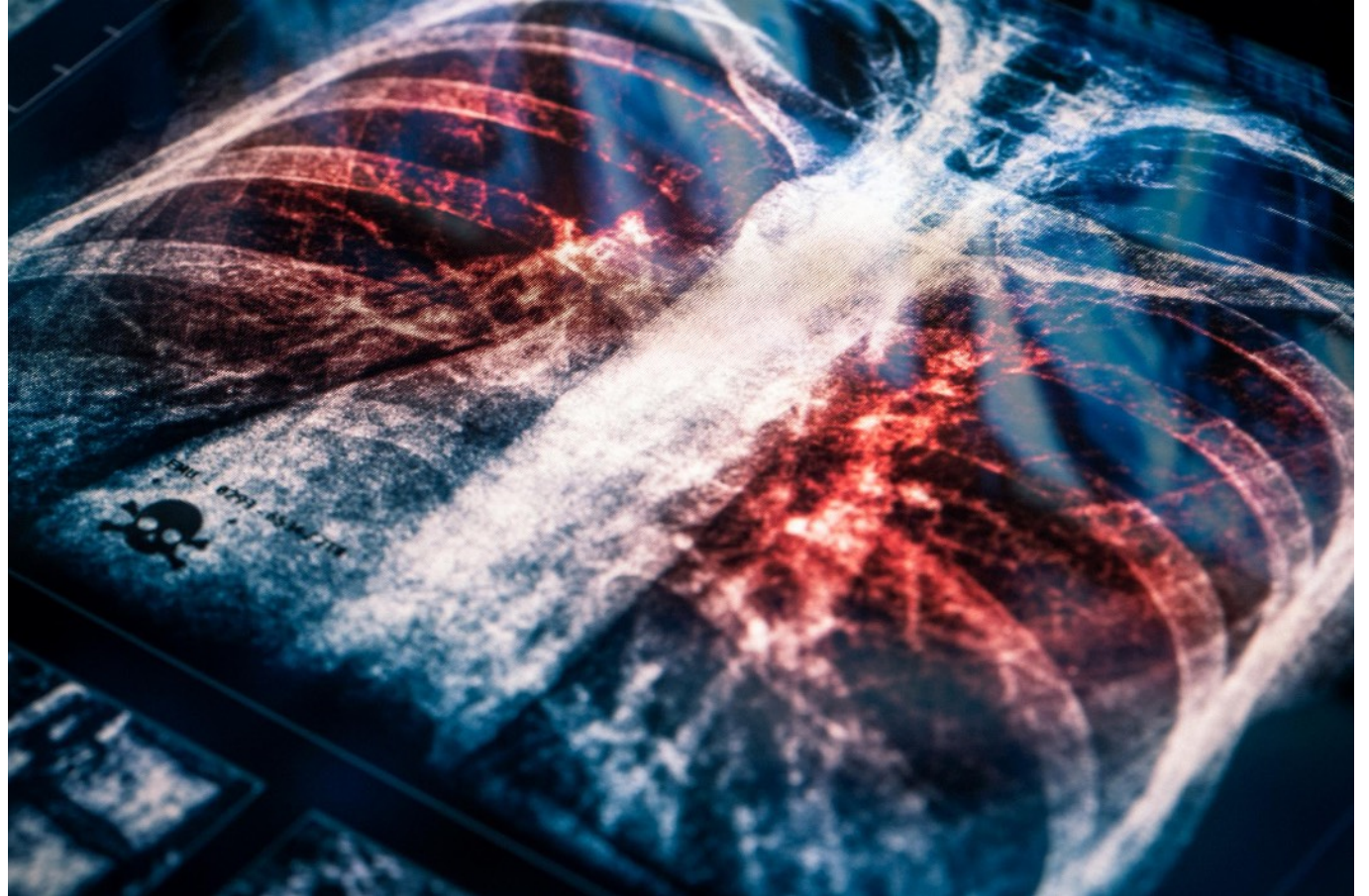
The fight or flight response activates automatically when a threat is perceived.

## **Adrenaline Release**

Adrenaline is released to prepare the body for immediate action by increasing heart rate and energy.

## **Chronic Response Impact**

Chronic activation of this response can negatively affect recovery and overall wellbeing.



# Recognizing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



# Common Signs and Symptoms of PTSD

## **Flashbacks and Nightmares**

PTSD symptoms often include vivid flashbacks and nightmares that relive traumatic experiences.

## **Hypervigilance**

Individuals with PTSD may exhibit hypervigilance, heightened alertness to potential threats in their environment.

## **Emotional Numbness and Avoidance**

Emotional numbness and avoidance behaviors are common, leading individuals to withdraw from triggers or reminders of trauma.

## **Importance of Early Recognition**

Recognizing PTSD symptoms early is crucial for timely access to appropriate mental health care.

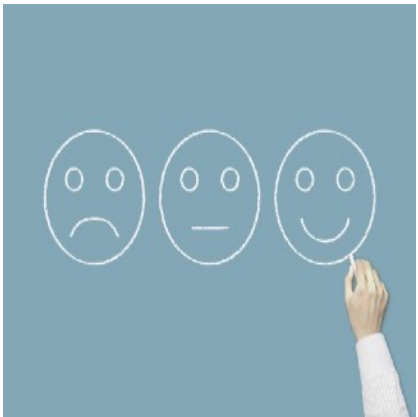






## **PTSD Symptom Severity**

PTSD causes persistent and severe symptoms that significantly affect daily life and functioning.



## **General Trauma Responses**

Many people experience stress after trauma, but symptoms are often less persistent and less disabling than PTSD.



## **Importance of Differentiation**

Accurately distinguishing PTSD from other trauma responses is crucial for guiding effective treatment decisions.

What About  
Anxiety?

---

Anxiety is the mind and body's reaction to anything you find scary or threatening

---

When too frequent or severe, it can negatively affect quality of life

# Anxiety vs. Phobia vs. Panic

Anxiety is an excessive, often uncontrollable, amount of worry in several areas of life, such as work, health, relationship, and finances

Phobia is intense fear that a person goes out of their way to avoid

Panic is an intense anxiety response often accompanied by numerous physical symptoms and an overwhelming sense of dread

# Psychological and Emotional Support in Recovery

# Coping with Emotional Trauma and Adjustment



## **Mindfulness Practice**

Mindfulness helps individuals stay present and manage emotional distress effectively.

## **Journaling Benefits**

Journaling allows expression of feelings and supports emotional processing.

## **Social Connectedness**

Seeking social support fosters resilience and eases emotional struggles.

# Examples of Coping/Grounding Techniques

Directive Music Task

Categories

Tai Chi/Qigong

Yoga/Chair Yoga

Jigsaw Puzzles

Coloring Pages

Noise Cancelling  
Earplugs and Low  
Light (for  
overstimulation)

Counting Backwards  
by Multiples

Deep Breathing such  
as box breathing and  
4-7-8 breathing

Meditation (Great  
Meditation, Balance  
App, Mindfulness  
Coach)

Holding a Cold  
Object (if no  
neuropathy)

Tactile Task-hold an  
item and give  
detailed description

Walking/Hiking

Journaling\*\*



# Sources:

- American Psychological Association
  - [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- Department of Veterans Affairs
  - <https://ptsd.va.gov>
- Therapist Aid
  - [www.therapistaid.com](http://www.therapistaid.com)
- Trauma informed Care Implementation Resource Center
  - <https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/>