

## PTSD has a wide range of treatments

Model and media personality Hailey Bieber recently revealed that she has been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) stemming from a stroke in 2022.

“It was so terrifying, so jarring, so discombobulating in every single way that you could imagine,” Bieber told Vogue.

PTSD is often associated with veterans, but it can affect anyone, says [Ari Lakritz](#), PsyD, a clinical psychologist at OSF HealthCare in Alton, Illinois. It describes the development of symptoms following a traumatic event, either through firsthand or secondhand exposure. Secondhand exposure is usually not as simple as, for example, watching news coverage of a violent crime. A more appropriate example, Dr. Lakritz says, is a police officer who routinely investigates those crimes.

Dr. Lakritz describes what may trigger the beginning of a PTSD diagnosis: “Memories of the event. Dreams or flashbacks. Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma.”

Those symptoms then change the person’s moods and level of arousal, Dr. Lakritz says. They may feel guilty or unworthy. They are easily startled, irritable and have trouble concentrating. For example, a sexual assault survivor smelling their attacker’s cologne or deodorant may make the person feel anxious or withdrawn.

“This particular set of symptoms can often very much look like depression,” Dr. Lakritz says.

PTSD symptoms can arise right after the traumatic event, or they can appear months later.

Treatment will vary widely depending on the person’s needs, Dr. Lakritz says. Two evidenced-based methods he sees a lot are cognitive processing therapy and prolonged exposure therapy.

Cognitive processing therapy has people challenge or modify their beliefs about the trauma.

“Try to reframe [the beliefs]. Try to make a different end to the story,” Dr. Lakritz explains. “Try to change their thoughts about what happened and about their future and their ability to recover.”

Prolonged exposure therapy “teaches people to gradually approach the trauma in increasingly closer ways,” Dr. Lakritz says. For example, a shooting victim may come to a counseling session and be shown a picture of a gun. Then at a session days or weeks later, they hear the sound of a gunshot. The stimuli increase in intensity as the person learns there is very little to fear now.

Medicine and treatments outside a doctor’s office, like spending time with animals or picking up a new hobby, are also options. The first step, though, is to [make an appointment](#) with a mental health provider.

And when it comes to people like Hailey Bieber talking about mental health, Dr. Lakritz says it’s good because celebrities have great influence. But there’s a caveat.

“The more useful part is when they talk about the help they got,” Dr. Lakritz says.

Learn more about [PTSD](#) and [mental health care](#) on the OSF HealthCare website.