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PTSD After Performing CPR: Steps to Healing and Recovery

May 3, 2024 by Paul Swindell



Performing CPR during a medical crisis can be traumatic, even when the person survives.

linger, despite the relief of recovery. For many, the trauma transforms into a form of **PTSD**. What is the best way to manage the aftermath when lifesaving efforts leave you scarred?

Reliving the Crisis



Photo by cottonbro studio on [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

After going through a high-stress emergency, your mind and body remain in an activated state. Sirens and other

second-guessing if you did enough and if the CPR was adequate.

Intrusive flashbacks and panic attacks frequently occur in the first year.

Most handle the anniversary date with particular difficulty as suppressed memories and emotions bubble up. This “*anniversary reaction*” often catches survivors and co-survivors off guard with its intensity. Knowing it may happen enables preparation through self-care and seeking extra support.

[Confiding in others who have experienced similar situations provides reassurance.](#) They confirm these emotional aftershocks are a common and valid response to trauma. You are not alone in your struggles.

Managing the Mental Fallout



Despite relief at survival, guilt and anxiety persist. [Afraid to relax your vigilance, you become hyper-focused](#) on any potential health issues to stave off another emergency. This constant stress state prevents moving forward psychologically and overwhelms mental coping abilities.

Unresolved trauma impacts daily functioning and relationships. Experts recommend professional counselling to process the experience and learn healthier thought patterns. [EMDR](#), [cognitive behavioural therapy](#), [expressive writing](#) and [support groups](#) prove especially helpful for [PTSD](#).

While avoidance seems easier, confronting the trauma through talk therapy provides long-term benefits. The stigma around seeking mental health treatment fades as you regain stability and perspective. Be patient and keep trying new counsellors until you find the right fit.

Honouring Your Own Needs



In an emergency, your sole focus defaulted to the victim's survival. But now you must direct that loving concern toward your healing. Self-care and emotional needs take priority in recovery. Allowing time for adequate rest, healthy nutrition, physical activity, and social connection provides strength.

Let loved ones shoulder more responsibilities for now.

Pushing your limits too soon prolongs the trauma response, emotional wounds heal slowly. Expect setbacks along the way and practice self-compassion. What happened doesn't define who you are, only what you overcame.

Progress comes gradually, then suddenly. One day, panic morphs into manageable discomfort that passes quicker. Triggers still surface but lose control over you—the trauma integrates into your story as fuel for empowering and educating others.

Though it lives within, PTSD loses its grip as post-traumatic growth takes root. You reclaim your sense of safety and purpose. Your courageous efforts saved a life at great personal cost. Now, you courageously rebuild your own life, transformed by the experience.

Key Takeaways:

- Trauma symptoms are common after emergencies but can be managed

- Consider professional counselling, CBT, EMDR, expressive writing and group support for PTSD treatment
- Be patient and allow time for rest, self-compassion and gradual healing
- Find purpose in educating others and transforming the trauma into post-traumatic growth

**Paul Swindell**

After our first meet-up in February 2015, I realised I was not alone. It was the first time since my cardiac arrest the previous year that I had spoken face-to-face with someone who had experienced what I had. This was also true for my wife, who also happened to be my

lifesaver. From that meet-up, the idea of SCA UK was born. Since then, we have achieved a considerable amount, primarily providing information, resources and support to others in a similar situation but also raising the profile of survivorship and the need for better post-discharge care. We are starting to get traction in this, and with the formation of the charity, I genuinely believe we have a bright future ahead and will make a significant difference in the lives of many who join our ranks.

■ Blog, Cardiac Arrest, Life Saver, Mental Health, Recovery

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2 thoughts on “PTSD After Performing CPR: Steps to Healing and Recovery”

**Gwen**

May 3, 2024 at 7:21 pm

The Rewind Technique for relieving PTSD in as few as two sessions.

Strictly speaking a hypnotic state is not required for this therapy, and I can testify to its success from experience.

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Karl Perry

May 9, 2024 at 6:20 am

I've just had my 5th Re-birthday and all 5 have felt different! Thankfully, this one has been very positive!

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