

# Post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth

Post-traumatic stress	Post-traumatic growth
<p>Experiencing one or more of the following symptoms as the result of witnessing or being involved in a traumatic event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliving the event</li> <li>• Avoiding things that remind one of the event</li> <li>• Negative emotions or thoughts</li> <li>• Feeling on edge</li> </ul>	<p>Psychological growth as the result of a traumatic experience that leads one to have a greater appreciation of life, a changed sense of priorities, a greater sense of personal strength, and recognition of new possibilities</p>

## Best practices

- Due to the nature of their job, first responders are at a higher risk for experiencing post-traumatic stress and its effects compared with the general population
- There are often multiple traumatic events that contribute to post-traumatic stress. For example:
  - The closer to the epicenter of the incident, the higher the level of stress the person is likely to experience
  - Those who are harmed or injured while responding to a crisis are significantly more likely to exhibit signs of post trauma stress
- Those who are exhibiting growth following an incident should receive departmental support to continue that growth
- Longer duration of employment and higher job satisfaction can be protective factors for post trauma stress
- Spending time deliberately processing one's experiences and looking for lessons learned can contribute significantly to post trauma growth
- Working to identify proper coping mechanisms following trauma has been linked to more significant growth in individuals versus those who use unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as heavy drinking

## Resources

- **IACP:** [Critical Incident Stress Management](#)
- **IAFF:** [Post-Traumatic Stress, Acute Stress Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- **SAMSHA:** [First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response, and Trauma](#)
- **Military Health System:** [Turn Post Traumatic Stress into Post Traumatic Growth](#)