

Prolonged Exposure (PE)

Target Population

Adults who experienced a traumatic event and have PTSD or symptoms of PTSD. Co-occurring problems such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse may also be present.

Treatment Setting

This is a clinic-based service.

Length/Frequency of

Treatment

Weekly 90 minute sessions for approximately 8-15 weeks.

Referral Process

PE is delivered in outpatient settings and can be accessed by calling the providers in the provider directory.

Website:

http://www.med.upenn.edu/cts/workshops_pet.html?1

Overview

Prolonged exposure is a treatment for **adults** who are experiencing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This therapy aims to reduce PTSD symptoms by helping individuals approach trauma-related thoughts, feelings, and situations that had previously been avoided. This repeated exposure process helps reduce the power the thoughts, feelings and situation have to cause distress and PTSD symptoms.

Core Components

- The goal of PE is to allow for adequate and in-depth emotional processing of an event and to decrease avoidant behaviors commonly associated with PTSD
- This is accomplished during sessions via the following methods:
 - **Imaginal exposure** through the retelling of a trauma memory (revisiting, recounting, and processing). Individuals are asked to revisit and recount a specific traumatic event as vividly as possible while in a safe and therapeutic setting.
 - **In-vivo exposure** to situations that have been avoided because of trauma-related fear. Individuals establish an avoidance hierarchy and then face real-life events that cause manageable levels of anxiety symptoms.
 - **Psychoeducation:** education about common reactions to trauma.

DBHIDS PE Initiative

Providers receive intensive training and consultation from treatment experts at the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety at the University of Pennsylvania. They also receive training in how to screen and identify individuals who could benefit from trauma treatment.