



## PROLONGED EXPOSURE

A Treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

### TO LEARN MORE

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## TRAUMA & PTSD

Trauma is an emotional shock that impacts a person's life in many ways. Almost everyone who experiences a trauma will have some difficulties in the following days or weeks. Common reactions include:

- feeling fearful and anxious
- unwanted memories of the trauma
- nightmares or difficulty sleeping
- feeling angry or irritable
- drinking or using drugs
- feelings of depression

For many people, these difficulties can get better with time. However, for others, they may continue for months or even years. When the difficulties a trauma survivor experiences do not diminish with time, the impacted person may develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

## IMPACT IN PHILADELPHIA

Trauma touches the lives of many people in Philadelphia. According to PE-trained providers in Philadelphia, as many as 56 % of individuals seeking treatment have experienced at least one traumatic event during their lifetime and 77% of those individuals who report having experienced a traumatic event have PTSD symptoms.\* Common traumas that people in Philadelphia report are:

- sexual and physical assaults
- witnessing death
- car accidents
- child abuse

## WHAT IS PROLONGED EXPOSURE?

Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy is an evidence-based treatment for adults experiencing symptoms of PTSD. Sometimes, survivors of trauma continue to be haunted by their past experiences. These memories, thoughts, and feelings are often painful and difficult to live with.

PE Therapy aims to reduce PTSD symptoms by helping individuals approach trauma-related thoughts, feelings, and situations that had previously been avoided. This gradual exposure process helps reduce the distress associated with trauma-related thoughts, feelings, and situations that cause PTSD symptoms.

## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN PE TREATMENT?

Treatment is delivered by a therapist over 8 to fifteen 90-minute sessions. To accomplish the goals of PE, the treatment includes the following components:

- **Education about PTSD:** causes, symptoms, and reasons symptoms persist.
- **In-vivo exposure:** to approach feared, but objectively safe situations, individuals establish an avoidance hierarchy and then practice real-life situations that cause distress.
- **Imaginal exposure:** to develop a new perspective on the trauma memories, individuals are asked to recount a specific traumatic memory while in a safe and therapeutic setting and to process the experience with their therapist.

## WHO BENEFITS FROM PE?

Individuals with many different types of trauma have experienced positive results with PE. This includes traumas related to combat, sexual assault, childhood abuse, natural disasters, and accidents. Here are a few questions you might consider when exploring PE as a treatment option.

- Have you experienced a trauma?
- Do you push away painful memories of the trauma or places that remind you of the trauma?
- Do memories of the past continue to fill your head?
- Are your relationships strained?
- Have you relied on alcohol and/or drugs to help you cope with painful memories?

## WHERE IS PE LOCATED/HOW DO YOU GET REFERRED?

A number of adult outpatient providers offer PE Therapy throughout Philadelphia. To find a location near you, check the PE provider list at [dbhids.org/epic](http://dbhids.org/epic). Please contact any of the providers listed for help in determining if this treatment is right for you or a loved one.

## WHO PAYS FOR PE?

PE is available at no cost to Community Behavioral Health (CBH) members. For more information about CBH or to find out if you are eligible for CBH services, contact Member Services at 888-545-2600. If you or your family is not covered by CBH, you can contact the providers directly to determine if your insurance plan is accepted.



\*Citation: data collected via nine behavioral health providers in the City of Philadelphia trained in the DBHIDS PE training initiative.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

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