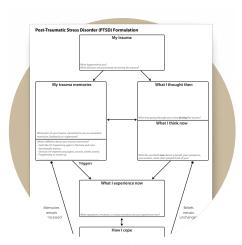
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common reaction to traumatic events. If you struggle with PTSD, you might experience distressing memories, intense emotions (e.g., fear or guilt), and you might avoid things that remind you of what happened. Crucially, you may feel like you're still under threat, even though the traumatic event is over.

Several things contribute to PTSD, including:

- Memories of your trauma which might be 'unprocessed', and which can intrude as flashbacks and nightmares.
- The sense you make of your experiences (at the time and afterwards), which can keep you in a state of heightened anxiety.
- The things you do to cope with the symptoms of PTSD, which can inadvertently keep them going.

One way of making sense of your experience is to explore how these 'common ingredients' of PTSD apply to you. Therapists use tools called formulations to create a 'map' of how a problem might have started and why it might be 'stuck'. By working through one with a therapist, you can reach a shared understanding of what is going on, and come up with ideas about how to get 'unstuck'.





# How could this tool help me?

You can use the PTSD Formulation to:

- Develop an understanding of your difficulties with your therapist, based on what psychologists know about PTSD.
- Guide the treatment strategies that will help you recover from PTSD.



# How should I use it?

Each box will prompt you to record different parts of your experience:

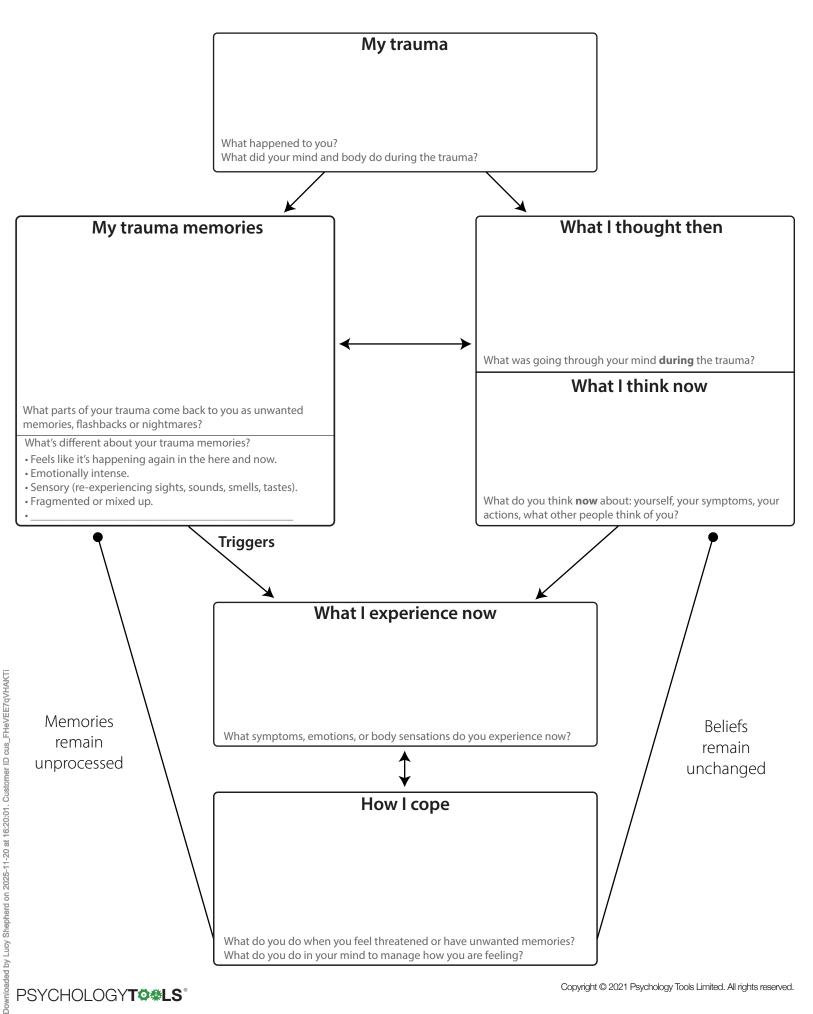
- My trauma. Describe what happened in just a few words.
- My trauma memories. What parts of the trauma come back to you as unwanted memories, flashbacks, or nightmares?
- What I thought then. What was going through your mind *during* the trauma?
- What I think now. What do you think *now* about the trauma, yourself, your symptoms, and what other people think of you?
- Triggers. What things trigger unwanted memories for you?
- What I experience now. What symptoms do you currently experience when you encounter a trigger (e.g., distressing emotions or bodily sensations)?
- How I cope. What do you do to manage when you encounter a trigger?



# **Helpful tips**

- If possible, complete this form in session with the guidance of your therapist.
- Completing the form might bring up difficult thoughts and feelings about what happened. Consider using grounding strategies to manage triggers.
- If it seems helpful, share your formulation with someone you trust. It
  may help them understand your difficulties better, and they might have
  important things to add.

whoaded by Lucy Shepherd on 2025-11-20 at 16:20:01. Customer ID cus\_FHeVEE7qVHAKTi



#### My trauma

I was raped by a friend after a party. Afterwards he acted like nothing had happened. My body froze and I couldn't move.

What happened to you?

What did your mind and body do during the trauma?

### My trauma memories

The smell of his aftershave.

I keep seeing his face grinning at me. I have nightmares about not being able to move and not being able to escape.

What parts of your trauma come back to you as unwanted memories, flashbacks or nightmares?

What's different about your trauma memories?

- Feels like it's happening again in the here and now.
- · Emotionally intense.

**Memories** 

remain

unprocessed

- Sensory (re-experiencing sights, sounds, smells, tastes).
- · Fragmented or mixed up.

### What I thought then

What's happening? Why won't he stop? He's enjoying this and is treating me like meat.

I can't escape this.

What was going through your mind during the trauma?

#### What I think now

It must have been my fault. I must have given him the impression that I wanted it. I'm weak that I can't get over this — he's living his life but I'm destroyed by this. I can't trust anyone, I can't trust myself. I'm disgusting.

What do you think **now** about: yourself, your symptoms, your actions, what other people think of you?

Triggers 1. Having sex with my new boyfriend.

a. Seeing sexual assault on Tv.

# What I experience now

Flashbacks of the rape.

I feel the same fear as I did at the time. During sex I freeze and I can't move. Feel ashamed of myself.

What symptoms, emotions, or body sensations do you experience now?

# **....**

# How I cope

I push the memories away and try to distract myself by smoking cannabis. I try and avoid sex, and try to avoid watching or reading things that involve anything sexual. I don't go to parties anymore. I think about what I could have done differently to have prevented it from happening.

What do you do when you feel threatened or have unwanted memories? What do you do in your mind to manage how you are feeling?

Beliefs remain unchanged

#### My trauma Driving friends home after a day at the lake. we were hit by another car. Other driver was using his phone. my friend was killed. What happened to you? What did your mind and body do during the trauma? My trauma memories What I thought then I'm going to die. Seeing the other car coming towards us. This is it. Smell of oil and hot metal. Thought of my mum. Image of my friend in the morque. What was going through your mind **during** the trauma? What I think now If I'd chosen to go another way home my What parts of your trauma come back to you as unwanted memories, flashbacks or nightmares? friend would still be alive. Why was it him What's different about your trauma memories? and not me? It's not fair, the other driver • Feels like it's happening again in the here and now. gets to live and my friend is gone forever. · Emotionally intense. Other people will think it was my fault. • Sensory (re-experiencing sights, sounds, smells, tastes). What do you think **now** about: yourself, your symptoms, your · Fragmented or mixed up. actions, what other people think of you? **Triggers** cars Pictures of my friend What I experience now Nightmares of the collision, and I wake up drenched with sweat. Images in my mind of my friend in the morque. I feel on edge, especially if I'm in a car. I feel quilty about what happened. **Memories Beliefs** What symptoms, emotions, or body sensations do you experience now? remain remain unprocessed unchanged How I cope I don't drive anymore. I don't see his family and I don't keep in touch with my old friends. I keep busy so that I don't think about it. I think about all the things that I could have done differently, and I get mad at the other driver. What do you do when you feel threatened or have unwanted memories? What do you do in your mind to manage how you are feeling?