

World Mental Health Day: sources for information sheet

The role of physiotherapy in trauma rehabilitation

What is trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing event or series of events, such as abuse, a bad accident, rape or other sexual violence, combat, or a natural disaster. Trauma can be either acute or chronic:

Acute emotional trauma is the emotional response that happens during and shortly after a single distressing event.

Chronic emotional trauma is a long-term emotional response a person experiences from prolonged or repeated distressing events.

American Psychological Association. [Trauma](#).

Ashley Olivine, PhD. [What Is Trauma? Emotional Trauma, Psychological Trauma](#). Published on 4 January 2022

Exposure to any form of trauma, particularly in childhood, can increase the risk of mental illness and suicide; smoking, alcohol and substance abuse; chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes and cancer; and social problems such as poverty, crime and violence.

World Health Organization. [Fact sheet: Injuries and violence](#). 19 March 2021

Symptoms of trauma can be both emotional and physical. This can impact a person in terms of attitude, behaviour and functioning. Symptoms can include: anger; depression or anxiety; guilt or shame; social withdrawal; loss of interest in activities; increased heart rate; body aches or pains; difficulty sleeping; fatigue.

Paul A. Sandifer, Robert-Paul Juster, Teresa E. Seeman, Maureen Y. Lichtveld, Burton H. Singer. [Allostatic load in the context of disasters](#). Psychoneuroendocrinology, Volume 140,2022, 105725, ISSN 0306-4530

HelpGuide. [Emotional and Psychological Trauma](#)

How can physiotherapy help?

Physiotherapists in mental health use physical oriented approaches to achieve personal lifestyle modifications that are relevant and sustainable. These strategies empower individuals towards greater independence and self-management of personal health and wellbeing.

International Organization of Physical Therapy in Mental Health. [Policy statement: The role of physical therapists within mental health and psychiatry](#). May 2019

Amie Wallman-Jones, Pandelis Perakakis, Manos Tsakiris, Mirko Schmidt, [Physical activity and interoceptive processing: Theoretical considerations for future research](#). International Journal of Psychophysiology, Volume 166, 2021, Pages 38-49, ISSN 0167-8760,