



Close to Home Study Guide

Dealing with PTSD

1. Opening (1 minute)*

Acknowledge that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects each person in different ways. It also affects our relationships with family, friends, and God.

Pray: Dear God, we have gathered together in your presence to discern a mystery of life, to better understand the difficulties of traumatic events in our lives. Help us to listen. Help us to learn. Amen.

2. Storytelling (8 minutes)

Read or tell Karla's story (pp. 2–3).

- With whom do you identify in Karla's story?

3. Review of pamphlet (6 minutes)

Review the causes of traumatic stress (p. 4). Invite people to share if they have been personally affected by a trauma in one or more of the three categories.

- Do you ever experience any of the symptoms of traumatic stress?

Note that the symptoms of traumatic stress can also be related to other things. Highlight the differences between traumatic stress and post-traumatic stress (p. 5).

Ask someone to read the sidebar, "Our internal alarm system" (p. 5).

4. Reading of Scripture text (15 minutes)

Where Is God When It Hurts? (a book by Philip Yancey) is an ageless cry of the heart when we have faced trauma of catastrophic proportions.

Read Psalm 77:2-4 (p. 6)

- What would you add to this description of your "day of trouble"?

Read the next paragraph and Psalm 137:1-4 (p. 6).

- What resonates with you about response of the Israelites?

Read Jeremiah 29:11 (p. 7).

- What do you hope are God's future plans for you?

* The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

5. Steps toward healing (14 minutes)

Review “Steps toward healing” (pp. 8–9). If persons in the group are dealing with PTSD in their lives, ask them to raise their hand if they have tried any of the suggestions.

- What are your next steps?

If anyone is a relative or caregiver for someone with PTSD, invite him or her to share new insights from this session.

- What are your next steps in caring for yourself and caring for your loved one?

6. Closing (1 minute)

Invite the group to pray together regarding the things you have shared. Encourage the group to claim this beautiful promise that God gave to the Israelites:

The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:17-20 NRSV)



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This study guide is written by Sharon Williams, editor of *Adult Bible Study* (MennoMedia) and minister of worship with Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church, Norristown, Pennsylvania. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from MennoMedia (see www.MennoMedia.org/closetohome) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions (www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome).