

Plug-In Missions Ed: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

November, Week 2

By Melissa Logsdon-Young

Objectives

To help children understand what Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is and the impact it has on the person with PTSD and those around them.

Materials

PTSD Symptoms Seek and Find Puzzles

Pencils, strips of paper or index cards, poster board

Optional: Materials for PTSD project

Preparation

Print *PTSD Symptoms Seek and Find Puzzles* (from web site)

Print these questions on slips of paper or index cards:

1. What is PTSD?
2. What does it look like?
3. How did they get this way?
4. What is the person feeling?
5. How long will it take them to get better?
6. How can I help?

Print the letters PTSD on separate sheets of poster board. Display them in your meeting room.

Procedures

1. Point to the PTSD posters. Tell kids they will be learning about PTSD. Ask if anyone knows what it means.
2. Pass out copies of the “PTSD Symptoms Seek and Find” and pencils. As children are finding the words, help to give definitions for some of the words that are unclear. This will help them to see what symptoms people with PTSD may have. (You may want to pair older and younger children.)
3. After everyone has completed their puzzles, set up the classroom so that the children can face you or whoever is answering the questions. This will be an interview type setting. Provide six children with a preprinted question. Instruct children to ask their questions in order as numbered on the card and then share the answers below.

What is PTSD? PTSD stands for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Let’s look at what each word means.

Post means after something really bad happened, the person started to feel bad. Something may have happened to them or they may have seen something happen to someone else.

Traumatic means something that is very, very upsetting. Traumatic things can give you bad dreams and even make you not feel well.

Stress makes your heart beat faster and puts a strain on your body mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Disorder means something is wrong and not working like it usually does.

What does it look like?

Living with PTSD can be very hard for the person who has it and for their family and friends. PTSD can make people GRUMPY when you think they should be NICE. It makes them SAD when they should be HAPPY. It makes them TIRED when they should be EXCITED.

How did they get this way?

People with PTSD have been through an upsetting event. They either went through it, or saw someone else go through it, or they were faced with something that they thought would hurt them or even kill them. When the event happened they were very scared, felt like there was nothing they could do or they were shocked by what happened.

ASK: What are some situations that might cause you to be scared like this? (EXAMPLES: natural disasters such as storms, tornados, floods, house burning, car wrecks, or other accidents.)

ASK: Are there people with specific jobs that might suffer from PTSD? (EXAMPLES: soldiers (military personnel), firefighters, police, EMTs, doctors, nurses, etc.)

What is the person feeling?

People with PTSD keep remembering the event over and over again both when they are awake and when they are dreaming. Sometimes they think the event is occurring again. They might get really scared again when they see something that reminds them of the event, or maybe even a certain smell will remind them of it.

Those with PTSD try to avoid everything that reminds them of an event. If they were in a car wreck, they may not like riding in a car or going past the place where the accident happened. If there was a bad storm, they might not like when other storms come along and they may try to hide where they can't see or hear what is going on around them. If they were with certain people, they may try to avoid them as well, not that it was their fault but it just reminds them of what happened. Sometimes they can't remember exactly what did happen. Sometimes they aren't able to do things like they did before. Sometimes they aren't able to feel a certain way, like show affection toward someone that they used to, not because it's that person's fault but because of their own feelings being mixed up. Sometimes they think that things will never happen, like they won't ever get married (if they weren't), or have children, or get a new job. They have a feeling of hopelessness.

They may have problems falling asleep or staying asleep. They might get angry and even yell at other people and threaten to hurt them. They have difficulty concentrating and sometime get surprised really easily.

How long will it take them to get better?

It can take a long time to better from PTSD. The good news is that they *can* get better, but it might take lots and lots of time. They need love and understanding.

How can I help?

People with PTSD need love and understanding. They need to know that they are not alone and that PTSD isn't their fault. No one caused them to have PTSD, it happened because of the bad things that happened. It's normal for them to feel that way. It is best not to ask them a lot of questions, because sometimes it makes it harder for them. If you have questions, you can ask another adult about it. If they ask to be left alone or for you not to do something, try to do what they ask.

4. Lead in prayer for people with PTSD.

Optional: Print *PTSD Mission Projects for Children* from web site. Complete selected project.