

**Link to Brainline article** TBI and PTSD: [Navigating The Perfect Storm](https://www.brainline.org/article/tbi-and-ptsd-navigating-perfect-storm):  
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## What's unique about PTSD?

Symptoms of PTSD include:

- Unwanted and repeated memories of the life-threatening event
- Flashbacks where the event is relived and person temporarily loses touch with reality
- Avoidance of people, places, sights, or sounds that are reminders
- Feelings of detachment from people, even family, and emotional numbness
- Shame about what happened and was done
- Survivor guilt with loss of friends or comrades
- Hypervigilance or constant alertness for threats.

Individuals with PTSD are at increased risk for depression, physical injuries, substance abuse, and sleep problems, which in turn can affect thoughts and actions. These risk factors also occur with brain injury.

PTSD is a mental disorder, but the associated stress can cause physical damage. TBI is a neurological disorder caused by trauma to the brain. It can cause a wide range of impairments and changes in physical abilities, thinking and learning, vision, hearing, smell, taste, social skills, behaviors, and communication. The brain is so complex, the possible effects of a traumatic injury are extensive and different for each person.

When PTSD and TBI coexist, it's often difficult to sort out what's going on. Changes in cognition such as memory and concentration, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue are common with both diagnoses. One basically feeds and reinforces the other, so it's a complicated mix — it's the perfect storm. It may help to consider and compare changes commonly seen with TBI and PTSD. ....

## .... Talking about the Trauma

**TBI:** The person may retell an experience repetitively in excruciating detail to anyone who will listen. Such repetition may be symptomatic of a cognitive communication disorder, but it may also be due to a memory impairment. Events and stories are repeated endlessly to the frustration and exasperation of caregivers, friends, and families who have heard it all before.

**PTSD:** Avoidance and reluctance to talk about the trauma of what was seen and done is a classic symptom of PTSD, especially among combat veterans.