



INVISIBLE DISABILITIES ARE REAL

What is an Invisible Disability?

Invisible disabilities are those that are not readily visible. Examples include: having a seizure-related medical condition, heart condition, diabetes, blind with guiding vision, mental health related disabilities such as anxiety, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Injury (PTSD/I), or being on the autism spectrum - none of which are visually apparent.

People with invisible disabilities may behave in a way that observers don't understand. The fact is, this person is dealing with an episode related to their invisible disability, with potential consequences to them that are very real. (Dr. Manuela Joannou, Medical Director of Project Trauma Support, Perth, Ontario)

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Injury?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI), usually follows an incident or incidents that were life-threatening, that caused loss of life and/or major injuries. Individuals who are subjected to multiple incidents have a higher risk of developing PTSD/I but it can develop from a single incident. PTSD/I can also be the result of a cumulative effect of many life-threatening incidents. If you are a first responder or a member of the military you may expect to have several hundreds of such incidents over your career. Training and preparation for such incidents can help but does not always prevent PTSD/I. (Dr. Manuela Joannou, Medical Director of Project Trauma Support, Perth, Ontario)

“When a severe episode of PTSD/I is triggered, an individual could be dealing with the affect for hours, for days, weeks and with severe episodes longer than a month.”

(Shirley Jew, Canadian Veteran and Jason Burd, First Responder, both diagnosed with PTSD/I)

It is important to note that PTSD/I does not indicate weakness. In fact, the individual is experiencing normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Every person has their own individual limit of what they can cope with, and most people who have been exposed to a severe enough traumatic event will develop symptoms. (Dr. Manuela Joannou, Medical Director of Project Trauma Support, Perth, Ontario)

What are Triggers?

Triggers are sensations; they could be any type of sensory input, whether they are a sight, a sound or a smell that can cause someone to have a strong emotional reaction. It might remind them of an incident that they were involved in. Triggers can cause a lot of fear, sadness, or provoke anger. These emotional reactions can seem to other people to be over-the-top or excessive - yet, the individual is re-living what caused their PTSD/I. (Dr. Manuela Joannou, Medical Director of Project Trauma Support, Perth, Ontario)