

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Review 25

van Emmerik, A. A. P., Kamphuis, J. H., Hulsbosch, A. M., & Emmelkamp, P. M. G. (2002). Single session debriefing after psychological trauma: A meta-analysis. *The Lancet*, 360(9335), 766–771. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12241834>.

Objectives	Examine the effectiveness of single-session debriefing (administered within 1 month of the event) in preventing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and non-PTSD psychopathology.
Studies Included	Seven international studies published from 1996 to 2000
Participants in the Studies	Those exposed to trauma within the past month, including police officers, women who experienced a miscarriage, road traffic accident victims, victims of violent crime, or those exposed to combat
Settings	Settings were not reported for all the studies.
Outcomes	PTSD symptoms, anxiety, depression
Limitations of the Studies	The meta-analysis includes only a small number of studies because of the authors' exclusion criteria. Some studies had nonrandomization of participants to intervention and control groups; some studies did not report preintervention assessment data, preventing the analysis of within-effect size changes in symptoms; victims not at risk for development of PTSD may confound or obscure a true beneficial effect of intervention.

Results

The results show that critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), administered within 1 month of a traumatic event, has no efficacy in reducing symptoms of PTSD and other trauma-related symptoms and, in fact, suggest it has a detrimental effect. Moreover, CISD was not effective in treating anxiety or depression.