

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

### Review 3

Cloitre, M. (2009). Effective psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder: A review and critique. *CNS Spectrums*, 14(Suppl 1), 32–43. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19169192>.

<b>Objectives</b>	Examine interventions for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in populations experiencing traumatization.
<b>Studies Included</b>	Sixty U.S. and international studies published from 1989 to 2008
<b>Participants in the Studies</b>	Adults diagnosed with PTSD, including victims of natural disaster, motor-vehicle accidents, childhood sexual abuse, terrorism/civil conflict, adult sexual assault, physical assault, combat, comorbid severe mental illness, mixed trauma, occupational trauma, interpersonal violence, political detainees, genocide witnesses, refugees, 9/11 World Trade Center disaster workers, police, loss of a loved one, 9/11 Pentagon service staff
<b>Settings</b>	Settings were not reported for all the studies.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Changes in PTSD symptoms
<b>Limitations of the Studies</b>	Small sample sizes, lack of power to detect differences between active treatments; high attrition rates; stringent exclusionary criteria for entrance into the studies, which limits generalizability of results; lack of analysis of intent-to-treat participants, which limits accurate assessment of the treatment benefits

### Results

The effectiveness of the following therapies was examined in the treatment of PTSD symptoms: exposure therapy; eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR); cognitive therapy; stress inoculation therapy (SIT); relaxation techniques; problem-focused interventions; and supportive counseling.

- Exposure therapy, EMDR, SIT, and cognitive therapy are superior to wait-list or pill placebo condition.
- Relaxation techniques and problem-focused interventions yielded significant improvement in PTSD symptoms but are inferior to exposure therapy, cognitive therapy, and a combination of the two.
- There is a small advantage to the combination of exposure therapy and cognitive therapy to either therapy alone.

Overall, there is substantial evidence that psychosocial interventions provide relief of PTSD symptoms. However, even though there are numerous studies comparing EMDR to exposure therapy and/or cognitive therapy, there is still not enough evidence to determine the type of therapy that is most beneficial.