

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Why Untreated Trauma Keeps Recovery Out of Reach



What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition that develops after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event—combat, assault, accidents, or abuse. People with PTSD are haunted by intrusive memories, intense anxiety, and an overwhelming need to avoid anything that reminds them of the trauma.

What Does it Look Like?

- **Hypervigilance**
They're always on edge—scanning for danger, startling easily, and unable to relax even when they're safe.
- **Nightmares and Sleep Disruption**
Sleep becomes a battlefield. Nightmares replay the trauma, and they may wake in a panic.
- **Emotional Withdrawal**
They shut down emotionally—numb, distant, unable to connect with the people who love them most.
- **Avoidance Behaviors**
They go to extreme lengths to avoid places, people, or activities that once brought them joy.

How Does PTSD Contribute to Relapse?

Your loved one isn't using because they're weak. For someone with PTSD, the memories don't stay in the past—they intrude without warning, hijacking the present. Substances become the only way to quiet the noise.

- 1) **Self-Medication Becomes Survival**
Alcohol and drugs offer immediate relief from flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety that feel otherwise unbearable.
- 2) **Short-Term Programs Lack Depth**
Processing trauma takes time—a 30-day program can't undo years of unresolved pain.
- 3) **Without Treating Trauma, Relapse is Likely**
They return to the same intrusive memories and hyperarousal with no new coping skills, instead resorting to substance use.

Prevalence:
6–8% of U.S. adults¹

Co-Occurrence:
3–60% develop a substance use disorder in their lifetime²

Relapse Risk:
2–4x more likely to develop SUDs than those without PTSD³

Sources: ¹ NIMH, *National Comorbidity Survey Replication*. ² PMC, *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders*. ³ Kessler et al., *National Comorbidity Survey*.

Treating PTSD and Chronic Relapse at Burning Tree Ranch

Trauma doesn't heal on a schedule—and neither does the addiction it fuels. Our **long-term, progress-based model** gives clients the extended time needed to safely process traumatic memories and build coping skills that actually stick. This work can't be rushed: confronting trauma requires trust, stability, and months of consistent therapeutic support.

Clients advance through the program when they demonstrate genuine change in how they **manage trauma responses** and stress—not when a calendar says they're done.



“Trauma survivors have spent years building walls to protect themselves. You can't tear those down in 30 days. The real work happens when they finally feel safe enough to face what they've been running from.”

 **Meghan Bohlman, LPC-S, LCDC, EMDR-Trained**
Executive Clinical Director, Burning Tree Ranch



Dual Diagnosis Treatment for PTSD Co-Occurring with Addiction

When PTSD and addiction occur together, treating only one leads to relapse. Substances temporarily quiet the intrusive memories—but they also prevent the brain from naturally processing trauma.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**
Without treating the underlying disorder, the change is temporary.
- **Building Life Skills**
Practical skills are required to manage emotions without substance use.
- **Providing Enough Time**
It takes time to replace deeply-ingrained patterns with new ones.

Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

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