

What is PTSD?

PTSD can be a chronic and devastating illness that severely impacts quality of life and is associated with high rates of disability and suicide. Sufferers often struggle to maintain healthy relationships with work, friends, and family.

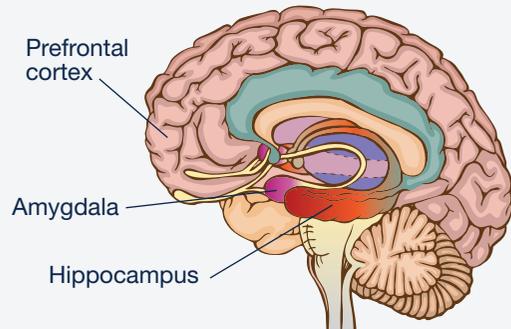
“One of the biggest things with PTSD was a sense of hopelessness. I want to see my brothers and sisters get the help that I got.”—Retired Marine and study participant Nicholas Blackston



PTSD can be caused by war, sexual assault, childhood abuse, torture, violent crime, accidents, natural disasters, and other severely stressful events. PTSD patients often avoid expressing their emotions and experience persistent fear and hyperarousal. Patterns of avoidance and withdrawal reinforce the painful memories instead of extinguishing them.

PTSD is a worldwide public health problem. 6.8% of Americans—more than 20 million people—suffer from PTSD at some point in their lifetime. In countries with widespread conflict, the frequency of PTSD among civilians can be far greater. Nearly one in seven U.S. service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffers from PTSD.

PTSD involves changes in the brain. Studies show that PTSD patients have decreased activity in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex (brain areas associated with memory and learning) and increased activity in the amygdala (associated with fear).



What is MDMA-assisted psychotherapy?

MDMA-assisted psychotherapy is an innovative treatment that combines psychotherapy with the administration of MDMA, which may catalyze the therapeutic process. The drug—MDMA—is not in itself the therapy, but rather a powerful tool for both the clinician and PTSD sufferer. In this method, biological and psychotherapeutic approaches are applied together.

How does MDMA-assisted psychotherapy work?

MDMA-assisted psychotherapy doesn't just help patients manage their PTSD—it may show them a way out. MDMA's unique ability to reduce fear and increase interpersonal trust could make it ideally suited as an adjunct to psychotherapy for PTSD.

MDMA significantly decreases activity in the left amygdala (associated with fear and traumatic memories). It can also increase the range of positive emotions toward self and others, and increase interpersonal trust without causing sensory distortions or inhibiting access to difficult emotions.

Studies suggest that MDMA could increase the effectiveness of psychotherapy by strengthening the alliance between therapist and patient.

In the context of psychotherapy in a controlled setting, MDMA can make it easier for people with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD to confront their traumatic memories, often for the first time.



Do existing PTSD treatments work?

Existing treatments may not fully address the root cause of PTSD. Only two selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)—paroxetine (Paxil®) and sertraline (Zoloft®)—are currently marketed as PTSD medications in the U.S. These drugs must be taken daily in order to alleviate some PTSD symptoms, and even then do not work well enough for many patients.

At least one out of three PTSD patients do not respond adequately to established psychotherapies. Cognitive behavioral therapies (CBTs) such as prolonged exposure (PE) and cognitive processing therapy, psychodynamic therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and other psychotherapeutic treatments for PTSD are not enough for some patients.

Even after treatment, over a third of PTSD patients still have symptoms several times a week after 10 years.



“This is serious research addressing pressing public health problems. My hope is that our work will lead to FDA approval for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy to be widely available to patients who suffer from PTSD.”

—Co-therapist Annie Mithoefer, B.S.N.

In MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, MDMA is only administered a few times, and even a single session can have a profound effect. Conventional pharmaceutical treatments require patients to take drugs daily for months, years, or even their entire lives.



Experimental treatment protocol

What is MDMA?

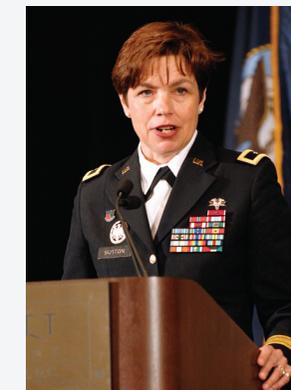
MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is a synthetic compound widely recognized for its ability to decrease fear and defensiveness while increasing trust and empathy. MDMA promotes the release of oxytocin and prolactin, hormones associated with trust and bonding, helping patients discuss their painful memories openly and honestly.

MDMA makes it easier for patients to be comfortable discussing difficult emotions and memories. MDMA can help open a window between the extremes of fear and avoidance in patients undergoing psychotherapy for PTSD—and hold it open long enough for them to step through.

Are there risks to MDMA-assisted psychotherapy?

MDMA has been approved for use in clinical research and no drug is without risk. MDMA can increase body temperature and heart rate, but these effects are transient and pose minimal risk for otherwise healthy individuals. MDMA has been administered to over 750 human subjects in clinical studies. For more information about the risks of MDMA, visit mdmmaps.org/faq.

In a November 19, 2012 article in The New York Times, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Loree Sutton, founding director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, stated “When it comes to



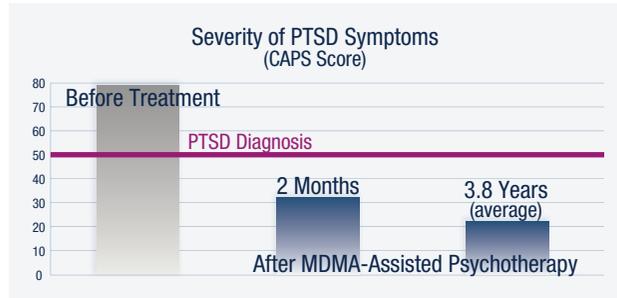
the health and well-being of those who serve, we should leave our politics at the door and not be afraid to follow the data. There's now an evidence base for this MDMA therapy and a plausible story about what may be going on in the brain to account for the effects.”

Can MDMA-assisted psychotherapy help?

“It’s basically like years of therapy in two or three hours. You can’t understand it unless you’ve experienced it.”
 —Former Army Ranger and study participant, quoted on Military.com

A paper published in July 2010 in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology* reported that 83% of subjects with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD receiving MDMA-assisted psychotherapy experienced a significant drop in the severity of their PTSD symptoms in comparison to placebo, as measured by the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS).

A long-term follow-up published in October 2012 showed that these benefits were sustained an average of 45 months (about 3.8 years) later.



Additional studies are being conducted in the United States, Israel, and Canada. If results continue to be promising, MDMA-assisted psychotherapy could be legally available by 2021—provided researchers find the necessary funding.



“A useful analogy might compare MDMA to antibiotics. A short course of antibiotics simply controls bacteria long enough to let the immune system take over and do its own healing. MDMA appears to be a catalyst for another kind of internal healing process.”—Principal Investigator Michael Mithoefer, M.D.

More information is available at maps.org.
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“PTSD is never a solitary event for the person who has it; like an infectious disease, the ripple effects go on and on. The suffering spreads to their family and their communities.... Our understanding of the neuroscience of trauma treatment is increasing rapidly. People who have experienced MDMA-assisted psychotherapy have been able to reconsolidate traumatic memories into other parts of their brain.”—Richard Rockefeller, M.D.

“The wisest, most loving part of myself got to heal the most wounded part of myself.”—Study participant Rachel Hope

“PTSD frequently robs the individual of the ability to grieve. MDMA’s ability to reduce fear can allow people to explore their pain with trust and confidence.”—Principal Investigator Marcela Ot’alora, M.A., L.P.C.



“I came to MAPS humbled by the demands of life and finished the program humbled by its mysteries. I am awed by the tremendous amount of resources summoned by the MAPS team to aid in the healing of treatment resistant PTSD.”
 —Study participant Elizabeth Matthews, M.A., L.P.C.

“I can now acknowledge the incredible satisfaction of knowing the multi-generational emotional, physical, and sexual torture, and suicide has ended. With me. My three children and granddaughter are free of the incalculable debt of hate.”—Anonymous study participant



“With the careful combination of MDMA and the compassionate care of a trained team of therapists, we’re succeeding in showing the world that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy can be a powerful tool for healing and personal growth.”—MAPS Founder and Executive Director Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

mdmaptsd.org

MAPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit research and educational organization. Since our founding in 1986, MAPS has supported research into the risks and benefits of MDMA, including treating PTSD with MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. MAPS is also sponsoring research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for the treatment of social anxiety in adults on the autism spectrum, and for anxiety related to life-threatening illness.

The continued expansion of research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy relies on the generosity of individual donors. Please consider making a contribution today at mdmaptsd.org.

MAPS has been covered extensively in major media. Recent stories can be found in these outlets:

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MAPS

One out of three people suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) do not respond adequately to treatment.

Can MDMA-assisted psychotherapy help?



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