

# DSM-IV & DSM-IV-TR: Acute Stress Disorder

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When an individual who has been exposed to a traumatic event develops [anxiety symptoms](#), reexperiencing of the event, and avoidance of stimuli related to the event lasting less than four weeks they may be suffering from this [Anxiety Disorder](#).

## **Diagnostic criteria for 308.3 Acute Stress Disorder** **([cautionary statement](#))**

A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

- (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
- (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror

B. Either while experiencing or after experiencing the distressing event, the individual has three (or more) of the following dissociative symptoms:

- (1) a subjective sense of numbing, detachment, or absence of emotional responsiveness
- (2) a reduction in awareness of his or her surroundings (e.g., "being in a daze")
- (3) [derealization](#)
- (4) [depersonalization](#)
- (5) [dissociative amnesia](#) (i.e., inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma)

C. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in at least one of the following ways: recurrent images, thoughts, dreams, [illusions](#), [flashback](#) episodes, or a sense of reliving the experience; or distress on exposure to reminders of the traumatic event.

D. Marked avoidance of stimuli that arouse recollections of the trauma (e.g., thoughts, feelings, conversations, activities, places, people).

E. Marked symptoms of anxiety or increased arousal (e.g., difficulty sleeping, [irritability](#), poor concentration, [hypervigilance](#), exaggerated [startle response](#), motor restlessness).

F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or impairs the individual's ability to pursue some necessary task, such as obtaining necessary assistance or mobilizing personal resources by telling family members about the traumatic experience.

G. The disturbance lasts for a minimum of 2 days and a maximum of 4 weeks and occurs within 4 weeks of the traumatic event.

H. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a [substance](#) (e.g., a

drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition, is not better accounted for by [Brief Psychotic Disorder](#), and is not merely an exacerbation of a preexisting [Axis I](#) or [Axis II](#) disorder.

from the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth Edition](#).

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