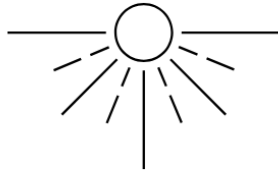


THE HOLISTIC COUNSELOR PODCAST



A LEARNING & REFLECTION GUIDE

# Understanding Complex PTSD

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Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

READ / LISTEN / REFLECT

Diana S. Rice

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FROM THE MIC TO THE COMMUNITY

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

# Begin where you are.

Feeling constantly on guard or finding trust difficult can leave you searching for an explanation. Learning about complex trauma may help you prepare a conversation with a clinician who can understand your experience in context.

## Listen alongside this guide

Conversations from The Holistic Counselor Podcast to explore with these pages.

## EPISODE 4

## Childhood adversity and complex trauma

Diana discusses childhood adversity and complex trauma; use the source links for diagnostic distinctions.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

## EPISODE 118

## Parts work, trauma, and faith with Lynn Kearney

Lynn Kearney discusses Internal Family Systems, complex trauma, and faith.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

## IN THESE PAGES

Understanding the topic / Make room for your questions / Keep learning. Find support.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

# Understanding the topic

## What the term means

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder includes symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and other lasting problems. These can include trouble managing emotions, a deeply negative view of oneself, and problems in relationships. It can follow repeated or prolonged trauma. A history of trauma alone does not mean someone has this condition.

## Why professionals may use different words

The World Health Organization lists it as a diagnosis in the ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision). It is not listed on its own in the DSM-5-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision). These are two systems clinicians use to name mental health conditions.

## Support begins with your needs

An assessment can explore symptoms, current safety, strengths, and other possible explanations. You should not have to prove your pain with a trauma score or disclose every detail to begin asking for care.

## Research and perspective

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs explains the overlap and differences between PTSD and complex PTSD. A clinician can help you understand which description, if any, fits your symptoms and what support may help.

## Do I need to know the diagnosis before I can ask for help?

You can describe the difficulties you want help with first: feeling on guard, relationships, sleep, or managing strong emotions. A clinician can assess possible explanations with you. You can ask about pacing and what information is needed before discussing painful details.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

# Make room for your questions

Choose a question that feels useful today. A few notes in your own words can be enough. Your reflections stay with you; this website does not collect them.

Type in the spaces below, or print and write by hand.

**Which present-day difficulties would I like support with?**

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**What helps me feel more settled or connected?**

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**What would I need a therapist to understand about pacing?**

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## Questions for a conversation

What training do you have in complex trauma?

How do you assess post-traumatic stress disorder and related concerns?

How will we plan for times when I feel overwhelmed?

Ask a licensed clinician about an assessment. You can describe current problems without starting with detailed accounts of the past.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

# Keep learning. Find support.

## OPTIONAL FAITH REFLECTION

Is there a trusted person who can hold both my faith and my questions with care?

## Sources and further reading

Editorial revision: October 13, 2026. The linked authorities provide current rules, services, and evidence.

[1. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for post-traumatic stress disorder: Complex post-traumatic stress disorder](#)

Wherever you are reading from, your culture, language, beliefs, access needs, and daily circumstances belong in the conversation. Professional titles and services vary between countries. Sources and directories identify their own regions; a local health service or professional regulator can explain the options where you live.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

These guides offer general education for adults. They do not provide personal therapy, diagnosis, medical advice, or a professional relationship with Diana. A qualified professional who can practice where you live can help you apply information to your circumstances. Changes to prescribed care belong in a conversation with your treating professional.

[Read the full educational disclaimer](#)

## FROM THE MIC TO THE COMMUNITY

# Keep exploring.



Read, listen, and return  
at your own pace.

Scan for this guide and its episode links.

[theholisticcounselor.com/resources](https://theholisticcounselor.com/resources)

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### IF YOU NEED URGENT SUPPORT

If you need urgent emotional support in the U.S. or its territories, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers phone, text, and chat support. For immediate danger or a medical emergency, use your local emergency number (911 in the U.S.). Elsewhere, contact a crisis service in your country. The podcast and its messages are not monitored for urgent care.

[988lifeline.org/chat/](https://988lifeline.org/chat/)

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