

What makes some women able to resist or recover psychologically from assault-related trauma?

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Credit: George Hodan/Public Domain

In a study of 159 women who had been exposed to at least one assault-related potentially traumatic event, 30% developed major depressive disorder, which may be attributed to self-blame common to survivors of assault. Fewer women (21%) developed chronic posttraumatic stress disorder.

Mastery—the degree to which an individual perceives control and influence over life circumstances—and social support were most prevalent in [women](#) who did not develop a trauma-related psychiatric disorder after assault exposure, while mastery and posttraumatic growth were related to psychiatric recovery. These factors were less established in women with a current psychiatric disorder.

The *Brain and Behavior* findings have significance for the health and wellbeing of women, and for identifying individuals who are most in need of resilience-promoting interventions. "Women exposed to assault may present with post-trauma depression in lieu of [posttraumatic stress disorder](#). Resilience factors like mastery and social support may attenuate the deleterious effects of an assault," said lead author Heather L. Rusch. "The next step is to determine the extent that these factors may be fostered through clinical intervention."

More information: Rusch, H. L., Shvil, E., Szanton, S. L., Neria, Y. and Gill, J. M. (2015), Determinants of psychological resistance and recovery among women exposed to assaultive trauma. *Brain and Behavior*. [DOI: 10.1002/brb3.322](https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.322)

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