

Rapid transitions seen from neutral to negative emotional states in PTSD

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Individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) undergo rapid transitions between neutral and negative emotional states, which are intensified by emotional numbing symptom severity, according to a study [published](#) online April 16 in *JAMA Network Open*.

In a cross-sectional study, Nachshon Korem, Ph.D., from the Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, and colleagues examined whether individuals with PTSD experience a more pronounced shift between neutral and [negative emotional states](#). Data were included from 1,440 trauma-exposed individuals who were categorized as having probable PTSD (pPTSD) or as trauma-exposed controls.

Hierarchical Bayesian modeling was used to fit a five-parameter [logistic regression](#) to analyze the valence rating of images. The curve's slope was compared between groups and its association with the severity of emotional numbing symptoms was examined. The study included 35 images with a valence range from highly negative to neutral; the emotional responses of the participants was assessed using the rating of these images.

The researchers found that the pPTSD group had a steeper slope than controls (mean slope difference, -0.255). There was a robust association seen between the slope and emotional numbing severity across all individuals (mean additive value, 0.100). The association between emotional numbing and transition sharpness was confirmed in an additional analysis controlling for age (mean additive value, 0.108), with no evidence found of an age-related association.

"The steeper slope in emotional transitions holds notable clinical implications, directing attention toward developing targeted

interventions that focus on emotion regulation or mindfulness strategies to modulate this pattern of high-threshold, low-tolerance responses," the authors write.

More information: Nachshon Korem et al, Emotional State Transitions in Trauma-Exposed Individuals With and Without Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.6813](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.6813)

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