

# WHO GETS PTSD?

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For more information about the SAGA program to help veterans with PTSD see  
<http://www.sift.net/research/health-and-telemedicine/saga>



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# SAGA

WHO GETS PTSD?

IF ALL THESE PEOPLE EXPERIENCED THE SAME HORRIFIC EVENT, WHO WOULD GET PTSD?

THE ANSWER: WE DON'T KNOW.

ALWAYS BEING ON ALERT

ANXIETY

BAD DREAMS

MOST EVERYONE HAS SYMPTOMS OF PTSD RIGHT AFTER TRAUMA. PTSD DEVELOPS WHEN SYMPTOMS DON'T GO AWAY.

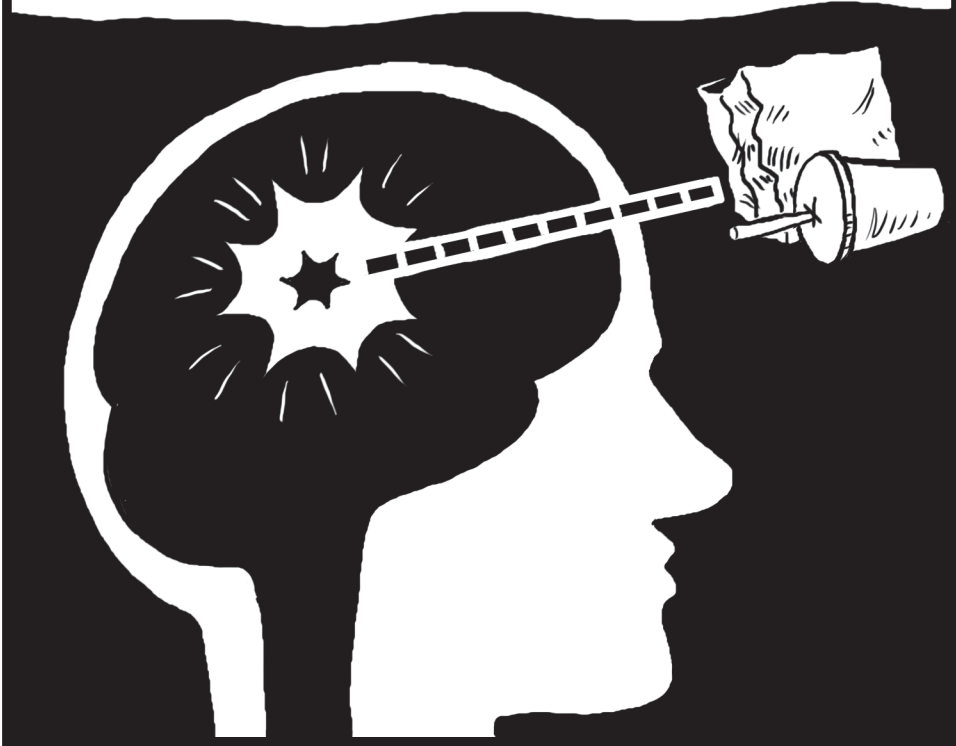
ONE THING THAT SEEMS TO MAKE PTSD MORE LIKELY IS NOT HAVING TIME AFTER THE TRAUMA TO PROCESS IT WITHOUT ADDITIONAL STRESS.

COMBAT IS ONE OF THE TRAUMAS MOST LIKELY TO LEAD TO PTSD.

SOLDIERS IN COMBAT ZONES OFTEN GO FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER, SO THEIR BRAINS MAY NOT GET A CHANCE TO FILE AWAY THE TRAUMATIC MEMORIES.



NO STRESS AFTER A TRAUMA SEEMS TO ALLOW THE BRAIN TO PUT IT INTO CONTEXT. AFTER A TRAUMA, THE BRAIN LINKS MANY ASPECTS OF THE EVENT TO INTENSE FEAR. FOR EXAMPLE, AFTER A ROADSIDE BOMB EXPERIENCE YOUR BRAIN MAY LINK ALL ROADSIDE TRASH AS DANGEROUS.



IT SEEMS THAT IF YOU GET TIME AWAY FROM STRESS AND ADDITIONAL TRAUMA, HARMFUL MEMORY LINKS START TO FADE ON THEIR OWN.



IF YOU DEVELOP PTSD THE LINKS MAY REMAIN AND BECOME VERY STRONG, SO PERFECTLY SAFE ROADSIDE TRASH IN THE U.S. CAN SEEM HORRIBLE.



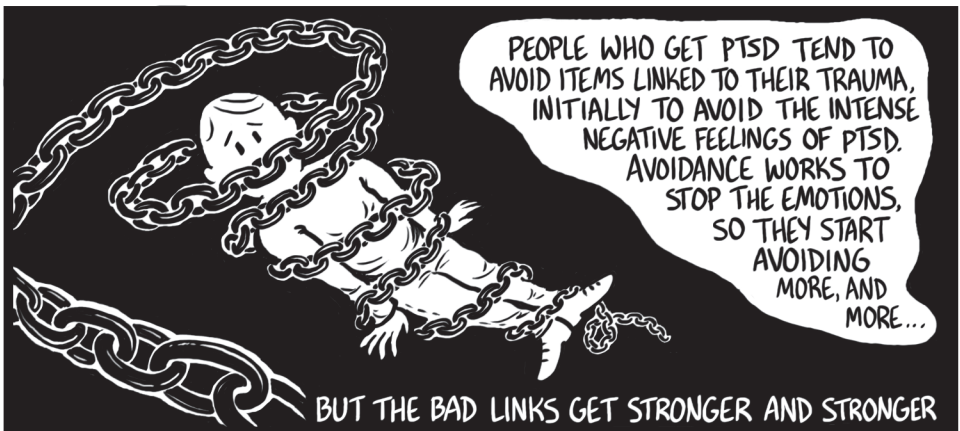
PART OF THE PTSD DISEASE IS THAT THESE BAD LINKS BETWEEN ASPECTS OF THE TRAUMA AND SAFE EVERYDAY THINGS BECOME ENTRENCHED AND HARD TO GET RID OF. YOUR BRAIN MAY ALSO GENERALIZE LINKS TO NEW THINGS THAT ARE SIMILAR.



THE BAD LINKS BECOME CHAINS KEEPING YOU FROM NORMAL BEHAVIOR. IF YOU STOP DRIVING BECAUSE OF ROADSIDE TRASH, THE LINKS BETWEEN TRAUMA, TRASH AND INTENSE FEAR NEVER GO AWAY.



THE BRAIN CHOOSES HOW TO CONNECT MEMORIES. SOMETIMES IT DOES IT WRONG.



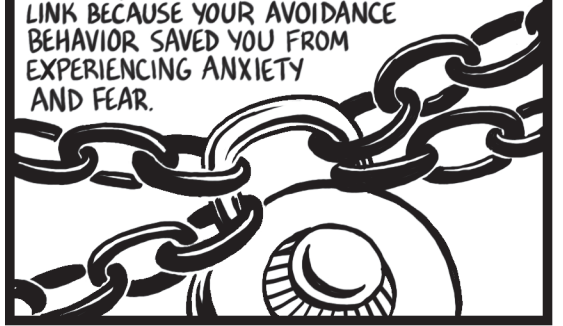
PEOPLE WHO GET PTSD TEND TO AVOID ITEMS LINKED TO THEIR TRAUMA, INITIALLY TO AVOID THE INTENSE NEGATIVE FEELINGS OF PTSD. AVOIDANCE WORKS TO STOP THE EMOTIONS, SO THEY START AVOIDING MORE, AND MORE...

BUT THE BAD LINKS GET STRONGER AND STRONGER

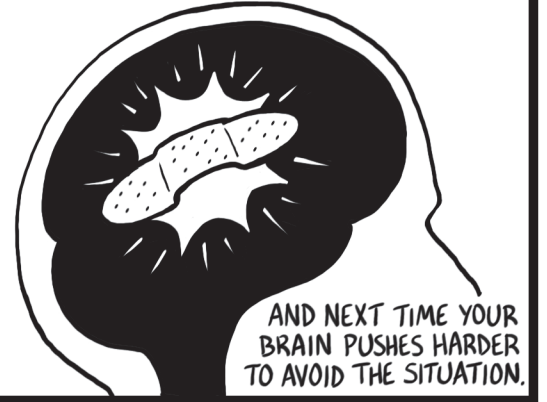
BECAUSE AVOIDANCE PUSHES YOU AWAY FROM YOUR FEARS...  
YOUR BRAIN DOES **NOT** LEARN THOSE FEARS DON'T MAKE SENSE.



IN FACT, IT STRENGTHENS THE LINK BECAUSE YOUR AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOR SAVED YOU FROM EXPERIENCING ANXIETY AND FEAR.

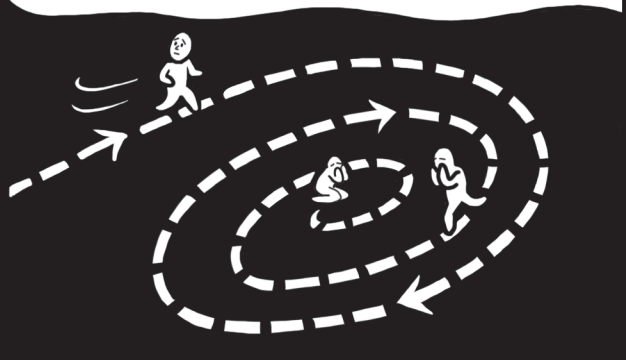


SO YOUR BRAIN THINKS IT IS DOING A GOOD JOB, EVEN IF THE DANGER IS NOT REAL.

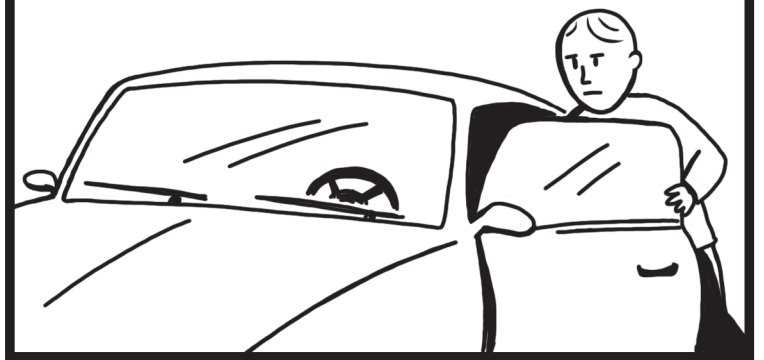


AND NEXT TIME YOUR BRAIN PUSHES HARDER TO AVOID THE SITUATION.

MANY PEOPLE WIND UP IN A PTSD HOLDING PATTERN, NEVER GETTING BETTER.

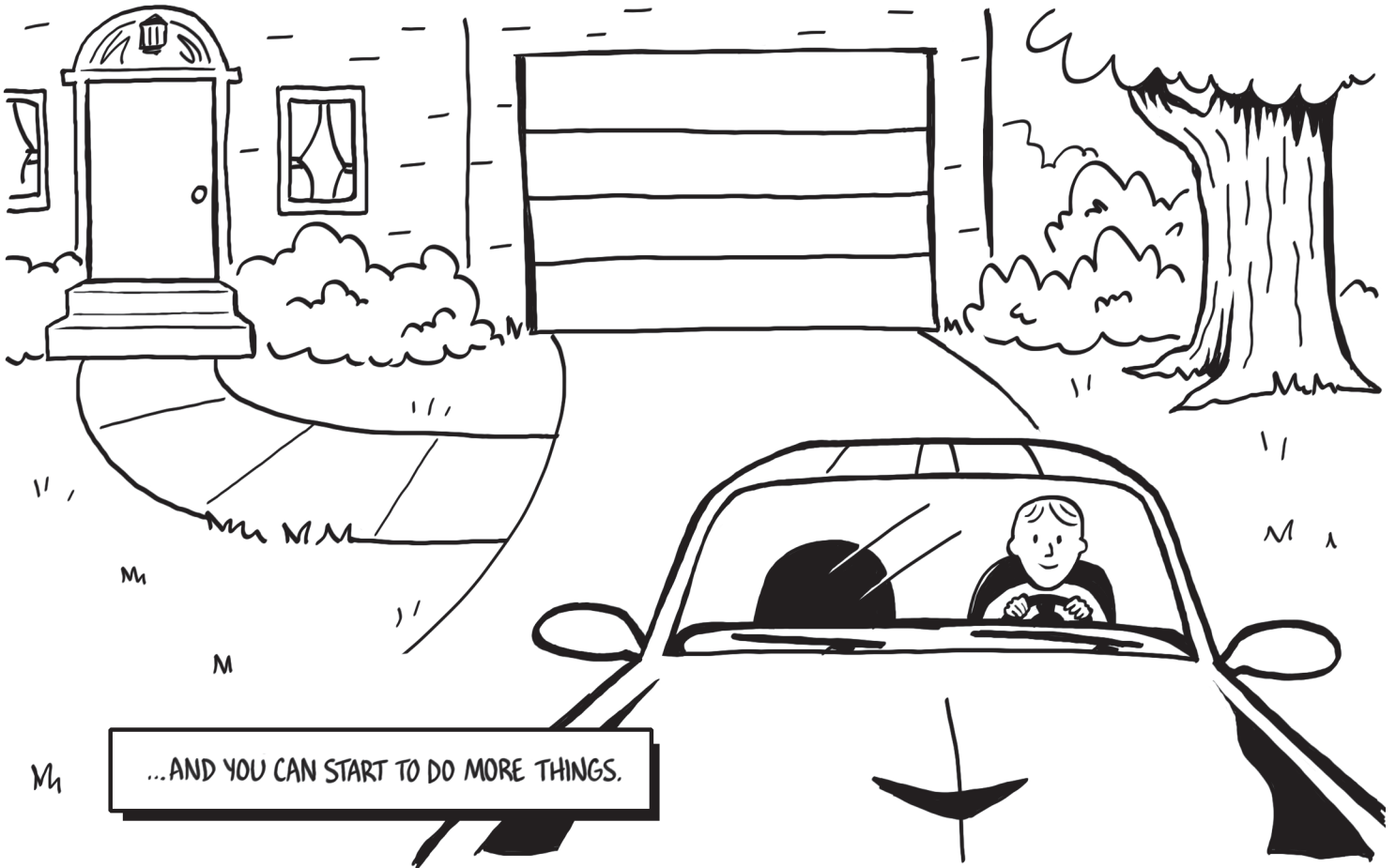


PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE TRAUMA BUT **DON'T** GET PTSD NEVER GOT CAUGHT IN THE AVOIDANCE CYCLE SO THE FEAR STARTS TO DIE.



IF YOU CAN BREAK THE CYCLE AND STOP AVOIDING, EVENTUALLY NEGATIVE FEELINGS START TO LESSEN...





FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PTSD AND COMICS GO TO [SAGA.SIFT.NET](http://SAGA.SIFT.NET)