

DRS. OZ AND ROIZEN

Traumatic events can trigger stress disorder, but it’s treatable

MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D.
AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.

Q. A few weeks ago, while trying to avoid a deer, I swerved wildly and just missed a head-on collision with another car. I ended up in a ditch, unhurt but shaken. Since then, I can’t sleep more than a few hours at a time. I get flashbacks and break into sweats. Sometimes during the day, just walking to the soda machine at work, I have to stop to catch my breath. What’s happening?
A. You don’t have to be a wounded Iraqi warrior to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and that sounds like what you are describing. Anyone who has experienced a traumatic event involving the threat of injury or death is a candidate.

PTSD is called a disorder because it changes — disorders — how certain hormones and brain chemicals, called neurotransmitters, carry information and respond to stress. Not everyone who has a similar experience will react the same way; whether you develop PTSD depends on your genetic predispositions, your social situation (isolation makes it harder to process the event) and your physical health going into the trauma. This is a physical condition, so don’t be ashamed and don’t try to shrug off the feelings. We urge you to see a specialist — the sooner you get properly diagnosed, the sooner you can begin treatment and regain control of your life and your relationships with those around you.

The good news is that therapy, which may mean medications, cognitive behavioral therapy and counseling therapy (specific to your experience), or a combination of all three, really does work. You won’t feel better overnight, but you will learn how to cope with the memory of what happened and take back control of your life.

Without prompt treatment, symptoms can get more intense and harder to handle. But with treatment, you can begin to get rid of chronic sleep deprivation and stress, and avoid a cascade of related health problems, from high blood pressure and heart disease to diabetes and depression.

Dr. Mehmet Oz is host of “The Dr. Oz Show,” and Dr. Michael Roizen is chief medical officer at the Cleveland Clinic Wellness Institute. Submit your health question to doctoroz.com.

KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

TIP OF THE WEEK

Finding relief for grinding teeth

Pigs grind their teeth when they’re bored, and cats do it when they’re dehydrated. Grinding teeth and often-associated jaw problems (TMD — temporomandibular disorder, also known as TMJ) can make your face and jaw ache and even break teeth. But though the causes of bruxism (that’s doc talk for grinding your teeth) and TMD are not known, a major new study may help the estimated 10 million to 35 million North Americans (mostly women between 18 and 45) who deal with these syndromes.

Turns out that people with TMD have heightened pain sensitivity and may have genetic predispositions that increase their stress response and inflammatory reactions. That may be why TMD is associated with fibromyalgia, headaches and chronic back pain.

The good news is that the best remedies usually are the simplest. Try to avoid surgery, implants and bite or jaw realignments; those procedures often cause more problems than they solve.

- Use a dental night guard to prevent teeth grinding and jaw clenching.
 - Use hot and cold compresses to ease pain.
 - NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen sodium, reduce inflammation.
 - Learn to manage stress. Try progressive relaxation: Start at your feet and move up your body, tensing each muscle group for 7 to 10 seconds; then releasing it quickly, resting for 15 seconds; then progress to the next muscle group and repeat. Breathe evenly and deeply. If it hurts to tense any area, skip it.
- Ahh! Now you’re smiling!



GUSCHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Volunteer Gretty Myers, right, helps seniors with the storytelling exercise, in which participants build a story together.

FAMILY

FROM E1

Minds over memory

The class participants — some residents of the community, some not — shout out the first thing that comes to mind when they look at a picture, just as they are instructed to do.

Many agree that the men in the photo look like vendors at the West Side Market they recall from their childhood days.

“At West Side the good ones were in the front,” says a participant. “You’d get an opportunity to try and taste samples.”

Flipping to a photo of a woman feeding a boy with a spoon, Paul Allphin, who is 86, inspects the picture for a few moments before saying, “He looks like he has to take medication.”

His wife, Beverly, 84, looks over at him, smiling. “For Paul,” a retired chemical engineer who served in the Navy during World War II, she says, “it’s always been hard to express emotions.” But the class, she says, helps both of them get out of the house to another setting. “And I think that’s stimulating to a certain degree.”

Beverly says she meets other caretakers she can talk to, which makes her feel less isolated, and Paul has opportunities to participate in the musical and artistic activities the ArtCare program offers, such as drum circles, meditative art and the storytelling exercises.

The goal of ArtCare is not to treat dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, cognitive illnesses for which no cure or effective long-term medication exists, says Norris. Rather, it aims to bring purpose and meaning into the lives of those living with memory loss, especially those in advanced stages of the illness — many of whom are cared for at home and have few opportunities to socialize.

Farrell says TimeSlips, a creative storytelling project designed in 1998 by founder Anne Basting, is able to reach people

For more information

The Carolyn L. Farrell Foundation offers two ArtCare classes that are free and open to the public: ArtCare for Dementia/TimeSlips is held 2 p.m. Wednesdays at Westlake Village, 28550 Westlake Village Drive; and Finding You, Creative Journaling, for those living with mental illness, 6:30 p.m. the first and third Monday of every month at West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, 20401 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River. Go to farrellfoundation.com for more information on the foundation.

in different ways — some respond to scents, others to visuals and some to the neighborhoods they imagine the photos were taken in.

“By getting them [away] from using their memory and focusing on imagination, we encourage them to use those parts of their brain that are still functional. They build a story built on their imaginations,” says Farrell.

Farrell cites findings by Cameron Camp, director of research at the Center for Applied Research in Dementia in Solon. Camp has shown that you can reduce agitation, anxiety and depression in those living with dementia by providing creative activities that are hard to fail at — yet are still engaging.

“People think those who have dementia can’t respond to you,” says Norris. “So they leave them there to sit in front of a TV, and they are bored and they get agitated.”

“Cameron has found that if you have activities for them there’s less agitation in their life, so it helps caregivers, it helps patients, and it decreases the amount of medication they could need as well.”

An important outlet for socializing

When Carol, Farrell’s wife, began showing signs of Lewy body dementia several years ago, a condition in which symptoms of Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s manifest, the couple’s peer group began to diminish. Not, Farrell says, because “they actively didn’t like us” but because many were “afraid” or “uncomfortable trying to socialize.”

“We saw people not engaging

with her. We thought, ‘If this is happening to Mom, you know it’s happening to other people,’ and hopefully we could help them as well,” says Norris, who moved into her parents’ home with her husband and son for several years to help care for her mother.

Norris says her mother’s biggest fear in life was getting dementia, as there is a family history of the disease. When her mother first noticed early symptoms with her vision — words flying off the page as she read — she insisted the doctor test her for neurological cognitive impairment. She also volunteered to retake her driving test, and although she passed, she chose not to drive for her own and others’ safety.

In 2011, Norris and her father founded the Carolyn L. Farrell Foundation for Brain Health. Illness of the brain, Farrell says, is an issue that hits close to home. Besides his wife’s battle with dementia, his youngest son is rebuilding his life after a traumatic brain injury over a year ago. And Norris lives with bipolar disorder and anxiety.

As a mental-health advocate, Norris regularly speaks about mental health issues to local churches and other groups. Norris also writes two blogs online: Moving In With Dementia, about her mother; and Bipolar Spirit, about her own journey with mental illness.

As a minister, Norris says that a lot of people ask her “why bad things happen.” But without her mother’s and her own illness, she and her family, “wouldn’t understand people enough to help them like we can.”

Until last summer, Farrell says, he and his wife enjoyed stationary tandem bike rides together, which was helpful for managing her Parkinson’s symptoms.

Although her condition has progressed rapidly in a short period of time, Farrell says, the thing she still reacts to most is people.

“We try to bring people to her that come as comfortable as they can be,” says Farrell. “It’s very much the same thing as what we’re doing here. If this institution didn’t make folks feel comfortable, they couldn’t communicate either.”

Listening to their story

Once everyone has had a chance to offer their thoughts on the photo, Norris takes a few minutes to organize her notes. She begins reading the story in her clear, strong voice. The title, she announces, is “Wonderland.”

The participants giggle as Norris continues and some recognize their contribution: names they gave the shop owners in the photo, family dramas they imagined happening behind closed doors, the taste of the German rye bread they can still recall from the West Side Market.

Norris finishes reading the story, and the class claps loudly.

After Norris and Farrell say goodbye to the participants, they sit down next to each other at the table. Norris takes a deep breath. She has tears in her eyes.

Today is the first time her mother was unable to attend the class. Her illness has progressed, and it’s difficult for her to get out of bed or even to open her eyes.

“She won’t be back,” says Norris softly. “So I think that’s harder.”

“But,” says Farrell, glancing at his daughter comfortably. “It’s more important that we continue than anything.”

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: ccapachi@plaind.com, 216-999-4098

HEALTH LETTERS

Mail-order pharmacy doesn’t fit needs

I have been dismayed for the last several years because of the mandatory usage of mail-order pharmacies my husband’s employer insists on (Drs. Oz and Roizen, Aug. 7).

Several years ago it was an option, and we were willing to pay slightly more to safely pick up our meds at our local pharmacy. Now, anything in pill form is delivered by U.S. mail. We live in a rural area and cannot see when the mail arrives, and when it arrives is unpredictable. Consequently, the meds often sit in the mailbox for several hours. In Ohio, this means freezing cold in the winter and brutally hot in the summer. We have complained to no avail to those who only look at the bottom line and do not care whether our meds are losing quality or not.

I now take Lantus insulin for diabetes. This gets delivered by UPS. It is supposed to be refrigerated until use and then, once removed from the refrigerator, is only good for 28 days. On at least

two occasions, the insulin arrived warm. One time, we paid \$15 extra to have it sent “overnight.” It was delivered at almost 7 p.m. The temperature outside was in the 90s; the solitary ice pack inside was thawed and warm, as was the insulin.

Doctors know medication is temperature sensitive. How can we get out from under this bureaucratic system that is putting our health at risk?

SHARON BRADFORD
Brunswick

Quiet time is elusive

We have now come full circle on noise in our society (“Turning down hospital noise boosts healing power of quiet,” Aug. 7). When was the last time you can remember being somewhere and thinking to yourself, “It sure is quiet here?”

We have become overstimulated with noise . . . surrounded by people on their cellphones, shouting to their friends. Some-

thing beeping or ringing in your pocket or the pocket of someone next to you. Drivers with their windows down, blaring what they believe to be music. Cars with remote locks that sound the horn every time they are locked. And we are accepting all of this noise.

So sad that we have to go to the hospital now to get some peace and quiet.

KEITH CONKLIN
Twinsburg

Successful businesses have figured this out: Without satisfied, loyal, supportive customers, you have no business. Wakeup, health care providers. You still have time — but not that much.

THUNDERBALZ
posted on cleveland.com

Letters regarding stories in the Health section can be sent to healthletters@plaind.com or mailed to: Health Editor, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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THE WATCH . . . (PG) . . . 4:55 / 6:15 / 7:15 / 7:55 / 9:15 / 10:15
BRAVE . . . (PG) . . . 11:20 AM
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THE DARK KNIGHT RISES . . . (PG13) . . . 6:40 / 7:50 / 9:05 / 10:20
THE DARK KNIGHT RISES . . . (PG13) . . . 11:50 / 1:50 / 3:20 / 6:55 / 8:00 / 10:30
DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: DOG DAYS . . . (PG) . . . 11:35 / 12:50 / 2:10 / 3:15 / 4:30 / 5:40
THE WATCH . . . (R) . . . 6:50 / 8:05 / 9:25
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ICE AGE: CONTINENTAL DRIFT . . . (PG) . . . 11:45 / 2:15 / 4:40
NITRO CIRCUS THE MOVIE . . . (PG13) . . . (3D) 11:25 / 1:45 / 4:00 / 7:35 10:00
TED . . . (R) . . . 10:25 PM
TOTAL RECALL (2012) . . . (PG13) . . . 11:15 / 12:15 / 1:15 / 2:05 / 4:05 / 4:50
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THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN . . . (PG13) . . . (2D) 9:40 PM
THE WATCH . . . (R) . . . 7:20 / 9:50
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TED . . . (R) . . . (3D) (1:45) / 6:50
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DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: DOG DAYS . . . (PG) . . . (12:40) / 1:50 / 3:20 / 4:30 / 5:40 / 7:05
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