

# PTSD Impairs Detection of Emotional Cues

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A new European study suggests post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) impairs an individual's ability to detect facial expressions.

This limitation is significant as facial expressions convey strong cues for someone's emotional state and the ability to interpret these cues is crucial in social interaction.

This burden is a characteristic of many psychiatric and neurological disorders, such as social anxiety or Korsakoff's syndrome.

Researchers believe PTSD changes the way the brain processes specific emotions with the altered processing of emotional cues leading to PTSD limitations.

The research findings are reported in the journal *Cortex*.

In the study, Dr. Ervin Poljac together with Dr. Barbara Montagne and Prof. Edward de Haan investigated emotional processing in a group of war veterans with symptoms developed after prolonged exposure to combat-related traumatic events.

PTSD is already known to be associated with difficulties in experiencing, identifying, and describing emotions; the new study, however, specifically examined the participants' ability to recognize particular emotional facial expressions.

Participants were shown short video clips of emotional faces representing one of the six basic emotions (happiness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust and sadness).

Compared to healthy subjects, the participants with PTSD were less able to recognize two emotions in particular: fear and sadness.

This is the first study to show impairment in the processing of specific emotions in PTSD.

The researchers believe this knowledge will provide further insights into the disorder and also set the stage for new methods to assess PTSD.

In summary, experts believe the development of a more detailed prognostic model for PTSD will improve therapeutic interventions for the disorder.

Source: Elsevier



## APA Reference

Nauert PhD, R. (2011). PTSD Impairs Detection of Emotional Cues. *Psych Central*. Retrieved on October 16, 2011, from <http://psychcentral.com/news/2011/08/18/ptsd-impairs-detection-of-emotional-cues/28693.html>