

Flashbacks & PTSD

Flashbacks are defined in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as a

“recurrence of a memory, feeling, or perceptual experience from the past.”

This phenomenon is usually seen in individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),

An individual experiencing a flashback will describe feeling as if they are not fully in the present moment, but instead are in a past (usually traumatic) event. They may describe actually seeing things that happened in that past event and experiencing the event as if it were happening now.

Many people are confused about flashbacks because of how they are portrayed in movies or on television. For example, in the movies you may see images of combat veterans "hitting the deck" and acting out combat traumas, completely unaware of where they are. While this kind of flashback (called a "full immersion flashback") can happen, usually people will still maintain some awareness of the present moment while they are in a flashback. So, even if you are experiencing a milder version, you may still be having a flashback.