



PTSD Checklist for *DSM-5 (PCL-5)*

Version date: 29 August 2023

Reference: Weathers, F. W., Litz, B. T., Keane, T. M., Palmieri, P. A., Marx, B. P., & Schnurr, P. P. (2013). *The PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) – Standard* [Measurement instrument]. Available from <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

URL: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-sr/ptsd-checklist.asp>

Note: This is a fillable form. You may complete it electronically.

Instructions:

Below is a list of problems that people sometimes have in response to a very stressful experience. Keeping your worst event in mind, please read each problem carefully and then select one of the numbers to the right to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem in the past month.

Your worst event: _____

	In the past month, how much were you bothered by:	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
B	1. Repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	2. Repeated, disturbing dreams of the stressful experience?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	3. Suddenly feeling or acting as if the stressful experience were actually happening again (as if you were actually back there reliving it)?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	4. Feeling very upset when something reminded you of the stressful experience?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	5. Having strong physical reactions when something reminded you of the stressful experience (for example, heart pounding, trouble breathing, sweating)?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
C	6. Avoiding memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the stressful experience?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	7. Avoiding external reminders of the stressful experience (for example, people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations)?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
D	8. Trouble remembering important parts of the stressful experience?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	9. Having strong negative beliefs about yourself, other people, or the world (for example, having thoughts such as: I am bad, there is something seriously wrong with me, no one can be trusted, the world is completely dangerous)?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	10. Blaming yourself or someone else for the stressful experience or what happened after it?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	11. Having strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	12. Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	13. Feeling distant or cut off from other people?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	14. Trouble experiencing positive feelings (for example, being unable to feel happiness or have loving feelings for people close to you)?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	15. Irritable behavior, angry outbursts, or acting aggressively?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
E	16. Taking too many risks or doing things that could cause you harm?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	17. Being "superalert" or watchful or on guard?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	18. Feeling jumpy or easily startled?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	19. Having difficulty concentrating?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>
	20. Trouble falling or staying asleep?	0 <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>

Scoring and Interpretation Information

Total scores can range from **0 to 80**, with higher scores indicating greater PTSD symptom severity.

There are four subscales which match the four symptom clusters for PTSD within DSM-5:

- **Re-experiencing (criterion B)**, items 1-5, max score = 20)
- **Avoidance (criterion C)**, items 6-7, max score = 8)
- **Negative alterations in cognition and mood (Criterion D)**, items 8-14, max score = 28)
- **Hyper-arousal (Criterion E)**, items 15-20, max score = 24)

Scores in each row range between 0 to 4, where higher scores represent higher severity. Consistent with the Likert scale:

- 0 = Not at all**
- 1 = A little bit**
- 2 = Moderately**
- 3 = Quite a bit**
- 4 = Extremely**

In addition to a raw score being presented, **a mean score is also computed**, which is the **subscale score divided by the number of items within that subscale**. For example, in criterion C in 6 row the score is 4 and in 7 row the score is 3. Mean score will be calculated: $(4+3)/2=3.5$.

The average score can help determine elevated symptom clusters when comparing each of the four subscales. Symptom descriptors are also presented for the total score and each of the subscale scores.

These descriptors are determined by the distance from the normative mean:

- **Normal Range** - Average score less than or equal to 1.23
- **Mild** - Average score above 1.23 and less than or equal to 1.64
- **Moderate** - Average score above 1.64 and less than or equal to 2.455
- **Severe** - Average score above 2.455 and less than or equal to 3.265
- **Extremely Severe** - Average score above 3.265

Given the PCL-5 questions closely reassembled the diagnostic criteria in the DSM-5-TR, a provisional PTSD diagnosis can be made based on the following rule. The DSM-5 diagnostic criteria require at least:

- 1 Criterion B item (questions 1-5),**
- 1 Criterion C item (questions 6-7),**
- 2 Criterion D items (questions 8-14),**
- and 2 Criterion E items (questions 15-20).**

A score of 2 (Moderately on the Likert scale) or higher is an endorsed symptom.

Total scores of 33 or above are considered to be of clinical significance, and can serve as an alternative threshold for identifying significant PTSD symptoms that interfere with daily functioning (Bovin et al., 2016; Krüger-Gottschalk et al., 2017; Rosendahl et al., 2019).