

# Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder & Third Degree Mother Hunger



Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) emerges from repetitive, ongoing interpersonal harm ~ harm includes the lack of nurturing, protection and guidance from a primary caregiver. For this reason, I call this “disorder” Third Degree Mother Hunger. I came up with a special name because I don’t think the word “disorder” is fair.

I see the main difference between PTSD and CPTSD as *shame*. When you experience trauma at the hands of someone who you love, who was supposed to nurture and protect you, the aftermath is an embedded, implicit belief that “*something must be wrong with me.*” Which is different from the post traumatic reactions we suffer after a random accident (car crash) or a natural disaster (hurricane, flood, fire); while both PTSD and CPTSD share symptoms like:

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Startle
- Avoidance and dread

Shame is not on this list. Shame is not generally associated with an accident or natural disaster. It’s not personal. But maternal neglect and abuse IS felt as personal. It damages your entire sense of who you are.

If your mother was frightening, it’s likely her harmful behaviors were not a solo event. Anytime, or any day, she represented a threat to your wellbeing. You never knew what to expect...an angry, blaming mom, or a crying, childish mom. Or a mom who didn’t protect you from an aggressive, punitive partner. Or a mom who couldn’t care for herself...she needed you to do her job; feed the family, clean the house, and care for your siblings. Home was the worst place to be. Since you couldn’t leave, you adapted. Dissociation is one powerful adaptation. So is isolation. So is perfectionism. So is eating or starving, raging or cutting.

These are symptoms of CPTSD ~ you are not wrong, or broken ~ your early environment covered you in toxic shame. You adapted to chronic fear and powerlessness. You adapted to betrayal. And your heart is broken. Chances are, as an adult, you struggle with all sorts of addictive habits.

When you have a broken heart that no one knows about, healing is difficult. Your behaviors might look “disordered” and you feel lost. But there is support for Third Degree Mother Hunger and CPTSD. You are on the right path. If you haven’t already found a trauma trained therapist to support you, it might be time. You have been alone long enough.

Love,  
*Kelly*