

Traumatic Flashbacks

August 3, 2022



I am not my disability, but it's not to be ignored either. It's a part of me; it makes me who I am.

-Ryza Wood]

You experience memories of past trauma (sometimes violent, but not always) as if it's happening again. The flashbacks are triggered by external stimuli, sometimes predictable, but the specific stimuli can be any number of brief sensory experiences. In this case, the response is triggered seemingly randomly (IE)d4 times per day or when exposed to stimuli known to relate to the traumatic event and lasts for (IE)d6 minutes unless you succeed on a DC 8 + (IE) Constitution saving throw. All spellcasting and ability checks require that you succeed on a concentration check or make the subsequent check with disadvantage, and tasks that normally require a concentration check are made with a -(IE) penalty. If you take damage during the flashback experience that doesn't make sense within that context, you may make another Constitution saving throw immediately.

Real-world Examples

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Assistive Options

An ally or service animal that recognizes that you're experiencing a Traumatic Flashback may use a help action to give you advantage on the Constitution saving throw.

Startle Amplification

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You have an overactive stress response, causing you to have a fight-flight-freeze reaction to non-threatening situations. This response is triggered seemingly randomly (IE)d4 times per day and during any remotely stressful situation, including being awakened suddenly. If you are a [barbarian](#), when this response is triggered, you must succeed on a DC 10 + (IE) Wisdom saving throw or begin to Rage involuntarily, using up one of your daily Rages. You have a +(IE) bonus to Charisma (Intimidation) checks but a -(IE) penalty on Charisma (Persuasion) checks. Because of your heightened awareness, you also have +1 bonus on initiative rolls. If you have multiple traits, you may choose [Rash](#) as one of them.

Real-world Examples

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety

Assistive Options

Several behavior changes can have a positive cumulative benefit. Upon keeping three of the following for seven days, the IE decreases by 1 as long as you maintain them: spend an hour each day on a calming activity such as meditating, exercising, and staying in contact with at least two trusted people. If you

change which of those you're doing, at least three must stay the same, or you lose the benefit for seven days.

Intrusive Thoughts

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Thoughts that you don't like enter your head, such as thoughts of committing atrocities, doubts about your identity or relationships or value, and you can't get rid of them. While everyone has such thoughts, you can't easily get past them, and they happen a lot. You fear that you might act on those thoughts, or that, even though they're not based on evidence, that they indicate something about you or your life. You have a -(IE) penalty on saving throws against being frightened. Because you've honed your critical thinking skills as coping strategies, you have a +(IE) bonus to saving throws against illusion magic.

Real-world Examples

Anxiety, Depression, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Assistive Options

Because you are often ashamed of intrusive thoughts as they don't reflect your character and values, it's hard getting help from others. Realizing that these are "junk thoughts" that your

brain produces, not urges, and don't reflect on your character, can help you feel better about yourself when these thoughts come, but they don't eliminate the thoughts or affect game mechanics. If you have a trusted friend that takes time to talk to you about it, or if you keep a journal where you list evidence for and against the truth of the thought with a statement that acknowledges the thought and demonstrates that it's false, you can use your action to check it, and for either of these, the IE reduces by 1 for 2d4 - (IE) (minimum 0) hours.

Memory Loss

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You have trouble remembering events. Choose or roll on the following table.

d10	Symptom
1-2	Anterograde Amnesia
3-6	Retrograde Amnesia
7	Dissociative Fugue
8-0	Traumatic Amnesia

- **Anterograde Amnesia.** You are unable to form new memories but recall your past until 1d100 × 30 days ago or after a

specific story arc. Recalling new events, people, directions, or other details requires a successful DC 8 + (IE) × 2 check to remember general information or a higher DC for specific details. You can still sometimes learn procedures and routines. All Experience Points you earn are divided by (IE) + 1 or, if not using XP level advancement, when gaining or increasing a feat or proficiency, you need an additional (IE)d20 days to gain the bonus. It also takes you (IE) × 5 times as long to prepare spells. This form of memory loss has no Frequency. When charmed, you get an extra saving throw each round as you may forget your favorable impression of the source of the charm.

- **Retrograde Amnesia.** You have difficulty recalling memories before 1d100 × 30 days ago or before a specific story arc but have full memory of everything after that. You retain general knowledge and skills but may not remember how you learned. You're more likely to remember episodes from your distant past than more recent memories. Recalling people or events from the most recent (IE) × 20 percent of your life requires a successful DC 10 + (IE) × 2 Intelligence check, and recalling earlier memories requires a successful DC 10 + (IE) Intelligence check. A successful check will recall general information, more details requiring a higher DC. This form of memory loss has no Frequency.

Sometimes life feels like a constant brain fog. But times spent sitting with friends telling stories are the golden moments of clarity I live for.

-Niles M

- **Dissociative Fugue.** You are confused about your identity or have formed a new one. You retain skills from your

original identity but may try using skills you don't have. For example, you may experience frustration as to why you can't cast spells or why you can, believe your stealth skills are better than they are, etc. The GM and player should work together on the false identity, creating a random persona but retaining most or all previous abilities. (Try a random NPC or character class generator such as the one on dndbeyond.com or npcgenerator.com to get started.) This form of memory loss does have a Frequency, and recalling a single memory about your identity requires a successful DC $10 + (IE) \times 2$ Intelligence check while in a fugue state.

- **Traumatic Amnesia.** You have little or no memory of (IE) traumatic events from your past. Recalling a detail from one of those events requires a successful DC $15 + (IE)$ Intelligence check. Failure requires (IE) $\times 30$ days or until after the next adventure or story arc for each event before making another attempt. When successfully recalling a traumatic memory, you may feel overcome while you come to terms with this recovered memory and must succeed on a DC $8 + (IE)$ Wisdom saving throw or take one level of exhaustion for $10 \times (IE)$ minutes. This form of memory loss has no Frequency.

Real-world Examples

Korsakoff's Syndrome, Dementia, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Dissociative Amnesia, Encephalitis

Assistive Options

Written notes or journals can help keep track of memories. Friends and allies can help with recall, granting advantage on recall attempts even if the helper was not present for the episode in question.

Magical Assistance

Divination spells like [Divination](#) and [Commune](#) can help answer questions about the past that have been forgotten, but it does not recover the actual memory.