Australian Centre for
Posttraumatic Mental Health

The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL)

The PCL (Weathers et al, 1993) is an easily administered self-report rating scale for assessing the 17 DSM-IV symptoms of PTSD. It has excellent test-retest reliability over a 2-3 day period. Internal consistency is very high for each of the three groups of items corresponding to the DSM-IV symptom clusters as well as for the full 17-item scale. The PCL correlates strongly with other measures of PTSD, such as the Mississippi Scale, the PK scale of the MMPI-2, and the Impact of Events Scale, and also correlates moderately with level of combat exposure.

Three versions of the PCL are available, although the differences are very small. The PCL-M is a military version and questions refer to "*a stressful military experience*". The PCL-S is a non-military version that can be referenced to any specific traumatic event; the questions refer to "the stressful experience". The PCL-C is a general civilian version that is not linked to a specific event; the questions refer to "a stressful experience from the past". The scoring is the same for all three versions.

A total score is computed by adding the 17 items, so that possible scores range from 17 to 85. Used as a continuous measure, the PCL has good diagnostic utility. In Vietnam combat veterans a cut-off of 50 on the PCL is a good predictor of a PTSD diagnosis based on the SCID PTSD module. Principal components analysis revealed one large factor, consisting primarily of re-experiencing and hyperarousal items, and one much small factor, consisting primarily of emotional numbing items.

References:

Blanchard, E.B., Jones-Alexander, J., Buckley, T.C., & Forneris, C.A. (1996). Psychometric properties of the PTSD Checklist (PCL). *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 34,* 669-673.

Cardove, M.J., Andrykowski, M.A., Redd, W.H., Kenady, D.E., McGrath, P.C., & Sloan, D.A. (1995). Frequency and correlates of posttraumatic stress disorder like symptoms after treatment for breast cancer. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63,* 981-986.

Forbes, D., Creamer, M., and Biddle, D. (2001). The validity of the PTSD checklist as a measure of symptomatic change in combat-related PTSD. Behavior Therapy and Research, 39, 977-986.

Weathers, F.W., Litz, B.T., Herman, D.S., Huska, J.A. & Keane, T.M. (1993) The PTSD Checklist (PCL): Reliablity, validity, and diagnostic utility. Paper presented at the 9th Annual Conference of the ISTSS, San Antonio.

PTSD CheckList – Civilian Version (PCL-C)

Patient's Name: _____

Instructions: Below is a list of problems and complaints that people sometimes have in response to stressful life experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the past month.*

No.	Response:	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing *memories*, *thoughts*, or *images* of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing *dreams* of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly *acting* or *feeling* as if a stressful experience *were happening again* (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling *very upset* when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having *physical reactions* (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid *thinking about* or *talking about* a stressful experience from the past or avoid *having feeling*s related to it?					
7.	Avoid *activities* or *situations* because *they remind you* of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble *remembering important parts* of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?					
10.	Feeling *distant* or *cut off* from other people?					
11.	Feeling *emotionally numb* or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your *future* will somehow be *cut short*?					
13.	Trouble falling or staying asleep?					
14.	Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?					
15.	Having difficulty concentrating?					
16.	Being *"super alert"* or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling *jumpy* or easily startled?					

Weathers, F.W., Huska, J.A., Keane, T.M. *PCL-C for DSM-IV.* Boston: National Center for PTSD – Behavioral Science Division, 1991.

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PTSD CheckList – Civilian Version (PCL-S)

Patient's Name: _____

Instructions: Below is a list of problems and complaints that people sometimes have in response to stressful life experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the past month.*

The event you experienced was _____ on _____(date)

No.	Response:	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing *memories*, *thoughts*, or *images* of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing *dreams* of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly *acting* or *feeling* as if a stressful experience *were happening again* (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling *very upset* when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having *physical reactions* (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid *thinking about* or *talking about* a stressful experience from the past or avoid *having feeling*s related to it?					
7.	Avoid *activities* or *situations* because *they remind you* of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble *remembering important parts* of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?					
10.	Feeling *distant* or *cut off* from other people?					
11.	Feeling *emotionally numb* or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your *future* will somehow be *cut short*?					
13.	Trouble falling or staying asleep?					
14.	Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?					
15.	Having difficulty concentrating?					
16.	Being *"super alert"* or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling *jumpy* or easily startled?					

Weathers, F.W., Huska, J.A., Keane, T.M. *PCL-S for DSM-IV.* Boston: National Center for PTSD – Behavioral Science Division, 1991.

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PTSD CheckList – Military Version (PCL-M)

Patient's Name: _____

Instructions: Below is a list of problems and complaints that people sometimes have in response to stressful military experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the past month.*

No.	Response:	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing *memories*, *thoughts*, or *images* of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing *dreams* of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly *acting* or *feeling* as if a stressful experience *were happening again* (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling *very upset* when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having *physical reactions* (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when *something reminded* you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid *thinking about* or *talking about* a stressful experience from the past or avoid *having feeling*s related to it?					
7.	Avoid *activities* or *situations* because *they remind you* of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble *remembering important parts* of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?					
10.	Feeling *distant* or *cut off* from other people?					
11.	Feeling *emotionally numb* or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your *future* will somehow be *cut short*?					
13.	Trouble falling or staying asleep?					
14.	Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?					
15.	Having difficulty concentrating?					
16.	Being *"super alert"* or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling *jumpy* or easily startled?					

Weathers, F.W., Huska, J.A., Keane, T.M. *PCL-C for DSM-IV.* Boston: National Center for PTSD – Behavioral Science Division, 1991.

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