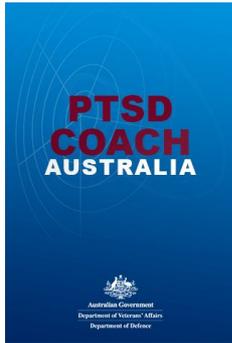


PTSD Coach Australia

Clinicians Guide to integrating PTSD Coach Australia into treatment

What is PTSD Coach Australia?



PTSD Coach Australia is a smartphone or mobile device application (App) that helps people understand and manage the symptoms of PTSD.

PTSD Coach Australia was adapted by ACPMH and the Mental Health Programs section of DVA (with permission) from a US app called “PTSD Coach”. The adaptation included Australian content revision and new functionality. PTSD Coach Australia has been designed for use with veterans and serving Defence force personnel.

Apps are a great way of providing information and tools to people when and where they need to use them. You may already encourage your clients to make use of tools such as PTSD Coach Australia as an adjunct to the care you provide. This guide can provide you with some tips about how to integrate PTSD Coach Australia into your client’s care.

PTSD Coach Australia contains:

- Up to date **information** about PTSD
- Up to date **information** about PTSD treatment – what works, and who provides it
- A range of **symptom management tools** and techniques.
- **A PTSD assessment** (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist, Weathers et al. 1993) – allowing users to measure the severity of their symptoms over time, plot the results, and email them to a health professional like you.
- **A scheduler** that allows people to manage all their self-care, health appointments and activities. Users can schedule reminders to use self-care tools at high risk times or to complete PTSD Checklist (PCL) assessments, as well as enter any health or rehabilitation activity or appointment into a private calendar. The app then sends typical smartphone reminders to prompt the activity.
- Information about where to **find treatments** and supports for PTSD – in the Defence and DVA health systems, and in the community.

Importantly: PTSD Coach Australia is not designed as a stand-alone treatment or self-diagnosis – ideally, it makes up part of a toolkit of resources for people managing PTSD.



How can it help my client?

PTSD Coach Australia can help your client by providing them and their families with accurate information, mood and symptom management tools that they can use in real life settings. Your clients can get feedback on their symptom severity (via the PCL assessment), and the app also provides Australian Defence and Veteran specific resources for help and support.

What type of clients is it for?

Ideally, your client will have received a diagnosis of PTSD, and will be having treatment for the condition. People with Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) or subclinical presentations may find the app of benefit, but it is important to note that if your client does NOT have PTSD, there are other options for mood management tools (including apps and web resources) that may be more appropriate to their condition.

What kind of PTSD treatments does this app work with?

This app has been designed to be used in combination with evidence based therapies for PTSD such as trauma focussed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).

Please visit DVA's mental health portal, At Ease, for more information about current evidence based therapies for PTSD and a range of other mental health problems that commonly affect veterans. The portal provides a dedicated site for mental health providers treating veterans. WWW.AT-EASE.DVA.GOV.AU

You can find information about the Australian Treatment Guidelines for the Treatment of ASD and PTSD from this website. You can also download a copy of the information resources contained in the PTSD Coach Australia app.

Clients and their families will benefit from receiving consistent, up to date information about PTSD and its treatment. You may wish to provide more detailed information to clients such as the more extensive resources on PTSD available from DVA's At Ease portal.

Benefits: Encouraging Flexible Symptom Management

Two main features of PTSD Coach Australia support effective and flexible symptom management.



Symptom management tools: The first is the range of tools contained in the app to assist clients to manage distressing or unpleasant moods – these include imagery audio exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and a range of other techniques. Ideally, you will have already taught your client some of these skills. They will now have these tools at hand as a mobile guide wherever they take their smartphone or tablet device.



Scheduler: The second is the scheduler that allows clients (and you) to predict difficult, high risk or distressing situations and schedule the use of a tool (or any other activity) before, during or after that stressful event. For example missing counselling appointments due to problems with memory or feeling highly anxious on public transport might be managed by setting a reminder for the appointment itself, as well as setting a reminder to use the controlled breathing exercise before travelling to the appointment. Another example of how the scheduler might be useful in PTSD treatment is to use it to remind clients to undertake *in vivo* exposure homework.

The scheduler can also be used to privately store details and reminders for all your clients' appointments, and other health and recovery activities. In this way, the app can assist with activation, motivational enhancement and problems with remembering coping strategies in times of stress.

When is my client Ready for PTSD Coach Australia?

Again, it's important to ensure that your client has PTSD before considering this app as an adjunct to your care. Practitioners should also be careful to identify their face to face or 'formal' interventions as the **primary treatment**, and PTSD Coach Australia as **another set of tools** that can help to support and reinforce what you do in your sessions.

It's safe to introduce PTSD Coach Australia at any point in treatment, but earlier on will probably give your client more benefits. The earlier you can promote the retention of accurate information about PTSD and recovery, and the earlier your client begins monitoring and actively self-managing symptoms, the better.