



# Case of Victoria English

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Victoria English is a single woman in her early 30s. She occupied a position of significant authority in a large corporation. She sees herself as efficient and independent and has never sought mental health services in the past. On February 25, 1993, she was working in her office at the World Trade Center when a bomb exploded. In the initial interview, she showed little emotion when she described being blown into the air and landing on her arm. This resulted in her having a broken arm. During the interview, Ms. English became more tearful and frightened as she described the bombing and how it affected her life. Specifically, she is currently feeling vulnerable and reported difficulties with the demands of her job. When she returned to work 2 weeks after the bombing, she reported being anxious on the subway. She began to work from home. The company physician, after consulting with her, suggested that she obtain a temporary disability and discontinue working.

During Ms. English's assessment, she was administered a Structured Clinical Interview for *DSM* Disorders (SCID) and met criteria for PTSD. Her symptoms included nightmares and intrusive

daytime recollections. These could bring her to tears. She also had intrusive fantasies of catastrophic events, such as buildings falling on people, as she went about her daily life. Ms. English also avoided situations such as riding the subway or going to the World Trade Center, which would make her feel vulnerable or remind her of the bombing. She also found herself cut off from others even when they reached out to her. She began cognitive processing therapy with cognitive behavioral components. By the end of therapy, her level of functioning had greatly improved. At the 1-year follow-up, she reported that she was doing well and had moved to a new city and become romantically involved with someone who would become her husband. She also reconsidered her priorities and according to her began to live a more balanced life. At the 2.5-year follow-up, she no longer met criteria for PTSD although she reported minor types of psychological distress.

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