

On the nexus of chronic pain, posttraumatic stress, and alexithymia

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Abstract

Individuals with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often exhibit deficits in emotional experience and expression, which suggests that certain individuals with PTSD may be alexithymic. In this study, in a sample of 105 individuals with PTSD, clinical correlates of alexithymia included re-experiencing, hyper arousal, numbing, dissociative symptoms, and retrospectively reported experiences of childhood emotional neglect. In a subsample of 26 individuals with PTSD related to a motor vehicle accident, functional neural responses to trauma-script imagery were associated with severity of alexithymia, including increased right posterior-insula and ventral posterior-cingulate activation and decreased bilateral ventral anterior-cingulate, ventromedial prefrontal, anterior-insula, and right inferior frontal cortex activation. Clinical and theoretical implications and future research directions are discussed.

Received: February 05, 2022; **Accepted:** February 12, 2022; **Published:** February 18, 2022

Biography

Dr. Lankster has 20 years of healthcare experience, 14 years of mental health experience, and 3 years of licensure as a clinical psychologist. She graduated from the American School of Professional Psychology and has undergraduate degrees in psychology and sociology from the University of West Alabama. She has published literature on trauma, CBT, cultural issues, and

more. Dr. Lankster is also a peer reviewer for the National Institute of Justice and the Journal of Rural Mental Health. Currently, she specializes in and researches issues surrounding community and mass trauma, rural mental health, culture related issues, and child therapy.