

Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): The Linen Cupboard Metaphor

Memories in PTSD are a bit like items stuffed in a messy linen cupboard. Whenever you brush past the cupboard the door flies open and items fall out: in other words, whenever you come across a reminder of the trauma you have flashbacks or intrusive memories, and feel intense fear. A typical response is to try to stuff things back in the cupboard, and to close the door as quickly as possible. But this just keeps the problem going: memories are jammed in the cupboard, and the door will still swing open at the lightest touch.



Treatment for PTSD involves



- slowly taking things out of the cupboard
- examining them carefully
- folding them neatly
- putting them back in the right place



In this way, memories of the traumatic event find their proper place: you can find them if you choose to, but they won't come back so often when you don't want them to.