The one factor which is invariably present for PTSD sufferers is that of intrusive thoughts and imagery.

The problem posed for the individual experiencing these is that they lose their feeling of control.

The images and thoughts occur unbidden and often at inappropriate moments.

How greatly these images dominate an individual’s life will vary with the individual and also for each individual will vary in intensity from time to time.

The most common feeling is that of not being the same person that they were and that the unwanted thoughts and images seem to a great extent to have a life of their own.

It needs to be born in mind that most individuals who experience a major traumatic event will have intrusive thoughts and imagery for some weeks following the event. It needs to be emphasised that this is a normal process of adjustment.

For most individuals imagery and thoughts will fade, usually they will experience most problems when relaxed, particularly when just falling to sleep or when asleep.

During the day the thoughts are often there as a background and are reduced by activity which acts as a distraction.

For some individuals the intrusion does not reduce, but becomes severe in the form of a dissociative flashback

In extreme cases the dissociation can be complete and prolonged, such as in psychogenic amnesia or DID. The person may even move to a different area and take on a new identity.