



Beyond Blue Counselling Services

19a Spring Head
Wednesbury
WS10 9AD

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Bonfire Night and National Stress Awareness Day: A Difficult Combination?

While it is important to recognise **National Stress Awareness Day** on **5th November**, its timing coinciding with **Bonfire Night** raises questions about whether this is really the most suitable date.

For many people, Bonfire Night is a time of celebration, a chance to enjoy colourful fireworks and social gatherings. However, for others, it can be a deeply distressing evening. Those who have experienced **conflict, war, or trauma** may find the sights and sounds of fireworks triggering, particularly individuals living with **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

During wartime, flares were used to communicate vital information: **white flares** to illuminate the surroundings, **red flares** to signal danger or an enemy sighting, and **yellow flares** to indicate the all-clear. The similarities between these bright, sudden lights and modern fireworks can evoke distressing memories and anxiety for veterans and survivors of conflict.

The **loud explosions, flashes of light**, and even the **smell of smoke** can all act as powerful sensory triggers. For some, this may mean retreating indoors, covering their ears with headphones, wearing goggles to block the flashes, or even hiding behind the sofa as unwanted memories resurface in the subconscious.

While Bonfire Night brings joy to many, it's important to recognise that for others it can be one of the most stressful nights of the year. Perhaps it's worth reflecting on whether holding **National Stress Awareness Day** on the same date truly helps raise awareness or unintentionally adds to the very stress it aims to highlight.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Breakwell

Director at Breakthru

Prof. Dip Psy C, Cert EMDR

Psychotherapist, EMDR Specialist, Supervisor and Counsellor