



Trauma

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope (Rice and Groves, 2015). Every person has a different capacity to cope, so each person will be affected differently by trauma. Examples of trauma include: separation from a parent/caregiver, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, homelessness, and mental illness or substance abuse of parent. As trauma most often occurs within the context of a relationship, the person's ability to form and maintain relationships is usually impaired.

Signs/Symptoms of Trauma at Home:

- Excessive anger
- Unusual startle reactions
- Extreme Fatigue
- Physical or verbal aggression
- Regular tardiness or absence from class
- Perfectionistic, controlling, or anxious behavior
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Low self confidence
- Irritability
- Clinginess
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Risky behaviors (including drug or alcohol abuse or sexual acting out)
- Panic attacks
- Extreme self-reliance
- Defiance
- Social isolation/trouble making friends

Tips

1. **Create a safe space:** ALL children thrive in a space that is physically and emotionally safe, but that is doubly true for child with a history of trauma. Let the child know, they are not alone.
2. **Establish predictability:** Dealing with unknowns usually provokes fear in children who have experienced trauma. Creating routines and structure that create an environment of consistency allows for the child to know what to expect.
3. **Build trust:** Forming trusting relationships with your child by letting them know that they can count on you. You can do this by communicating expectations clearly and following through on consequences.
4. **Offer choices:** The child did not have control over the trauma, and it makes being out of control scary. By offering choices, you increase the child's feeling of control which can decrease their trauma response.
5. **Stay regulated:** Children who have experienced trauma are very sensitive to adults' stress levels, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc. Seeing that you are stressed will often trigger a stress response in the child. If you maintain a regulated tone and energy, the child will often match you.



Feeling overwhelmed? Here are some coping skills for you!

- Take deep, slow breaths
- Connect with loved ones
- Practice self-compassion/self-love
- Don't try to manage this alone. Get support!!!

Additional Resources:

- [Child Mind: helping children cope after a traumatic event](#)
- [Safe Shores: Recognizing Abuse](#)
- [Resources from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)