

Trauma

Trauma can come from one or more events that are emotionally disturbing or life threatening. The event or events have long-term negative effects on a person's mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Traumatic events may include:

- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Childhood neglect
- Poverty
- Racism and discrimination
- Violence in the community or war

Trauma can happen at any age. Trauma events during childhood can have very negative long-term effects on the developing brains of children. About 62 percent of adults in the United States have at least 1 trauma event during childhood.

Effects of Trauma

People affected by trauma may use coping methods to lessen the emotional or physical pain they feel from their trauma. Some coping methods are healthy and can help and some are not. Negative coping methods that do not help include things like unhealthy eating, drug use, or alcohol use.

When people have trauma, they may feel unsafe or have difficulty trusting others. This can lead to more anger, aggression, shame, or isolation (staying away from others).

Other signs and symptoms of trauma include:

Emotional Symptoms

- Feeling numb (no emotional feeling)
- Shock
- Disbelief or denial (this did not happen to me)
- Confusion
- Guilt
- Fear

Physical Symptoms

- Problems sleeping
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Substance abuse (over-use of alcohol or drugs)

Trauma: How to Help

Take Part in Healthy Coping Methods

Some healthy methods that help people who have trauma cope are:

- Deep breathing and relaxation exercises
- Starting a new activity or hobby.
- Make a list of people you trust and can reach out to when you need help. Having supportive family, friends or community members can help people deal with the effects of trauma.

Know the Possible Triggers and Process Your Emotions

Talking to a doctor or working with a therapist on these steps may be helpful. Health care professionals trained to provide trauma-informed care may help people with trauma process what happened to them in a healthy way.

Bright Star Community Outreach Trauma Helpline (Chicago based):

Free weekly emotional support from trained faith leaders and mental health professionals by phone. Call 1 (833) 887-6123, Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm

Trauma Support Groups

It may help to talk about what happened to you with other people who may have the same kind of trauma. Talk with your health care provider about these local resources:

Advocate Trauma Recovery Center (708-346-7300)

- Helps people who have experienced violence
- Works to get back a sense of safety and end the cycle of violence
- Services include personal and group therapy, support groups, clinical assessments, medication management, and self-care

UChicago Medicine Coping with Trauma Group

- For female caregivers exposed to community violence or violent events
- Focuses on how to cope with anxiety and depression from trauma, dealing with emotions, healthy coping, and mindfulness