

THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA ON ADOLESCENTS

WHAT TRAUMA LOOKS LIKE

Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm. The harm can be physical or emotional, real or perceived, and it can threaten the child or someone close to him or her. Trauma can be the result of a single event, or it can result from exposure to multiple events over time.

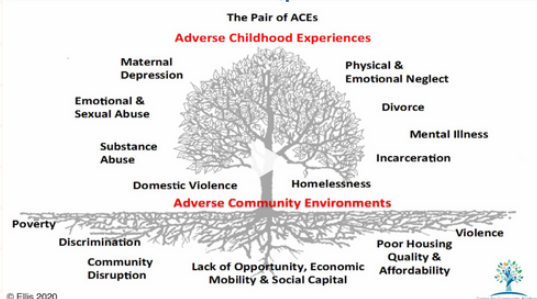
Traumatic events can include:

- Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional)
- Neglect
- Effects of poverty (such as homelessness or food insecurity)
- Being separated from loved ones
- Bullying
- Witnessing harm to a loved one or pet (e.g., domestic or community violence)
- Natural disasters or accidents
- Unpredictable parental behavior due to addiction or mental illness

RESEARCH

Childhood traumas have higher likelihood to lead to increase risk of poor physical health, coping skills, or other long-term cognitive impairments.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is a longitudinal study that explores the long-lasting impact of childhood trauma into adulthood (nctsn.org). Researchers found that child adversity is common and exposure to one or more ACEs increases an individual's risk of physical health, psychological, and social problems in adulthood (preventchildabuse.org).



RISKS TO DEVELOPMENT

- Prolonged exposure to trauma can lead to 'toxic stress' for a child which changes a child's brain development.
- Toxic stress can impair a child's ability to trust and relate to others.
- Adolescents may develop chronic or recurrent physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches. Chronic physical conditions may continue into adulthood.
- Adolescents may struggle with self-regulation (e.g., knowing how to calm down) and may lack impulse control or the ability to think through consequences before acting.
- Adolescents may have trouble thinking clearly, acquiring new skills, and may show deficits in language development and abstract reasoning skills.

OTHER POSSIBLE EFFECTS

- Traumatic memories are stored differently in the brain compared to everyday memories.
- Severe sleep disruption due to traumatic flashbacks that may occur during bedtime or other quiet times.
- Adolescents often have difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing emotions, and may have limited language for feelings. They may internalize and/ externalize stress reactions and emotions.
- When children encounter an overwhelming and terrifying experience, they may dissociate (detach themselves from their bodies), or mentally separate themselves from the experience.

Up to two-thirds of U.S. children have experienced at least one type of serious childhood trauma, such as abuse, neglect, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence. Trauma is possibly the largest public health issue facing our children today (CDC, 2019).

RESOURCES AVAILABLE



"The Bridge" Amherst FRC and Great Barrington FRC

A network of community-based providers offering multi-cultural parenting resources, support groups, early childhood services, information and other education and referral programs for families whose children range in age from birth to 18 years of age.

Trauma Institute & Child Trauma Institute

Offers no-cost intensive trauma therapy to victims of crime in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties in Western MA with extensive experience working with adults, children, and adolescents, including POC, LGBTQ+.

Behavioral Health Network Inc.

BHN's mission is to help individuals, families and communities improve the quality of life for those with behavioral and developmental challenges.

Justice Resource Initiative: Holyoke

Justice Resource Institute works in partnership with individuals, families, communities and government to pursue the social justice inherent in opening doors to opportunity and independence.

TEACHING STUDENTS WITH TRAUMA



- Recognize that a child is going into survival mode and respond kindly and compassionately
- Create calm, predictable transitions
- Praise publicly and criticize privately
- Adapt your classroom's mindfulness practice
- Take care of yourself
- Expect unexpected responses
- Employ thoughtful interactions
- Limit exclusionary practices

A FEW TIPS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS



- Help your child be made safe and give opportunities to integrate and make sense of their experiences
 - Seek support to help manage your own responses to your child's trauma
 - Identify trauma triggers
 - Respond, don't react
 - Avoid physical punishment
 - Don't take behavior personally
 - Help your child learn to relax
 - Be consistent and predictable
- Find more at [childwelfare.gov](https://www.childwelfare.gov)

HOW TO HELP AS A FRIEND



- Validate what they're saying
 - Ask how you can help
 - Be understanding of their limitations
 - Don't gossip
 - Change the subject
 - Turn to an adult if: things get too heavy, you have concerns about their safety, your mental health is being affected
- Don't feel you have to: be available 24/7, put yourself in danger

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