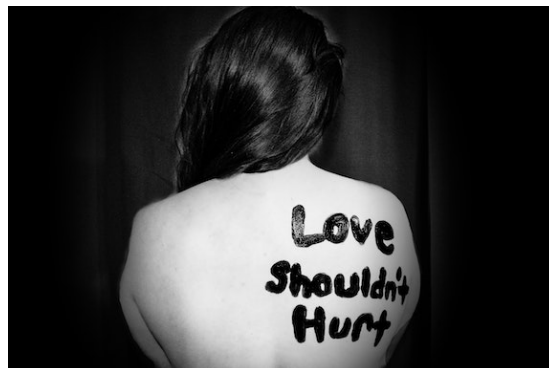


# Trauma

## Introduction

Exposure to abuse, neglect, discrimination, violence, and other adverse experiences increase a person's lifelong potential for serious health problems and engaging in high-risk behaviors. Exposure to traumatic events, especially as children, heightens behavioral and health risks long after the event has occurred. Trauma-informed care acknowledges the need to understand a person's life experiences in order to deliver effective care. Trauma-informed approaches to care shift the focus from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" by:

- Realizing the widespread impact of trauma and understanding potential paths for recovery
- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma in individual people
- Integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- Seeking to actively resist re-traumatization (i.e., avoid creating an environment that inadvertently reminds patients of their traumatic experiences and causes them to experience emotional and biological stress)



The commonly accepted understanding of trauma is that it relates to specifically identifiable personal experiences of psychological or physical violence, including discrimination, sexual abuse, physical abuse, medical mistreatment, and/or witnessing violence, terrorism, and disasters. However, trauma is not necessarily incident-based. The manifestations of trauma can also be generated by less clearly identifiable experiences of day-to-day life, by challenges in the interpersonal realm, by chronic and profound neglect, or by situations that overwhelm the adaptive capacity of the individual. Neurobiological research has established that overwhelming stress, trauma, and neglect particularly impact the parts of the brain that generate thought and memory, often with long term effects, especially in children. Presume that every person in the treatment setting has likely been exposed to abuse, neglect, persistently overwhelming stress, and/or other traumatic experiences.

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## Definition of Abuse

- Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation
  - An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm
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## Types of Maltreatment

- Neglect: Failure to provide for a child's basic needs (physical, medical, educational, emotional)
- Physical Abuse: Physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting, burning, or otherwise harming a child, regardless of intention
- Sexual Abuse: A general term for any type of sexual activity inflicted on a child by someone with whom the child is acquainted; considered an especially heinous crime because the abuser occupies a position of trust; the infliction of sexual contact upon a person by forcible compulsion; the engaging in a sexual contact with a person who is below a specified age or who is incapable of giving consent because of age or mental or physical incapacity

## Other Types of Trauma

- Witnessing domestic violence
- Being the victim of bullying
- Natural Disasters
- Serious accidents
- Discrimination
- War/Terrorism
- Immigration trauma
- Any other situation in which there was fear that one might be killed or seriously injured
- Any other situation in which there was fear that someone else might be killed or seriously injured



## Typical Trauma-Related Problems

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
  - Depression
  - Specific Phobias
  - Nightmares or Problems Sleeping
  - Anxiety
  - Bed-wetting or toileting accidents
  - Delinquency/Aggression
  - Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
  - Substance Use/Abuse
  - Social Skills Deficits
  - Academic Delays
  - Unhealthy Self-Esteem
  - Trust Issues
  - Thought Distortions
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