

School_Nurse Daily Newsletter

By: Tamra Douglas, BSN, RN

Reviewed by: Hopiann Coombs BSN, RN, Reneta Mitchell, AsCJ, Shanique Haughton, BSN, RN

Devotional Highlight

“Seasons” - Ecclesiastics 3 v 1

‘There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.’ - Ecclesiastes 3:1. Have you ever thought about the season that you are currently in? Sometimes it is easier to fight to escape the situation we are in, rather than to let it take its course whilst trying to understand the reason for the adversity.

Someone who is booming in their business and thriving is in a different season than someone who is grieving the death of a loved one. While Joe is in his season of reaping and building a business, Janet is in a season of rest - to allow herself to grieve and leave the worries of life to someone else. So, for Joe to put his business on hold to be there for Janet 24/7 is unwise, and so is Janet forcing herself to be elated for Joe in his season of professional success, when all she wants to do is to be alone and cry.

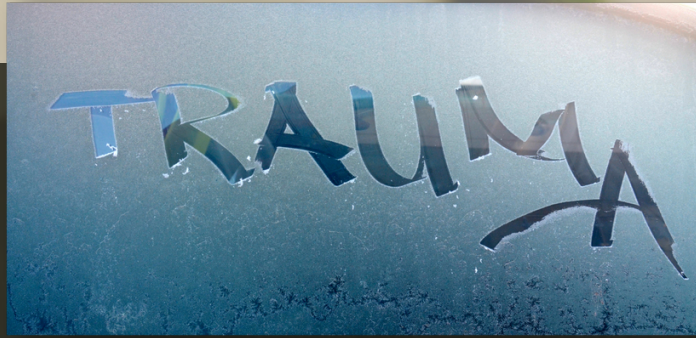
Acknowledge your season and allow it to take its course.

Prayer: Dear God, help us through our seasons right now God. Be it winter, autumn, or summer, help us through it all. Amen.

(Extract from Our Daily Bread)

Topic of the Month “Trauma and Traumatic Stress”





Have you ever had a traumatic experience before? Been in a motor vehicle accident? Witnessed someone being abused? Lost a parent or loved one? Is there violence in your community? Have you ever been bullied, in person or online? Do you feel neglected by your family?



What is Trauma?

"Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster" (APA, n.d.). It is normal for adolescents to be exposed to trauma. This is also associated with youth emotional and behavioural problems such as suicidality, delinquency, depression, and anxiety. Most traumatic experiences in youths are linked to physical abuse, sexual abuse, community violence, natural disaster, dysfunctional family processes and even witnessing domestic violence.

What happens when you are exposed to a traumatic event?

- Traumatic stress

Have you ever wondered why your teenage child may be misbehaving, other than focusing on the fact that they are 'bad'?

Most adolescents are yet to have the emotional and cognitive capabilities needed to process trauma effectively, without having outside help. Without the proper guidance, they will "lash out", exhibit behavioural problems, sleeping issues such as insomnia, sleeping too much, social withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, amongst others (Mission Harbor Behavioral Health, 2020). Why? Because that is the only way they know to express themselves. Instead of properly processing their emotions, they displace them. Not many adolescents would have been fortunate enough to grow up in a family that teaches them how to process their emotions, but only how to displace them.



Traumatic stress refers to the physiological and emotional response we have to traumatic events. It produces intense physical and emotional reactions such as feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless. It also influences physiological reactions such as a pounding heart, dizziness, trembling, and nausea (NCTSN, n.d.).



Acute Trauma vs Chronic Trauma

Acute Trauma and Chronic Trauma may be divided into two categories as the name suggests: acute trauma and chronic trauma. Acute trauma are those that happen quickly and at only one point in time, yet leaves a lasting impact regardless of this. These may be experiencing a car accident, being sexually assaulted or threatened, witnessing an injury or assault of someone (Mission Harbor Behavioral Health, 2020), even the death of a loved one.

Chronic trauma are those that are ongoing, repeating painful experiences. Adolescents that experience this might indulge in drugs and alcohol to calm anxiety and negative thoughts. An unstable home environment, consistent physical or emotional abuse, bullying, domestic violence, consistent neglect, and community violence are examples of chronic trauma. Our teens experiencing this may become socially isolated, have difficulty regulating their emotions, have poor impulse control, have low self esteem, and may have self-destructive behaviours.



Coping with Trauma

Some responses to trauma may be noticeable while some aren't. As parents, it is important to be able to know when your child is 'off'. When their change in eating habits is different, when their emotional and physical response to certain situations are different, when they no longer want to socialise with their peers, when they suddenly begin to disobey you. It is important for you to notice these changes because that is your child crying for help.

Some adolescents may cope with trauma negatively, as a result of this it may make the situation worse.

♥ Nurse D's Tip

Dear Adolescents,

I know this must be scary, chances are this isn't your first 'rodeo', but it is important that you learn how to process these emotions and regulate them well. You cannot do it alone. You will have to reach out to a trusted adult to help you work through your trauma, even if you feel like there is 'no one' around you to do so. You have your school community to help you as well, you have your Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, and School Nurses to confide in, so make use of them.





♥ Dear Parents

I know we are socialised to believe that only adults have 'real problems' dealing with. That only adults know what it means to be stressed, but we were socialised wrong. We were led to believe this and in turn, lack empathy towards our adolescents. Lack of empathy discourages them from wanting to share with us what they are going through. Instead, they prefer to talk to their peers that can only do so much and no more; leading them to find 'alternative means' of processing their emotions. Eventually, this makes it harder for them to communicate with us and others.

We really need to do better as a society, and I pray we lean in on doing so. With our children experiencing trauma, there are so much we can do, including:

- Listening to them. Many of us do not listen to their troubles
- Encouraging them to communicate with us, and remind them that we will hold no judgement after listening to them.
- Showing them empathy and that you really care.
- Helping them to process their emotions by giving them room to 'lack'. What I mean by saying this is that you will allow them room to not do the dishes tonight because they are feeling low. Allowing them to feel sad and not force them to 'forget it already' because they are allowed to feel their emotions. Allow them to be while doing little household and school duties during their recovery period.
- Remind them they are human and that they are having a 'normal' reaction to a traumatic event (UF, n.d.).

And when necessary, turn to a health professional to step in if you believe they aren't making any progress in their situation. No, this does not mean they are mentally ill, it just means that they need more help to overcome their adversity, and that is okay.

♥ Den Cu Yah!

Studies show that 70-90% of people will be exposed to a traumatic experience in their life. So, chances are, you have already experienced one as well.

Personally attributed to my experience - at least 3 of every 10 (female) students I meet indulge in self-harm, and knows a friend that does it as well.

Bonus Section - Question and Answer

Question: Why does it feel like the only thing that I know how to do is to harm myself?

Answer: That is mainly attributed to the fact that you are yet to learn how to process your emotions and regulate it properly. It will be important for you to learn how to use positive coping skills in order to control this.

Question: Why do I keep turning to self-harm?

Answer: That is because it gives you temporary relief of the overwhelming emotions you are feeling. It acts like a temporary outlet as you are able to feel physical pain instead of the emotional trauma you are experiencing.

Question: Not a question but, I know my situation won't change, so I will have to self-harm forever.

Answer: Sadly, it is true that many situations will not change for us, that is why coping skills are so important, as well as developing emotion-regulatory skills. With these, you will be better able to understand your emotions, know where they are coming from and what they mean to you. Then you will know how to adequately cope in your situation in a way that leads to you feeling better about yourself and your circumstances - irrespective of it not changing. The saying that goes 'it's a mind over matter thing' also applies here. Your mind is stronger than your situation, and believe it or not, you can strengthen it.

Disclaimer: The content on this newsletter should not be used in place of medical/professional consultation or advice, but to be used for educational purposes only.

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Thank you

