



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

Fact Sheet on Trauma

What is Trauma?

Trauma is defined by CAMH as: "...the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event." This definition is left purposefully vague to encompass the wide variety of situations that can invoke trauma or the varied responses that people may have as a result. Trauma can result from a variety of situations and may not be experienced by two people in the same way.

Trauma and the Body

Trauma responses in the body are governed by multiple brain/body processes, though the primary system in responses is called the autonomic nervous system, which among other processes governs fight, flight, and freeze responses. Some responses to these situations dissipate shortly after the event ends, but in some individuals they become persistent and can interfere with these individuals' lives. This document serves to highlight common responses to trauma to assist individuals experiencing difficulties following crises, or their families in identifying the symptoms of trauma

Symptoms

RE-EXPERIENCING THE EVENT

- Recurrent and intrusive memories of the event
- Recurrent dreams of the event
- Flashbacks: feelings of reliving the event
- Triggers: events or objects (stimuli) that evoke strong emotions related to the traumatic event

AVOIDANCE REACTIONS

- Avoiding thoughts or feelings associated with the event
- Avoiding activities or situations that remind you of the event
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the event
- Decreased interest in people or activities
- Feeling cut-off from yourself or others (restricted range of feelings)
- Hopelessness about the future



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

North: 45 Columbia St. E. Waterloo, ON
Central: 134 Frederick St. Kitchener, ON
South: 176 Hespeler Rd. Cambridge, ON

Phone: 519-585-2363
After-Hours: 519-570-5143
Email: vswr@wrps.on.ca
Website: www.vswr.ca

Symptoms cont.

REOCCURRING SYMPTOMS

- Sleep Disturbances
- Changes in eating habits
- Crying easily
- Difficulty concentrating
- Stomach pains, headaches, and muscle tension

OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS

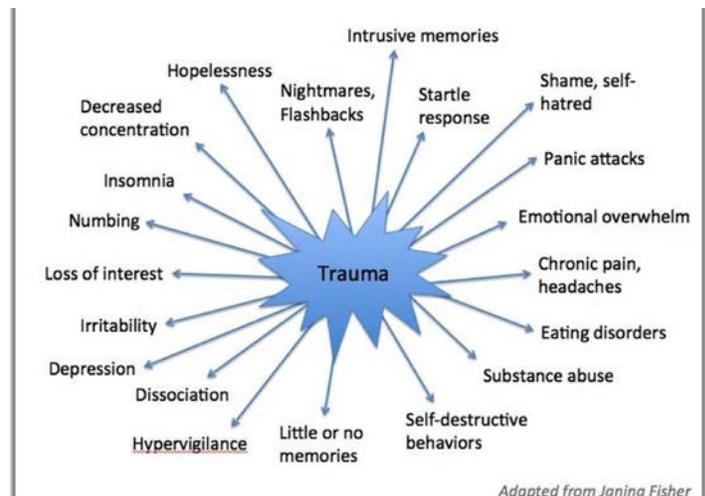
- Fear of it happening again
- Depression
- Guilt
- Shame
- Increased family conflict
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Shock and/or denial
- Difficulty coping with ordinary life
- Odd or irrational behavior

ADDITIONAL REACTIONS THAT CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS MAY EXPERIENCE

- Regression to younger behaviors
- Enuresis (bed-wetting)
- Crankiness, clinging, possessiveness
- Afraid of sleeping in their own bed
- Increased crying over simple things
- Night terrors
- Separation anxiety
- Refusal to go to school

What Victims Commonly Need

- A place (mentally and physically) of safety and shelter
- Empathy
- A non-judgmental Listener who will treat the communication in confidence
- Assistance in finding appropriate supports such as counseling or medical help
- Someone who is familiar with community resources
- Assistance in arrangements such as funerals, insurance details, filing claims and certificates
- Someone educated in trauma reaction to help normalize the emotions and thoughts being experienced



Resources

The Canadian Mental Health Association

www.cmhawrb.on.ca
Kitchener (519) 744-7645
Cambridge (519) 740-7782
Ayr (519) 632-9737

Here 24/7 - CMHA Crisis Line

1-844-437-3247



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