

## Part 6

# UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

## A Handy Guide For Facilitators

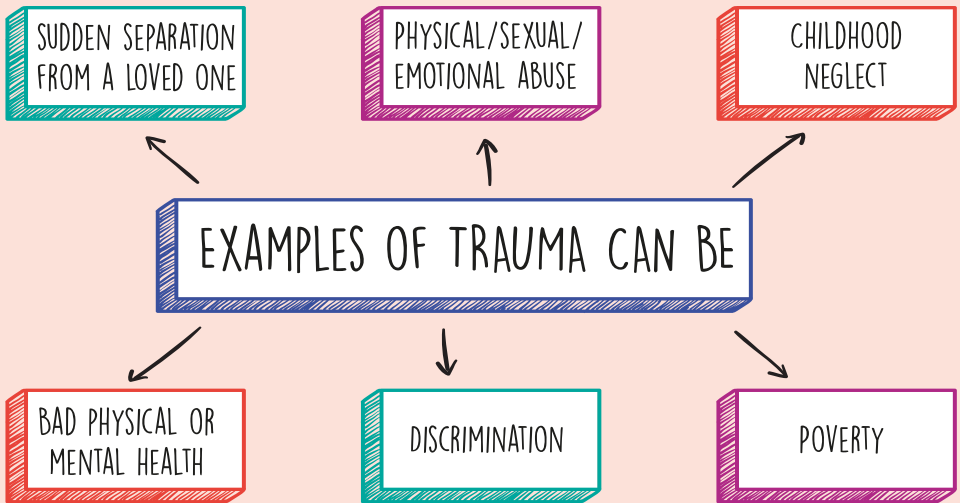


*THIS ACTIVITY IS A PART OF 'UNDERSTANDING CHILD PROTECTION' MODULE BY PROPSAHAN INDIA FOUNDATION. TO KNOW MORE VISIT: [WWW.PROPSAHAN.CO.IN](http://WWW.PROPSAHAN.CO.IN)*

# What Is Trauma?

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Events or circumstances experienced by an individual which can be physical or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, which result in adverse effects on the individual's functioning and well-being.

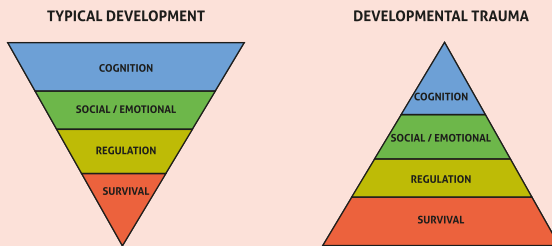
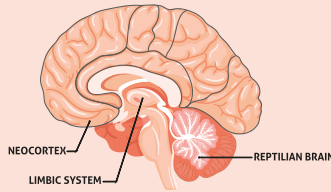


We need Trauma-informed care so every children's life experiences are key to potentially improving their quality of life, physical and mental health.

It makes child care: MORE INCLUSIVE!

# Science Behind Trauma

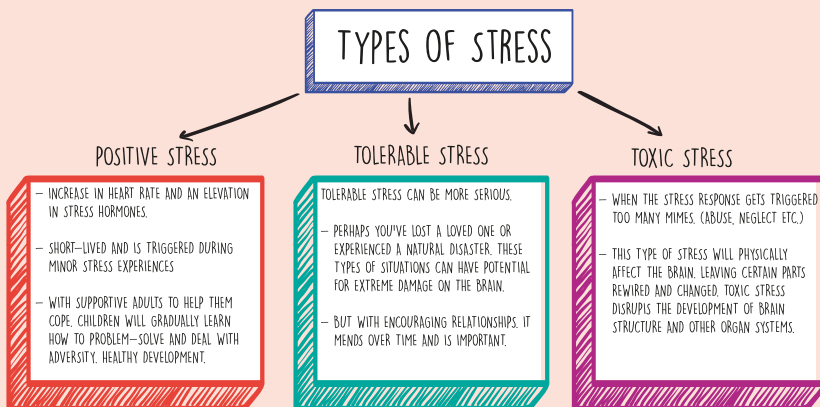
## TRAUMA & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education

We have all experienced some sort of stress as children. Maybe it was a test you didn't study for or moving schools and finding new friends.

Regardless, it's important to keep in mind that a little bit of stress from time to time is healthy: it helps us grow and understand how to overcome problems we may face. However, when the stress response is triggered too many times, there can be lasting effects on the brain that carry to adulthood. Stress plays a prominent role in the development of a child.



# Effects On The Brain

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Toxic stress causes permanent damage on the brain. Focusing on the amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and the anterior cingulate cortex (aka the ACC). The amygdala, also known as the fear center, detects dangerous things in the surrounding area and tell the body to act. **But it can become overactivated due to toxic stress.**

In other words, your **amygdala is always telling your body that you are in danger resulting in chronic stress, where one feels unsafe, fearful, and irritated.** Furthermore, victims will often overreact to minor triggers because trauma sensitizes one's amygdala, meaning that fear responses are triggered by lower levels of stress.

The prefrontal cortex, or the thinking center, regulates the stress response system by making things seem less scary than they really are. Outside of stress, it helps regulate our emotions and memory as well as sensory processing which allows us to effectively use our body in certain events, such as learning and problem solving. However, **trauma causes the prefrontal cortex to become underactivated.** Consequences of a damaged prefrontal cortex include difficulties with concentration, attention and learning.

Cortisol, is a hormone that increases heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and muscle tension to prepare us to fight or run away, otherwise known as the fight-or-flight reaction. **High levels of cortisol impair one's ability to think rationally or logically.** So, when our body is always thinking it is in danger, there will be constant high levels affecting our ability to concentrate & learn.

**A damaged anterior cingulate cortex results in difficulties with regulating emotions.** For example, if someone gets pranked, they could remain scared long after the joke ends.

**Childhood trauma can cause many psychological issues, such as PTSD, high stress levels, and depression.**

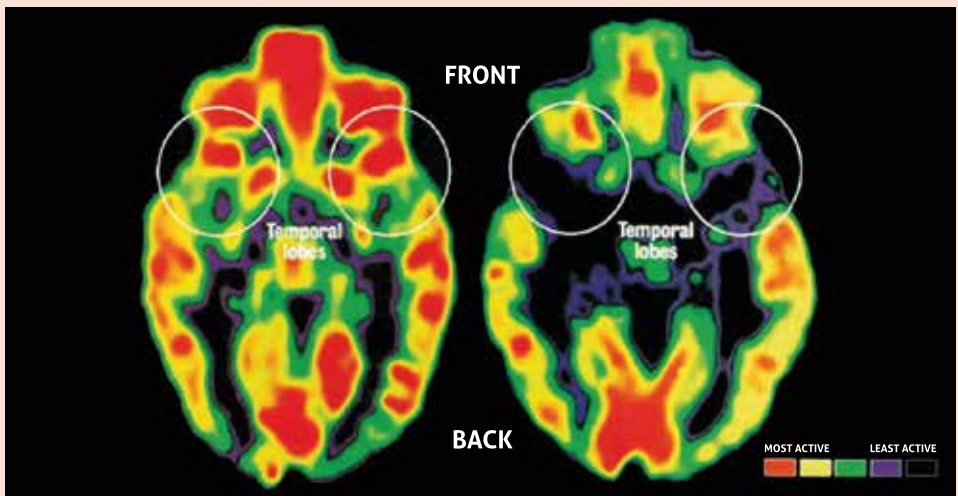
# Can We Heal?

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## YES!

Research indicates that supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible can help prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress.

One of the safest ways to solve one's trauma over time. It's a good idea to build confidence progressively and work towards a goal in which one can help relieve toxic stress, as these relationships will help build trust and a sense of community within the child, resulting in them eventually learning how to overcome their trauma.



**Healthy Brain**

This PET scan of the brain of a normal child shows regions of high (red) and low (blue and black) activity. At birth, only primitive structures such as the brain stem (center) are fully functional; in regions like the temporal lobes (top), early childhood experiences wire the circuits.

**An Abused Brain**

This PET scan of the brain of a Romanian Orphan, who was institutionalized shortly after birth, shows the effect of extreme deprivation in infancy. The temporal lobes (top), which regulate emotions and receive input from the senses, are nearly quiescent. Such children suffer emotional and cognitive problems.

**Recovering can be a long and difficult journey, but with enough patience, support, and care, one can finally be free of that burden.**

# Trauma Signs & Symptoms

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## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA TO LOOK OUT FOR IN A CHILD:

- TANTRUMS THAT DO NOT STOP WITHIN A FEW MINUTES
- INABILITY TO BE SOOTHED OR COMFORTED
- EASILY STARTLED
- AGGRESSION
- SLEEPLESSNESS
- WITHDRAWAL FROM PREVIOUSLY TRUSTED ADULTS
- AVOIDANCE OF EYE CONTACT OR PHYSICAL CONTACT
- POOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
- DIFFICULTY FOCUSING
- INABILITY TO TRUST OTHERS/MAKE FRIENDS
- FREQUENT STOMACH ACHES AND HEADACHES
- UNUSUAL CLINGINESS



# Trauma Signs & Symptoms

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## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA TO LOOK OUT FOR IN A CHILD:

- BED-WETTING
- ACTING OUT IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS
- SCHOOL PROBLEMS
- SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS
- VERBAL ABUSE TOWARD OTHERS
- OVERREACTION TO SITUATIONS
- FEAR OF BEING SEPARATED FROM CAREGIVER
- LONELINESS
- LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE
- FEAR OF ADULTS WHO REMIND THEM OF THE TRAUMA
- SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THE CHILD'S AGE
- HOARDING OF FOOD/THINGS



# Creating Trauma Friendly Classrooms

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## CREATING TRAUMA FRIENDLY CLASSROOMS & ACTIVITIES

1. Start the day with breathing exercises. Ground the children so they are in a calmer space now. E.g. Trace number 1-10 at the back of your palm, breathe in at 1, breathe out at 2 and so on. This activity engages the child in their senses and makes them more aware of their breathing and bodies.
2. Peer learning groups can be fun way of understanding interpersonal relationships and how we all have something to learn from each other. Have peer learning sessions once a month where children teach each other in small groups.
3. A designated weekly/daily sharing time can be a great way of helping children learn that they can share things in this space, they can be better listeners and that they aren't alone in their sufferings. It inspires more unity in groups.
4. Discuss the plan for the class with the child. It allows them the space for questions and they understand consent. Ask them if they know something about the topic of the day. Discuss, more than order. Let them be an active part of their learning process, however small the part is.
5. LISTEN, that's it. Children are always trying to tell us something, even in their silence.



# The Trauma Friendly Classroom

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- THE TEACHERS UNDERSTAND WHAT TRAUMA IS
- BELIEVES THAT A CHILD HAS A MIND OF THEIR OWN
- TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO "CALM" ONESELF EVERY DAY.
- PROVIDES CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL SAFETY.
- CHILDREN REGULARLY COME AND TALK TO TEACHERS.
- COMMUNICATION IS MOST IMPORTANT IN A CLASSROOM.
- THERE IS A SAFE EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- **GIVING CHILDREN CHOICES**

Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos, so you can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate.

- **SAFE SPACE IS PROVIDED**

Designated sharing time.

- **PROTECT**

Protect the traumatized child from peers' curiosity and protect peers' from the details of a child's trauma



# What We Say, Matters...

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**Don't Say!**

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU??

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THIS?

STOP THAT. RIGHT NOW!

THAT IS SO EASY! WHY ARE YOU NOT GETTING IT???



**Say!**

LET ME HELP YOU WITH THIS.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU BETA?

LET ME DO (\_\_\_). MAYBE THAT WILL HELP YOU OUT!

DO YOU NEED TO BE ANGRY? LET'S DO IT SAFELY INSTEAD.

ARE YOU FINDING IT DIFFICULT? LET'S TAKE IT STEP BY STEP.

# In Our School...

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WE ARE RESPECTFUL,  
HONEST AND KIND

WE ARE CREATIVE AND  
HAVE FUN LEARNING!

WE WORK HARD  
AND TRY OUR BEST

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE

WE LOOK FOR GOOD  
IN SELF AND OTHERS

WE HELP EACH OTHER

WE MAKE MISTAKES  
AND LEARN FROM THEM

WE HAVE A RIGHT  
TO FEEL SAFE

WE RESPECT  
EACH OTHERS' SPACE

WE SAY PLEASE  
AND THANK YOU.

WE ASK FOR HELP  
WHENEVER WE NEED IT

WE FOLLOW  
DIRECTIONS

WE RESOLVE CONFLICTS PEACEFULLY

## WE ALL BELONG AND MATTER!



WE WORK TOGETHER, EVEN THE TEACHERS ARE A PART OF OUR TEAM

# Trauma Informed Thoughts

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WHAT IS THE  
CHILD TRYING TO  
COMMUNICATE?

WE ARE A TEAM AND  
TEAMS ARE IN IT  
TOGETHER!

CHILD'S BEHAVIOR  
IS NOT ABOUT ME.

CHILD HAS A MIND  
OF THEIR OWN TOO

REMEMBER, HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE. A CHILD'S  
BEHAVIOR IS A REFLECTION OF THEIR INNER WORLD.



SEE THE NEED, BEHIND THE BEHAVIOR. AND TALK!