

Benefits of treatment for your child's trauma

Unfortunately, children do not heal from traumas by "forgetting" them. They may bury the memory over time, but it will often show up in problematic behaviors. Repeated studies show that trauma can have lasting and powerful effects on children and adolescents who do not get help. The good news is that treatment for trauma can be very effective. Studies show that the earlier you seek treatment for your child's trauma, the more successful it will be. Effective treatments for trauma often focus on decreasing immediate symptoms, increasing self-control, improving relationships, improving academic functioning, and restoring your child's trust in him/herself and in the future. Professionals should also provide family therapy to help family members to respond in a helpful way to the trauma and to create an environment that will best support the child's healing.

Where to get help

There are books at your local library that can provide you with more in-depth information about trauma. You may also need to seek professional help for your child or teenager. Speak with your child's pediatrician or your local mental health center in order to find a professional who specializes in childhood and adolescent development and the treatment of trauma.

Trauma

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What is Trauma?

How you can tell if your child or teenager is experiencing trauma:

When a child or adolescent becomes overwhelmed by a sudden, often hurtful or scary event, trauma may result. Depending on the child's strengths and resources, the trauma may have a small or a large impact on his or her life.

Trauma can have a negative effect on relationships, self-control, and self-esteem. Traumatized children and adolescents may fall behind in their development as they avoid the normal risks and activities that nurture growth. Many studies show that traumatized children and teenagers are more vulnerable to depression and other potentially serious problems with adjustment and behavior.

Symptoms of Trauma

Sleep Disturbance

nightmares, problems sleeping

Flashbacks

images of the event(s) that the child cannot stop

Anxiety

panic reactions, separation anxiety, general nervousness

Fear

of potential danger in usual, everyday activities

Setbacks

in age-appropriate activities and skills

Withdrawal

from pleasurable activities

Personality Changes

Complaints

of aches and pains

What causes trauma?

Many stressful events in childhood are normal and do not result in trauma. An event can be called "traumatic" when it is especially sudden, unpredictable, difficult to cope with, or leads to feelings of extreme helplessness. Some common sources of childhood trauma are: accidental injury and severe illness, catastrophes and disasters, physical and sexual abuse, witnessing violence in the community or home, and loss of a loved one.

When should you seek help?

You may need to seek professional help for your child if he or she:

- has some of the symptoms of trauma for more than six weeks
- becomes less successful in academic, family, and social activities
- engages in dangerous play and risks the safety of him/herself or others
- if the trauma is negatively affecting other members of the family.