

# TRAUMA ON CHILDREN

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 Analysis

'An event or an experience which threaten psychological and physical integrity' is called a trauma. The term "threat" is used because there is a threat against lives, body, integrity, belief system and loved ones in traumatic events. This threat comes suddenly and unexpectedly, where it breaks the daily rhythm of people's lives, effects people negatively and fray them out emotionally.

This analysis will look at the destructive effects of trauma upon children, the nature and symptoms of trauma as well as its coping methods.

## Types of Trauma

Trauma is also defined as normal reactions to abnormal events, because responding abnormally to abnormal events is considered normal in trauma process. There are many factors that might cause trauma. Some of them are man-made causes such as war, violence,

homicide and some of them occur beyond the control of human being such as natural disasters. Below are the most occurring types of trauma:

- Sex-related trauma (sexual abuse, rape, incest, pornography etc.)
- Loss-related trauma (loss of another human, animal, organ, relationship and grieving process)
- Emotional Violence-related trauma (neglect, insult, derision, curses etc.)
- Parental Attitudes-related trauma (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, uninvolved, excessive concerned, etc.)
- Physical Violence-related trauma (experiencing or being a witness of violence from parents, friends or adults)
- Illness-related trauma (chronic disorders, terminal diseases, surgery, hospital environment etc.)



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- School-related trauma (excessive punishment, neglect, sexual or physical violence from teachers or friends etc.)
- Relationship-related trauma (to be deceived, divorce, to be insulted, humiliated, community violence, bullying etc.)
- Life Alteration-related trauma (divorce, separation, dismissal, financial difficulties, frequent moving etc.)
- Natural Disaster-related trauma (flood, earthquake, fire, drought, blizzard, etc.)
- Other Traumas (to be in prison, terrorism, abortion, early childhood traumas, discrimination, being refugees, asphyxia, complex trauma, etc.)

## The Process of Trauma

Some traumatic events can occur only once in a person's life and it happens in a short time such as natural disasters, accidents, abuses and so on. However, other traumatic events can happen for a long time such as persistent sexual abuse, being a refugee, being held hostage and so on.

Small children in particular, when they are faced with traumas, might suffer greater damages compared to that of adults such as botulism, burning, asphyxia and fall. Therefore many trauma-related death cases can be seen among small children.

## Symptoms of Trauma

### *Cognitive Symptoms*

- Weak verbal ability
- Memory problems
- Concentration and attention problem
- Learning difficulties
- Negative flashbacks
- Recurrent thoughts of traumatic events
- Nightmares
- Re-creating the traumas

### *Behavioral Symptoms*

- Taking attention with positive or negative actions
- Committing violence, having problems of anger and aggression
- Disturbing behaviors in public places
- Imitation of trauma or abuse
- Cursing
- Excessive crying or screaming
- Hyper arousal
- Family and friendship problems
- Trusting issues
- Self-blame
- Fear about traumatic things
- Excitement, sadness, nervousness
- Introversion
- Avoidance
- Low self-esteem
- Fear of separation/being alone

### *Psychological Symptoms*

- Shock
- Fear
- Grief
- Anger
- Guilt
- Shame
- Helplessness
- Lack of interest
- Depression, anxiety, stress and other psychological disorders

### *Physical Symptoms*

- Lack of appetite or excessive appetite
- Digestion problems
- Headaches, chest pain

- Queasiness and stomach problems
- Fainting and psychosomatic disorders
- Sensitiveness against noises
- Hyper vigilance
- Persistent fatigue
- Shortness of breath and becoming sickly

At times like these, children might want to be closer to their parents and vice versa. During this period especially, children can show regression symptoms where they return to childish actions or act in unsuitable behaviors according to their ages such as bed-wetting, thumb sucking and nail biting or transient tic. These regression symptoms are normal provided they happen in a short term. Therefore parents should not react in extreme reactions to these symptoms. Otherwise, these symptoms will not stop and continue in a long run.

## Trauma Healing Techniques

- Awareness Raising: training children and their families about trauma and it's effects may help to understand the importance of trauma and how to cope with it.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: talking and discussing about traumatic events with children and doing some relaxing exercises before confronting the traumatic events (this should be done by professionals). At the same time, play therapy, art therapy, EMDR and other psychological techniques may be helpful in coping with trauma.
- Understand that they have a valid reason to be afraid and have anxiety even if you perceive their fears as meaningless.
- Talking with children about their personal traumatic event, fears, dreams, nightmares, future thoughts as much detailed as possible and according to their ages.
- Listen to children and encourage them to speak out.
- Sharing emotions between children and their parents is important too. If children see that their parents also have fear at times, then they can be relax knowing that it is normal to have fears.
- Being together as a family is important during traumatic and stressful times. Usually after a traumatic event children may think that their family will leave them and they will end up being alone. Families of traumatic children should stay close to them to prevent the children from having this feeling.
- Trusting children is important but telling them that they are trusted is not enough, it has to be proven with behaviors. Therefore parents should spend as much time as possible with their children and do activities together.
- Sometimes children develop sleeping problems, like sleeping late at night or wanting to keep sleeping with their parents in order to talk to them before falling asleep. When children have these wishes, allow them to do so for a limited time. However, do not extend this for more than two or three days, as they need to quickly go back to their normal routine.
- Children yearn to be appreciated as it makes them happy. Focusing to appreciate their positive behaviors and thoughts is so important in these critical times. Parents can ask for the simplest favors from their children and then appreciate their help. This small gesture will make children feel appreciated and increase their confidence and the feeling of being loved.
- Saying 'I love you' frequently and giving supportive messages such as 'these days will pass' to traumatized children is one of the many helpful reassuring techniques.
- If children do not want to go to school due to trauma, parents should try to send them to school. However talking to the school counselor and teachers about the trauma faced by the children is very important.

## Result

Summarily, we can see how the destructive effects of trauma do not only show on adults,

but also on children. Children can also develop difficulties while coping with traumas. Therefore, they should never feel alone and if they need professional help it should be provided. It needs to be noted that if children receive enough professional support in the right time and place, their traumas will not be transferred to future generations. However they lack the support that

they need, then the risk for them to recreate and transfer their traumas for future generations is high. Therefore when a child who suffered from trauma start to show the aforementioned symptoms and have some difficulties to maintain her/his life then immediate professional and social help should be provided immediately.

