

Trauma Related Challenges



What is a traumatic event?



Traumatic Event

intense, frightening, dangerous or violent events that either threaten or cause harm to a child's physical or emotional well being and overwhelm their ability to cope.

- May be a single event, series of events or set of enduring circumstances
- Can be directly experienced, witnessed or include repeated exposure to details
- Highly subjective, based on an individual experience of the event(s)
- Don't make assumptions about the potential impact of event(s).

Cultural and Historical Trauma



Cultural Trauma

An attack on the fabric of a society, affecting the essence of the community and it's members

Historical Trauma

A collective and cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, which results from massive group trauma such as genocide, slavery, colonization, or forced relocation

Racism and Oppression continue to create and exacerbate cultural and historical trauma

What are potentially traumatic events?



- Child abuse and neglect
- Family or community violence
- Separation from caregiver or loved one
- Sudden or violent loss of loved one
- Impaired caregiver
- Serious accidents
- Life-threatening illness
- Natural and technological disasters and terrorism
- Refugee and war experiences
- Immigration experiences
- Military family related stressors
- physical/sexual/emotional abuse, human trafficking
- family/home/community/school (bullying)
- foster care, deportation
- in a particular caregiver
- due to a mental health or substance abuse challenge
- car accident, fire, dog-bite
- deployment, parental loss or injury

Child traumatic Stress



What is child traumatic stress (CTS)?



- When someone experiences a traumatic event, it is common to have strong immediate emotional and physical reactions. These typically remit over time.
- When youth develop reactions that persist and affect their daily lives in an ongoing way, we call this Child Traumatic Stress (CTS) or Post Traumatic Stress (PTS).

What does it look like in students?



Intrusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— recurring, intrusive thoughts, images, memories and dreams of the traumatic event— dissociative reactions or flashbacks— strong distress or reactivity when exposed to trauma triggers, cues or reminders— trauma reenactment
Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— thoughts, feelings or physical sensations related to the event— people, places, things, conversations, or activities related to the event
Negative Cognitions & Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— inability to remember key aspects of the trauma— overly negative beliefs and assumptions about one's self, others, or the world— exaggerated blame of self or others for the cause or outcome of the trauma— persistent negative emotional state and difficulties regulating emotions and difficulties— loss of interest in activities that they used to enjoy and feeling detached from others— Inability to experience positive emotions and feeling flat or numb
Arousal & Reactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— irritability & aggression; impulsive, reckless, self-destructive behaviors— hypervigilance, startle response, trouble sleeping— difficulty concentrating & physical complaints

Why does it matter?



- Trauma and violence exposure in childhood is directly linked to school difficulty
- Youth experiencing PTS/CTS use many internal resources dealing with their symptoms as well as paying attention to their surrounding environment, making less resources available for learning
- These youth are more likely to misinterpret environmental and interpersonal cues as threatening and educators are often unaware of this internal activation, making it seem as if the youth overreacts or behaves in ways that don't make sense
- It is critical for educators to be recognize possible CTS/PTS reactions in students connect them with necessary supports and minimize triggers in the environment