

Trauma

What is trauma?

According to Young Minds, 'trauma' is used to describe both one-off events and/or things that are experienced over months or years, for example, within a child's family or peer relationships. A traumatic experience often involves a threat to a child's physical or emotional safety, and a sense of being trapped, powerless or unsupported in the face of a perceived danger or in the time.



Ultimately, whether or not an event or experience is traumatic for a child, depends on how it makes them feel as an individual. One child can find an event traumatic while another does not. The way we react to and experience what happens to us is shaped by all kinds of factors – from our personality to our life history, the support available to us, our relationships, our community and our culture.

Stress, crisis and trauma (The Simple Guide to Child Trauma by Betsy de Theirry)

There is a difference between stress, crisis and trauma. Most children have stress and this can become a positive experience that fuels momentum and learning if it is limited to short, sharp bursts for specific reasons like a new experience or a performance.

Crisis is something that many children experience, but with emotional support and a primary caregiver helping to navigate the child through it, there does not have to be any negative consequences that last long term.

'Trauma' is defined by the Institute of Recovery from Childhood trauma as 'an event or series of events such as abuse, maltreatment, neglect or tragedy that causes a profound experience of helplessness leading to terror'.

Trauma shatters our sense of safety, stability, trust and innocence.

Trauma is toxic stress that is created when trauma is prolonged and where the child is powerless and cannot change the continually frightening experience. It can impact a child immediately in the short term and can cause impact in the long term unless there is an appropriate response given to help the child recover.

Next week we will look at how children's experiences and environment affect them. If your child has suffered trauma, or is suffering traumatic experiences, ensure that you are seeking professional support. If your child has not suffered trauma, please remember that behaviour is a form of communication, and that a child may be behaving in a certain way as a result of trauma and that they need our understanding and support.



Working together to keep our children safe and happy.