

PLEASE
TAKE
ONE!

TRAUMA



WHAT IS TRAUMA?



Trauma happens when a distressing event overwhelms your ability to cope with the situation, and can have long-lasting effects. Trauma can be a single significant event, or a long-term pattern of seemingly less significant events.

What causes trauma depends on the person who experiences it. Some situations can be traumatic for some people, but not for others. A few examples of potentially traumatic events include difficult childhood events (abuse, neglect or disrupted attachment), and events in later life that involve loss of control (experiencing violence, natural disasters, war, serious accidents, or a sudden and unexpected loss). You can also experience trauma from witnessing a distressing event happen to others. (1,2)

Trauma is relatively common - some estimates predict that 3 out of 4 Canadians will experience a traumatic event at some point in their lives. (3)

WHY TRAUMA MATTERS

Trauma can have far-reaching effects on your health and wellbeing, even many years after the events took place. In fact, the younger you were when you experienced trauma, the more distressed your response is likely to be. People with untreated traumatic histories may be more likely to experience anxiety, depression, anger, grief, fear and shame, and can have difficulty in relationships with others. This can show up as trouble trusting or becoming close with others, withdrawing from loved ones, difficulty with intimacy, not recognizing dangerous situations, or repeatedly searching for someone to rescue them. (5)

PTSD

While not everyone who experiences trauma will experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD is a natural response to experiencing one or more major traumas. You can experience PTSD after a traumatic event happens to you or a loved one, after witnessing a trauma that happens to someone else, or being significantly or repeatedly exposed to difficult details of a traumatic event. (For example, as a first responder.)

PTSD can involve some (but not necessarily all) of the following symptoms: repeated unwanted memories of the event, nightmares, feelings of reliving the trauma, a sense of panic when reminded of the event(s), avoiding anything that reminds you of the trauma, feeling detached from others, persistent low mood or the inability to feel positive emotions, memory issues, anger and irritability, reckless behaviour, feeling on guard all the time, trouble concentrating, or sleep issues.

If left untreated, PTSD can be very disruptive in a person's life, but the good news is that PTSD is treatable! (6)



TRAUMATIC MEMORIES

Memories from traumatic events aren't stored in our brains as normal memories. In a traumatic experience, our brains are flooded with stress hormones, causing a handful of those earlier memories (and any other parts your brain views as especially important) to be stored with vivid detail, while some of the memories get stored as fragmented sensory information instead.

This happens as stress hormones overwhelm the part of the brain that puts everything into perspective and order, the hippocampus. That's why it can be hard to remember the exact details or order of events, or feel like parts of the trauma were "just a blur".

These fragments of sensory memories are tied closely with feelings of threat and danger in our brains, and are primed to be quickly triggered in the future if we see, smell, feel, touch or hear anything that reminds our brains of the trauma.

This type of memory is unconscious but can strongly affect our thoughts and behaviour, which is why it can sometimes feel like our reactions to small or seemingly irrelevant things don't make sense or feel outside of our control. (8)

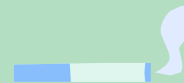
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Trauma that happened to our parents and larger family tree can affect us in more ways than one. While we can be affected by compromised parenting, information or communication around the trauma itself, or increased social or economic difficulties in the family, it's also likely that trauma can affect gene expression. These changes get passed along in our DNA - a process known as epigenetics. (7)



SUBSTANCES

Experiencing trauma is often extremely uncomfortable and overwhelming, and we can be drawn to using alcohol, tobacco or recreational drugs to help numb or cope with those feelings. While this may seem to offer some initial relief, these methods can aggravate the symptoms in the long run. (4)



TREATMENT



The good news is there are highly effective treatments for trauma available, including EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), somatic psychotherapies, CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), neurofeedback, and many other helpful modalities.

To get started, talk with your doctor or mental health professional about your trauma related symptoms and issues, and ask about your options.



LOVED ONES

It can be challenging to care for someone who has experienced trauma or PTSD. They can have difficulty feeling or expressing love, or being in close relationships. It's not uncommon for some caregivers to feel lonely or abandoned in the process of caring for their suffering loved ones. An important part of taking care of someone else is to take care of yourself, too! Find activities that help keep you happy and healthy, and prioritize keeping those activities in your life. The more wellness you have, the more you'll be able to offer your loved one.

MORE INFORMATION

1. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/trauma>
2. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/CCSA-Trauma-informed-Care-Toolkit-2014-en.pdf>
3. <https://cpa.ca/sections/traumaticstress/simplefacts/>
4. <https://cpa.ca/sections/traumaticstress/wheretogogether/>
5. <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/guides-and-publications/trauma.pdf>
6. <https://www.anxietycanada.com/disorders/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>
7. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/02/legacy-trauma>
8. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/trauma/p4.html>

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24/7 HELP LINES - PHONE

1-800-SUICIDE	1-800-784-2433
Crisis Line / Mental Health Support	310-6789 (no area code needed)
Fraser Health Crisis Line	604-951-8855
Kids Help Line (BC)	310-1234 (no area code needed)
Kids Help Line (Canada)	1-800-668-6868
KUU-US Crisis Line (Aboriginal)	1-800-588-8717
VictimLink	1-800-563-0808
Youth Against Violence Line	1-800-680-4264
Child Protection Services BC	1-800-663-9122

TEXT OR ONLINE CHAT

YouthSpace (Text)	778-783-0177
Youth Against Violence (Text)	604-836-6381
youthinbc.com	Daily from 12pm - 1am
youthspace.ca	Daily from 6pm - 12am
kidshelpphone.ca	Wed - Sun, 3pm - 11pm

SUBSTANCE USE HELP

Alcohol and Drug Resources	604-660-9382
Pacific Community Resource Society	604-836-6273
Little House Society (Tsawwassen)	778-434-3119
Alcoholics Anonymous	604-434-3933
Narcotics Anonymous	604-873-1018

MENTAL WELLBEING APPS

BoosterBuddy
Calm
Headspace
Mindshift
MyLife