



*Heartland
Counseling
Services, Inc.*

Signs and Symptoms of Traumatic Stress

<http://cctesi.northwestern.edu/family/child-trauma/>

Preschool Children	Elementary School Children	Middle and High School Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel helpless and uncertain • Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver • Cry and/or scream a lot • Eat poorly and lose weight • Return to bedwetting • Return to using baby talk • Develop new fears • Have nightmares • Recreate the trauma through play • Are not developing to the next growth stage • Have changes in behavior • Ask questions about death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become anxious and fearful • Worry about their own or others' safety • Become clingy with a teacher or a parent • Feel guilt or shame • Tell others about the traumatic event again and again • Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise • Have a hard time concentrating • Experience numbness • Have fears that the event will happen again • Have difficulties sleeping • Show changes in school performance • Become easily startled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel depressed and alone • Discuss the traumatic events in detail • Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting • Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs • Become sexually active • Feel like they're going crazy • Feel different from everyone else • Take too many risks • Have sleep disturbances • Don't want to go places that remind them of the event • Say they have no feeling about the event • Show changes in behavior

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THE “THREE E’s” OF TRAUMA

Another way to understand and define trauma may be by remembering the “Three E’s of Trauma,” developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA). The “Three E’s of Trauma” are: Event, Experience, and Effect.

Event

The “Event” refers to the threat or actual experience of harm which may occur once or multiple times to your child. Some events may include abuse, neglect, death of a loved one, or bullying.

Caregiver Pause and Reflect: *Did an event take place in my child's life?*

Experience

The “Experience” refers to your child's unique perception of the event described above – remember, an event that is scary or overwhelming to one child might not be for another child. In this domain, you are looking to understand your child's potential experience or perception of the event. Some feelings that your child might experience include shame, isolation, betrayal, fear, etc.

Caregiver Pause and Reflect: *How might my child feel about the event that occurred? Could my child be experiencing any of the emotions listed above or any other negative feelings? What could the event mean to him or her? Could the event have changed the way my child feels about the world, others, or about him or herself?*

Effect

The “Effect” refers to the impact the event and experience has upon your child. The impact can be short-term or long-term and it may come on immediately or show up later. The effect and experience of the event might result in new or increased problems in social or family relationships, changes in sleep, eating, or mood, and difficulties thinking, concentrating, and/or expressing emotions.

Caregiver Pause and Reflect: *How has my child changed after the event and in what ways? Does my child exhibit any of the examples listed in the chart above? Or have you noticed any other changes?*