

Trauma - Grab Sheet 2 of 3

Introduction

This is the second of three simple grab sheets for anyone who would like to know more about Trauma:

Grab sheet 1 told us what trauma is and what causes it.

Grab sheet 2 tells us what someone who has experienced trauma might feel, emotionally and physically, and how they might behave and relate to others.

Grab sheet 3 will tell us what approaches can be used to support people who have experienced trauma.

Consequences of trauma

Trauma is displayed and felt in many different ways - thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, behavior, and relationship styles. On the next page you will see lots of common examples of how trauma impacts upon people. However, this list does not cover everything. Trauma is personal and how each person experiences it is different. Trauma can underpin a range of mental health, physical health and relational difficulties.

When we might see the consequences of trauma:

- In a person's everyday life and presentation - generally people will have higher baseline levels of stress, distress, anxiety until they are supported to process and heal the trauma
- There might be sharp heightened levels of distress in response to triggers or reminders of a traumatic event - e.g. a smell reminder or visual reminder such as a place or person
- When trying to build new relationships and trust people
- When expected to go outside of their comfort zone
- Certain times of year e.g. anniversary of a traumatic event
- When life circumstances change and things suddenly feel more unknown/uncertain
- If protective factors change (e.g. relationship breakdown, job loss)

To find out more about Trauma and PTSD an excellent website for more information and resources is: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR EXAMPLES OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA

<u>Relationships</u>	<u>Physical sensations</u>	<u>Emotions</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing from friends and family / avoiding • Being wary and distrustful of people • Being desperate to connect and 'people pleasing', often at the expense of their own needs • Clinging, demanding, or needing to be close to people • Lacking affection or overly affectionate • Finding relationships that are risky or dangerous • Hiding (masking) true self and needs in relationships • Being cut off or guarded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head pounding or headaches • Increased blood pressure • Body tension and aching muscles • Heart pounding, beating fast or skipping a beat • Chest pains or palpitations • Breathing short and fast (might feel like can't catch breath) • Fingers, toes or lips feel numb or the person feels them tingling • People feel sick or they think they can't swallow • Feeling faint • Poor sleep • Sweating • Dizziness or shaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense and rapidly changing moods - triggers may not always be clear to those around the person • High levels of anxiety and fear - both generally and in response to flashbacks • Agitated, irritable, restless • Anger • Feeling edgy and on hyper-alert for threat and danger • Difficulties being able to feel soothed, calmed or relaxed • Feeling numb or unable to identify feelings • Depression - feeling very low or sad • Dissociating - cutting off from emotions, not being able to feel them, a feeling of things 'not being real' • Hard to feel good about self - low self-esteem

EXAMPLES OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA

Cognitive / thinking style

- Believing they are in the trauma event NOW (flashbacks/reliving)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Having a negative or threat-based bias e.g. thinking most things are unsafe/risky
- Difficulty tolerating uncertainty - increased need for certainty and predictability, for reassurance
- Sense of doom; 'something bad is going to happen'
- Interpreting self negatively / thinking they are a bad person
- Suicidal thoughts
- Intrusive thoughts - e.g. about revenge on a person who hurt them

Behavioural responses

- They might shout, scream, present as aggressive
- Crying a lot or excessively
- Shaking or freezing and not saying or doing anything
- Using Alcohol and drugs
- Other addictive behaviours e.g. gambling or too much exercise
- People may avoid anything that might remind them of the traumatic event. For example avoiding driving after a crash or a certain place where the trauma happened.
- Escaping or avoiding situations
- Impulsive and reckless behaviours
- Self-harm or suicidal behaviour