

TYPES OF TRAUMA: AN OVERVIEW

ACUTE TRAUMA

This type of trauma results from a single, isolated distressing or dangerous event.

EXAMPLES

- Car accident
- Natural disaster like a hurricane or tornado
- One-time assault
- House fire

RESPONSE

The symptoms typically follow the event but, for many, will decrease over time with support. However, it can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

CHRONIC TRAUMA

Chronic trauma results from prolonged and repeated exposure to highly stressful events.

The sustained nature of the stress can alter the brain's "fight or flight" response, keeping an individual in a constant state of hyperarousal.

EXAMPLES

- Ongoing child abuse
- Bullying
- Domestic violence



COMPLEX TRAUMA

This type of trauma results from exposure to multiple, varied traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature.

Complex trauma often begins in childhood within personal relationships, leaving the person with little to no escape.

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS

- Complex trauma can have more wide-reaching effects on a person's development, sense of self, emotional regulation, and relationships due to the betrayal and lack of safety experienced at a formative age.
- It is often associated with Complex PTSD (C-PTSD).

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAUMA

(ADVERSE CHILDHOOD
EXPERIENCES, OR ACEs)

A subset of complex trauma, **developmental trauma** specifically refers to early, repeated interpersonal trauma that disrupts a child's brain development and sense of secure attachment.

EXAMPLES

- Chronic abuse
- Neglect
- Abandonment by caregivers
- Witnessing violence

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

The impact can last a lifetime, affecting self-identity, relationships, and emotional regulation.

EXTENDED ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

(EXTENDED ACEs)

While traditional ACEs focus on abuse and household dysfunction, **extended ACEs** broaden the concept to include community and social conditions.

This recognizes that trauma can arise from systemic and environmental factors outside the family home.

EXAMPLES

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Bullying
- Community violence
- Living in an unsafe neighborhood

RESEARCH

The extended ACE framework better accounts for how systemic inequalities shape adversity and acknowledges that trauma can affect health outcomes in adulthood, particularly for marginalized groups.



MORAL INJURY

Moral injury is not a mental disorder but the deep psychological and spiritual distress that can occur after a person participates in, fails to prevent, or witnesses acts that violate their core moral beliefs and values.

CAUSES

- One's own actions (perpetration)
- The actions of others
- A sense of betrayal by trusted leaders or institutions

EXAMPLES

- Soldier acting against their moral code in combat
- Healthcare worker forced to make impossible choices with limited resources
- First responder unable to save everyone

SYMPTOMS

- Intense guilt
- Shame
- Self-condemnation
- Loss of trust in oneself or others
- A spiritual or existential crisis

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA (HISTORICAL TRAUMA)

This is trauma that is transmitted across generations of a family.

Descendants who have not directly experienced a traumatic event can exhibit the symptoms of trauma through learned behaviors, coping mechanisms, and possibly even genetics.

EXAMPLES

The effects of historical atrocities can be passed down and impact subsequent generations.

- The Holocaust
- Slavery
- The violent colonization of Native Americans



VICARIOUS TRAUMA (SECONDARY TRAUMATIZATION)

This type of trauma affects those who are exposed to the traumatic experiences of others through their work or close relationships.

EXAMPLES

- First responders
- Therapists
- Doctors
- Journalists
- Family members of a trauma survivor

COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES

Trauma symptoms can be physical, emotional, and psychological.

- **Intrusive memories:** Flashbacks, nightmares, or distressing thoughts that bring the traumatic event back to the forefront of the mind.
- **Avoidance:** Staying away from places, people, or activities that are reminders of the trauma.
- **Changes in mood and cognition:** Negative thoughts about oneself, persistent fear, guilt, or shame, or feeling emotionally numb.
- **Hyperarousal:** Being easily startled, having angry outbursts, or feeling constantly "on guard" for danger.
- **Dissociation:** Feeling disconnected from one's body, emotions, or surroundings.



YOU CAN HEAL FROM TRAUMA

Healing is a process that requires patience and self-compassion. If you are experiencing symptoms of trauma, help is available.

- **Acknowledge your experience:** The first step to healing is recognizing that you have been affected by trauma.
- **Build a support system:** Connect with trusted friends, family, or support groups.
- **Practice self-care:** Gentle movement like yoga, mindfulness, and proper sleep can help regulate the nervous system.
- **Be patient with yourself:** Recovery is not a linear process and setbacks can occur. Celebrate small steps forward.
- **Seek professional help:** Therapies such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), or Somatic Experiencing can be very effective in processing and resolving trauma.



Innova offers the highest quality specialty trauma treatment. All of our programs are designed to treat the effects of toxic relationships, abuse, trauma, and PTSD.



GET HELP NOW

Please contact us today to discuss how we can support you or your loved one on your journey to tomorrow.

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