

TRAUMA INFORMED PARENTING

What you should know



Because trauma affects at least one in four of our students, LPS has made a commitment that every school be “trauma-informed” by educating staff, students and parents.

It is not always easy to tell when children are affected by a traumatic experience, grief or loss. If you think there is a chance that your child is having difficulty handling past or current events in his/her life, the first step is to learn about trauma and how it can impact children. If your child is experiencing the effects of trauma, you, as the parent, have a very important role in your child’s recovery.

What is Trauma?

Trauma occurs when one or more stressful experiences overwhelms a child’s ability to cope.

This Can Be:

- Physical or emotional
- Real or perceived
- Threatening to the child or someone close to him/her

Possible Sources of Trauma

- Witnessing violence
- Witnessing harm to a loved one
- Effects of poverty
- Deportation
- Natural disasters or accidents
- Dating violence
- Parent’s addiction or mental illness
- Abuse
- Neglect of physical or emotional needs
- Being separated from loved ones
- Bullying
- Medical procedures
- Death
- Repeated life changing events or stressors

Trauma May Affect Children’s:

Bodies - Elevated heart rate, fight or flight response, chronic illness (such as heart disease and obesity) which can continue into adulthood

Brains (thinking) - Difficulty thinking, learning, and concentrating; memory problems, difficulty with transitions, impact on school success

Emotions (feeling) - low self-esteem, feeling unsafe, trust issues, difficulty managing emotions, forming and keeping friendships and relationships, depression, anxiety

Behavior - Lack of impulse control, aggression, substance abuse, high risk behaviors, self-injury, suicide

Signs and Symptoms

What is traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another. Trauma symptoms look different for each person. Responses depend on the type of trauma, severity, and duration. Based on the child’s age, the signs may present themselves differently.

Preschool: Fearfulness, separation anxiety, loss of developmental milestones (toileting, motor skills, language), trouble sleeping, repetitive play, aggression

School Age: Irritability, anxiety, aggression, misconduct, lack of concentration, trouble sleeping, stomach pains, fear of events happening again, phobias, recurring nightmares

Adolescents: Outbursts of anger, feelings of revenge, detachment, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks, guilt, shame, depression, lack of motivation/energy, disillusionment with adults/authority, risk-taking

What Can a Parent Do?

- Identify triggers. Watch for patterns of behavior or reactions that do not seem to fit the situation.
- Be emotionally and physically available. Some children may show or say that they want more of your time or attention. Sometimes behaviors may push the adults away when the child needs them the most. Don't take behaviors personally. Stay tuned in to what the behavior is saying.
- Respond rather than react. Children can mirror your emotions. Stay calm, acknowledge their feelings. Be reassuring.
- Listen. Don't avoid talking about things that are uncomfortable.
- Avoid physical punishment. This can cause additional trauma.
- Practice deep breathing, muscle relaxation, positive self-talk with your child.
- Give age appropriate choices.
- Be patient. Healing from trauma takes time.
- Seek help. Your child's school can offer guidance.

Resources - Where Can I Get Help?

Websites:

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/child-trauma.pdf>
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/trauma/caregivers>
<http://www.attachmenttraumanetwork.org/understanding-attachment/therapeutic-parenting/>

Books:

Levine, Peter and Maggie Kline, [Trauma Through a Child's Eyes: Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing](#)
Hendrix, Harville, [Giving Them the Love That Heals: A Guide for Parents](#)

Agencies:

Child Advocacy Center, 402-476-3200
Child Guidance Center, 402-475-7666
Lutheran Family Services, 402-441-7940
Trauma Trained Therapists in Private Practice (consult your school social worker)



How Can My School Help?

If you believe your child is showing signs/symptoms of trauma, let your school's Social Worker, Counselor and/or Psychologist know. They can help you determine what strategies and services will best support your child. Each school has different types of supports they can offer to help your child.