

## Trauma

When we talk about emotional or psychological trauma, we might mean:

- situations or events we find traumatic
- how we're affected by our experiences.

Traumatic events can happen at any age and can cause long-lasting harm. Everyone has a different reaction to trauma, so you might notice any effects quickly, or a long time afterwards.

**Trauma** is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.

### **There are three main types of trauma: Acute, Chronic, or Complex**

- Acute trauma results from a single incident.
- Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged such as domestic violence or abuse.
- Complex trauma is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature.

What is traumatic is personal. Other people cannot know how you feel about your own experiences or if they were traumatic for you. You might have similar experiences to someone else, but be affected differently.

Trauma can include events where you feel:

- frightened
- under threat
- humiliated
- rejected
- abandoned
- invalidated
- unsafe
- unsupported
- trapped
- ashamed
- powerless.

Children can experience various types of trauma including:

- Natural disasters
- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Medical injury, illness, or procedures
- Community violence
- Neglect, deprivation

- Traumatic grief
- Victim of crime
- Kidnapping
- Accidents
- School violence
- Loss

Trauma can sometimes directly cause mental health problems, or make you more vulnerable to developing them. It is among the potential causes of all mental health problems. It can be difficult to tell which problems are being caused by trauma.

Some conditions are also known to develop as a direct result of trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (complex PTSD).

The **Grounding Techniques** worksheet describes four skills for controlling intense emotional experiences and regaining mental focus. Grounding techniques work by focusing attention on the present moment, and bringing attention back to reality.

This worksheet is designed for individuals who have experienced a trauma and continue to have symptoms of dissociation.

#### **Resources:**

*Grounding Techniques*

*What is Trauma?*

*Common Reactions to Trauma*

Emotional and Psychological Trauma

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm>

Treating effects of childhood trauma

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-the-effects-of-childhood-trauma-4147640>