



A trauma is a dangerous, frightening, and sometimes violent experience that is often sudden. Trauma is a normal reaction that occurs in response to an extreme event. It can happen to one family member or a whole family. Examples of a trauma are:

- Violence
- Fire
- Homelessness
- Natural Disaster

After experiencing a trauma, children, teenagers and families may feel traumatic stress. Feelings of traumatic stress include:

- Feeling scared or anxious
- Feeling numb

---

### How it affects my child

Many people who go through trauma will have trouble adjusting to life after the event. The brain of children and teenagers may be harmed and they may not develop needed skills. After trauma, some children suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Child Traumatic Stress (CTS) or depression.

**PTSD** usually happens after a major trauma that was life-threatening. **CTS** happens after trauma is over. It is important to get help for a child or teenager after going through a trauma so he or she can continue to grow. For more information, refer to the Anxiety Disorder Fact Sheet included in this kit.

### Signs & Symptoms

There are lots of reactions to trauma including:

- Thinking about what happened
- Aggression or irritability
- Body aches
- Having trouble at school
- Nightmares or difficulty sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Refusing to go to school

### What can we do about it?

It's important to get help if children or teenagers are having signs or symptoms after a trauma. Caregivers and relatives can help children in two important ways:

1. Talking to children about what happened
2. Getting professional help

### Recommendations for families

- Learn what trauma is
- Get help from trauma experts
- Be involved in your child's health

### What can caregivers say and do?

- Tell children they are safe
- Let children talk about feelings and fears
- Go back to a daily schedule
- Spend extra time with family and friends

## Resource Links

### **Children's Mental Health Matters!**

Facts for Families — First Steps in Seeking Help  
[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

### **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

This site contains resources for families to promote an understanding of mental illnesses.  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

#### *Helping Children after a disaster*

Information for parents about trauma, PTSD, and behavioral changes to look for.

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx)

#### *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

Defines PTSD and gives symptoms.

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-070.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-070.aspx)

#### *Talking to Children about Terrorism and War*

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Talking-To-Children-About-Terrorism-And-War-087.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Talking-To-Children-About-Terrorism-And-War-087.aspx)

#### *Talking to Children about the News*

[https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families\\_and\\_youth/facts\\_for\\_families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-The-News-067.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families_and_youth/facts_for_families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-The-News-067.aspx)

### **The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia – Center for Pediatric Child Traumatic Center**

<http://www.chop.edu/cpts>

### **Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health**

<http://www.mdcoalition.org>

### **National Institute of Mental Health**

NIMH strives to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness through basic clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure. Visit NIMH for information on clinical trial and mental health information, statistics, and resources.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

#### *Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters*

Defines trauma, describes how children react to trauma and how to help them, includes tips for parents and caregivers.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-violence-and-disasters-parents/index.shtml>

### **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

NCTSN seeks to improve access to care, treatment, and services for traumatized children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events.

<http://www.nctsn.org>

### **Aces Too High**

<https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>



an initiative of



The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), receives funding from the Maryland Department of Health – Behavioral Health Administration, the Maryland Family Network, and community sponsors. Together with the Maryland Coalition of Families, National Center for School Mental Health, MANSEF, and hundreds of community champions, we work to raise public awareness and acceptance of the importance of children's mental health to overall child and family wellbeing. We are grateful to the National Center for School Mental Health for their collaboration in creating these resources for families.