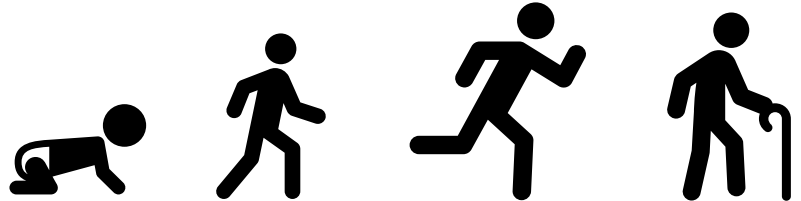


## INTRODUCTION

Trauma, whether it is emotional, psychological, or physical, can affect anyone, and has a profound effect. If left unprocessed, a person may not have the ability to function at the same level they did before a traumatic event.<sup>1</sup> Research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has shown that individuals who were exposed to trauma have a marked decrease in physiological, cognitive, behavioral, and psychological functions.<sup>2</sup>

This resource provides information for healthcare professionals on the following trauma-related topics:

- Stigma
- Brain Development
- Social Cost
- Symptoms and Health



## STIGMA

Victims of trauma may experience stigma from others and themselves. Regardless of the cause or source, stigma reduces an individual's ability to cope and seek help following a traumatic event. Below are a few complex examples of how stigma further complicates a person's journey towards healing.

### Sexual Trauma

- Survivors of sexual trauma are often blamed for their experience and are deemed less likeable than individuals who disclose other types of trauma.<sup>3</sup>
- Stigmatizing responses to disclosures result in worsening mental health and a decrease in help-seeking behaviors.

### Substance Use Disorder

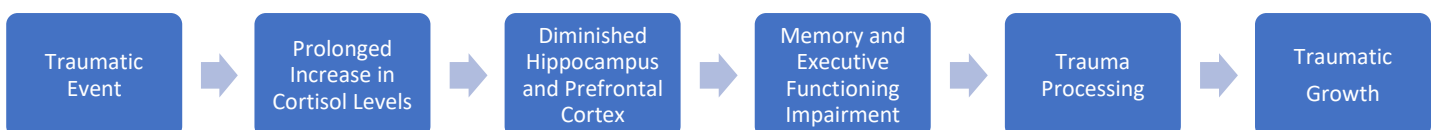
- Patients with substance use disorders (SUD) internalize negative stereotypes and belief that they are not capable or worthy of change.<sup>4</sup>
- Stigma is a fundamental cause of health inequities. It can also lead to the development of SUD and reduce initiation and engagement in treatment.<sup>5</sup>

### War

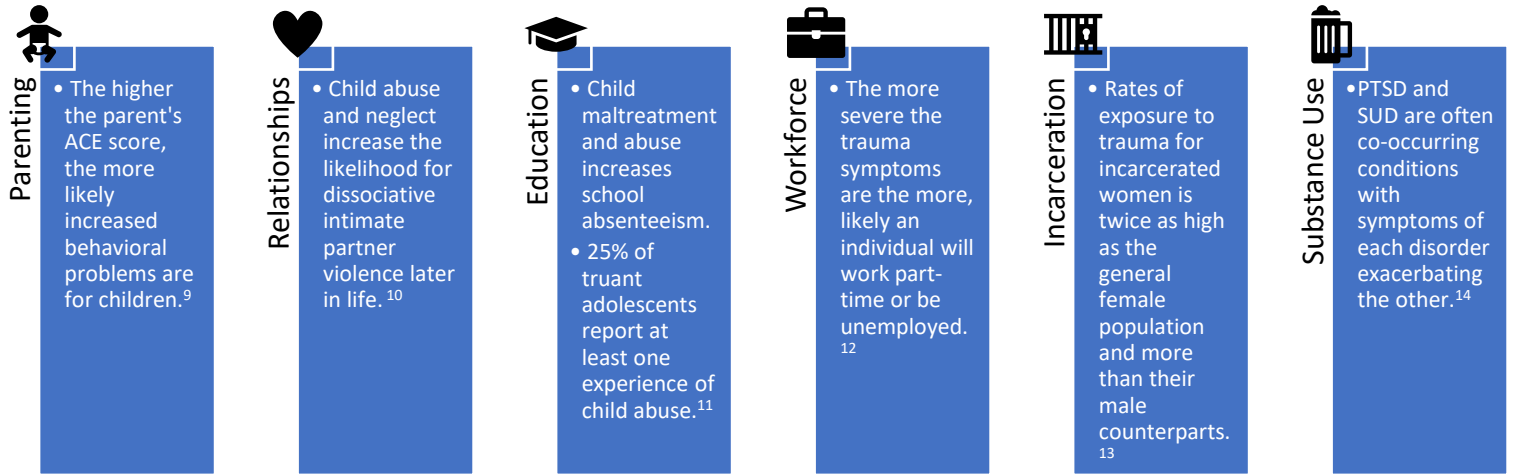
- Refugees refrain from seeking help for many reasons, including history of political oppression, mental health misunderstandings, perception that talking will not help, fear, avoidance of symptoms, shame, and cultural norms.<sup>6</sup>
- Active duty and discharged soldiers avoid disclosing mental health symptoms out of fear of being perceived as weak or acquiring a label.<sup>7</sup>

## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Trauma affects people differently. If perceived as traumatic, an event can trigger the release of cortisol in the brain.<sup>3</sup> When exposed to cortisol repeatedly, potentially permanent brain structural changes take place. Processing trauma can help undo these changes due to neuroplasticity resulting in traumatic growth.<sup>8</sup>

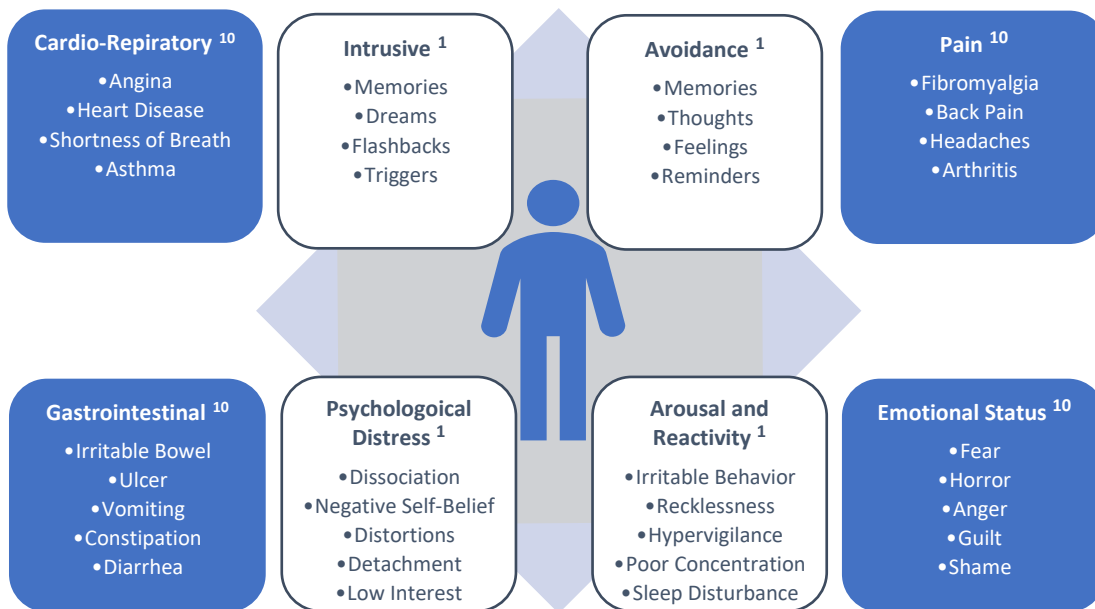


# SOCIAL COST 6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16



# SYMPTOMS and HEALTH

These are some common physical and emotional health symptoms associated with traumatic experiences.<sup>15,16</sup> Experiencing these is not an indicator of trauma nor does a person need to experience all of those listed.



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