# TRAUMA OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

Trauma can result from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances an individual experiences as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.[1]

**This resource provides information about the following topics:**

- **Current research** on trauma, its prevalence, and its impact.
- **Types of trauma** showcasing the complexity of individual and collective experiences.
- **Pillars of care** as the foundation for trauma-informed environments.
- **Building resiliency** for our patients.
- **Self-care** for ourselves and peers in the helping industry.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

**1 in 2**
U.S. children experience at least one ACE.[16]

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study connects instances of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction to negative adult health outcomes.[2]

People with four or more ACEs experienced a 4- to 12-fold increase in negative adult health outcomes, including substance use disorders, depression, and suicide attempts.[3]

About 60% of US adults have experienced at least one ACE, compared to between 85-100% of adults who struggle with substance misuse.[4-6]

## TYPES OF TRAUMA

| | |
|---|---|
| Acute | • Single overwhelming event.[7]<br>• Single incidents of a car accident, sexual trauma, or domestic violence, etc. |
| Chronic | • Prolonged or repeated exposure.[7]<br>• Series of sexual trauma, intermittent domestic violence, community violence, etc. |
| Complex | • Multiple, chronic, prolonged exposures to trauma.[7,8]<br>• Multiple car accidents, physical abuse, homelessness, etc. |
| Generational | • Family history of shared traumatic experiences.[9]<br>• Generational substance use, past family exposure to armed conflict, etc. |
| Historical | • Complex and collective trauma experience across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance.[10,11]<br>• Structural racism, war, genocide, slavery, colonialism. |
| Vicarious | • Development of trauma-related symptoms through working with traumatized individuals.[12]<br>• First responders, therapists, providers, etc. |

# PILLARS OF CARE

Providing a trauma-informed environment can assist patients in sharing[7] and healing[14,15] from their trauma:

**SAFETY**
- Trust
- Consistency
- Reliability
- Availability
- Honesty
- Transparency

**CONNECTION**
- Positive relationships
- Quality of a relationship
- Appropriate responses
- Mindful of trauma reenactment
- Awareness of trauma triggers

**MANAGING EMOTIONS**
- Co-regulate
- Listen reflectively
- Label feelings
- Use collaborative problem solving
- Model coping strategies

# BUILDING RESILIENCY

It is the individual who decides if the event they experienced is traumatic. Supportive family, friends, and providers can assist with a patient's resiliency.[1,13] Below are best practices to help build trauma resiliency.

**Coping**

Teach and encourage mindfulness and grounding techniques (e.g. counting, breathing)[14]

**Strength Building**

Consider strength finder surveys and express affirmation and appreciation of strengths[15]

**Flexible Thinking**

Identify automatic thoughts and challenge cognitive distortions (e.g. catastrophizing, labeling)[15]

**Social Support**

Build positive connections with caring individuals[14]

# SELF-CARE

Working with traumatized individuals can lead to developing secondary traumatic stress symptoms.[12,13] It is important to replenish by developing self-awareness and applying self-care techniques. Below are a few techniques to try.

Balanced Diet

Regular Excercise

Frequent Outdoors

Proper Sleep

Relaxing Activities

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