

Traumatic Stress Reactions- Symptoms of Trauma in Children

Re-Experiencing:

Images sensations or memories of the traumatic event keep coming up uncontrollably in the child's mind.

Avoidance & Withdrawal: To avoid the effects of trauma a child numbs out or shuts down even from things that are normally enjoyed like friends or activities.

Hyperarousal:

A child that is quick to startle; one that is constantly on-guard and can't seem to settle. This might be a child who is sensitive to shifts in moods or extremely reactive to loud voices or sounds.

How Do Children Respond To Trauma? (*Well, it depends...*)

Like adults, children will have a wide variety of reactions to traumatic situations and these reactions will depend on a number of different things. These include:

<i>Age and Developmental Stage</i>	How old was the child when the trauma occurred? Is the child developmentally on track? If a child is non-verbal or has no comparison experience for the trauma, it can cause an overwhelming sense of fear and helplessness.
<i>Child's Temperament</i>	Some children are more fearful, some more sensitive; other children may be harder to upset. A child's temperament can impact how they might respond to traumatic events
<i>Child's Perception of Danger</i>	Physically and emotionally a child's perception of danger will affect their trauma response.
<i>Child's Past Experience with Trauma</i>	Trauma's effect can be cumulative; the more traumas in a child's history, the more challenging it may become to handle new trauma.
<i>What Happened After the Trauma Occurred</i>	If a child's life returns to their routine and the child feels safe, then recovery from trauma may be easier. If there is further trauma from resulting events or continued upheaval in routine, this will impact a child's response and ability to handle stressful situations.
<i>The Availability of Protective Adults After the Trauma</i>	A loving, stable adult is often one of the most important factors in a child's recovery from trauma. A caring resource parent who provides safety, reassurance, guidance and protection can help a child heal.