



DIGITAL DIALOGUE

TRAUMA & RECOVERY



# *Helping Young Children Who Have Experienced Trauma*



# Speakers

*Join the National  
Conversation  
on Child Abuse  
and Neglect*



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# Definition of Early Childhood Trauma

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When a young child experiences an event that causes actual harm or poses a serious threat to the child's emotional and physical well-being.



Different from regular life stressors because it causes a sense of intense fear, terror, and helplessness beyond the normal range of typical childhood experiences.

# Early Childhood Trauma

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Affects almost half of all U.S. children (35 million)

Disproportionately affects young children

Examples: abuse & neglect, separation/loss of a parent, serious injury, domestic violence

Myths: Young children don't remember traumatic events; they always "bounce back"

Sources: APA Presidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents(2008); National Survey of Children's Health (2011/12); USDHHS/ACF/ACYF/Children's Bureau (2017).

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## Trauma in early childhood affects:

- brain structure
- cognitive development
- social-emotional development and behavior
- learning
- ability to form healthy attachments to others
- physical health

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# Meeting the Needs of Young Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

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- Presence and continuity of a nurturing caregiver
- Environments that promote:
  - Safety and trust
  - Self-regulation and social-emotional skills
  - Other early skills needed to succeed in school



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# Nurturing Adults Can Provide Trauma-Informed Care

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- Facilitate children's coping by helping them process events.
- Provide predictable routines and expectations.
- Identify and limit exposure to triggers and help children cope.
- Protect children from re-traumatization.
- Promote children's self-regulation skills.
- Support early learning.
- Access community services and supports.

# Parents and other caregivers need information on:

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- The impact of trauma on children
- Effective ways of identifying and addressing trauma
- Promoting parental well-being
- Evidence-based/-informed community services and supports
- Ways to cope with and prevent secondary stress



# Impact on Parents and Families

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- Parenting a trauma-exposed child is stressful.
  - Stress may lead to insensitive caregiving.
- Parents may experience the same trauma (e.g., domestic violence, accident).
  - Negative reactions in parent or child may intensify the other's symptoms.
- Challenges related to child trauma may lead to family conflict.



# Resources

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- [\*Helping young children who have experienced trauma: Policies and strategies for early care and education\*](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Early childhood trauma](#)
- [Excessive stress disrupts the architecture of the developing brain](#)
- [SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Practice](#)
- [Developing a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System](#)
- [Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services](#)

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# Thank You & Next Steps

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- Download the handouts to learn more. Click on the files in the “Handouts” box on your screen.
- Do you have innovative ideas, questions or concerns about trauma and resilience? Tell us about your work. Send an e-mail to **hello@CANTASD.org** with “Trauma and Resilience” in the subject line.

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# Participant Feedback

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Thank you for your participation!

How useful was this session?

Additional Comments:  
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