

Recognizing **TRAUMA**

What is Trauma?

Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that may overwhelm an individual's ability to cope.

Potentially traumatic events may include:

- Abuse (physical, sexual or emotional)
- Neglect
- Effects of poverty (homelessness, food insecurity)
- Witnessing domestic violence/abuse
- Separation from a loved one
- War zone or refugee experience
- Natural or man-made disaster

EFFECTS OF TRAUMA:

| <i>Trauma may affect individuals'...</i> | <i>In the following ways:</i> |
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| Bodies | inability to control physical response stress • chronic illness |
| Brains (thinking) | distractability • difficulty learning • impaired memory |
| Emotions (feelings/reactions) | low self-esteem • poor attachments • anxiety • depression • unexpected reactions/overreactions |
| Behavior | avoidance of people/places/situations • difficulty sleeping • substance abuse • fighting/aggression • isolation |

How to support survivors of trauma:

- Help identify trauma triggers
- Be emotionally and physically available
- Help identify coping skills
- Create a sense of safety and stability
- Help them learn self-regulation skills
- Listen
- Allow survivor to feel some control
- Encourage treatment when necessary