

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

'A distressing event or events that are so serious they overwhelm our ability to cope, resulting in a change to the way we think, feel and behave'. (UK Trauma Council)

There are three types of trauma;

Acute: A single, serious incident



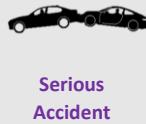
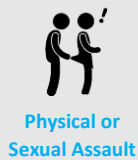
Chronic: repeated & prolonged traumas



Complex: exposure to varied & multiple traumas



WHAT COULD BE AN ACUTE TRAUMA?



HOW CAN TRAUMA AFFECT MY BRAIN?

TRAUMA CAN HIJACK THE BRAIN...



When a person experiences something traumatic



Adrenaline and other neurochemicals rush to the brain and print a picture there



The traumatic memory loops in the emotional side of the brain



Disconnecting from the thinking part of the brain so it cannot help the emotional side get away from the trauma.

Due to the emotional side of our brains being focussed on the trauma memory, this can lead to us experiencing symptoms within our body but also, we may react to situations differently following a trauma than we may have done before.

HOW OUR BODIES CAN RESPOND AFTER TRAUMA

When we feel **stressed** or **threatened**, our bodies release hormones called cortisol and adrenaline. This is the body's automatic way of preparing to respond to danger, and we have **no control** over it. This can have a range of effects, like:



Fight – fighting, struggling or protesting



Flight – hiding or moving away



Freeze – feeling paralysed or unable to move



Fawn – trying to please someone who harms you



Flop – fainting or the body disconnecting from the mind

Studies have shown that stress signals can continue long after the trauma is over. This might affect your mind and body, including how you think, feel and behave¹.

HOW CAN TRAUMA AFFECT ME?

Trauma affects everyone **differently** but we may experience some of the following...



Flashbacks i.e. memories or thoughts about the event



Strong emotions i.e. sad, angry or anxious



Overreacting i.e. finding it hard to calm down when distressed



Disturbed sleep i.e. not being able to sleep or having nightmares



Withdrawal i.e. from family and friends



Disturbed eating i.e. eating more or less than usual



Self-harm and/or substances i.e. different to before the trauma

It is **normal** to experience these types of symptoms, 80% of people have these symptoms within the **first month** after a trauma. They can feel horrible and scary, but they are the brain trying to process the huge thing you went through and / or witnessed.

THIS CAN BE FIXED...

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change – to **rewire**, **relearn** and **strengthen** important connections. Think learning a new language or playing a new computer game.

The neuroplasticity that enables brains to change in response to trauma also allows them to **heal**.



¹ [trauma-2020.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/trauma-2020.pdf)

WHAT CAN I DO?

Reach out for help

Let somebody know that you're struggling with how you're feeling.

Trying to cope on your own can be really difficult, and you don't need to struggle on alone.



I deserve support

Learn about other people's experiences

Some people find it really helpful to speak to other people who have been through the same thing as them as it can help them feel less alone.

This isn't for everyone though!



Support groups

Will I be ok listening to other experiences?

Practice self-care

There are many other ways you can care for yourself, this will look different for everybody. Whatever it is, it's important to try and build into your routine the [self-care](#) you need.



Meditate

Gaming

Exercise

Hobbies



Grounding techniques



You may also find it helpful to practise some [grounding techniques](#) for when you feel overwhelmed, or create and use a [self-soothe box](#). The important thing is to be kind to yourself and go at your own pace

Just chatting

Nice photos

Listening to music

5-4-3-2-1 SENSES

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

- 5** things you can *see*
- 4** things you can *feel*
- 3** things you can *hear*
- 2** things you can *smell*
- 1** thing you can *taste*

If symptoms last longer than a month **and** stop you doing things you normally used to do then **speak to your GP or an adult you trust**, at school or a youth worker. They will be able to help you access services.

SERVICES

[Kooth](#) offers an online mental health community. With access to;



Articles – with personal experiences and tips from young people and the Kooth team



Discussion boards – conversations with the friendly Kooth community on lots of topics



Chat with the team – about anything that's on your mind, message or have a live chat



Daily journals – write in your own daily journal to track feelings or emotions and reflect on how you're doing

[Young Minds](#) is a charity for children and young people's mental health. They provide;

Advice and guidance – help with emotions, coping with life and trauma, medication and mental health advice.

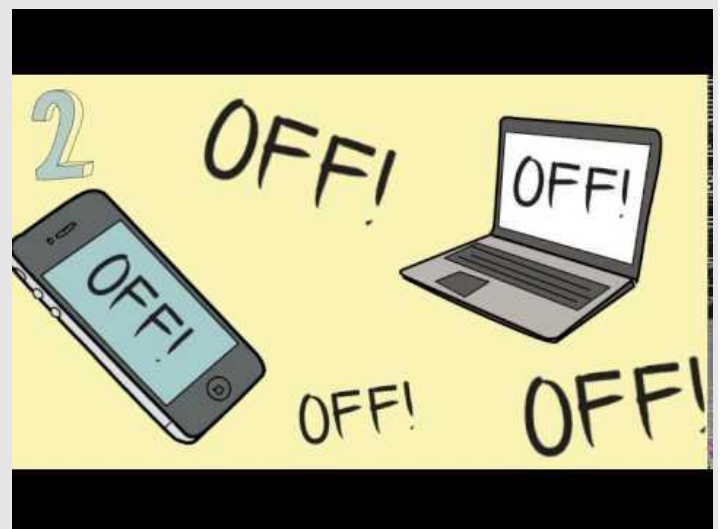
Real stories – about young people's experiences and tips for getting through it

Signposting services – types of support, how to access them and who to talk to if you need help



[Rise](#) is a charity that supports people affected by domestic abuse and violence. Although this may not be relevant for you, they have some fantastic [resources](#), including short YouTube videos for children and young people. For example, click on the below "your special teenage brain" video by Nicola Mogan

The [Anna Freud Centre](#) has great resources, particularly around [self-care](#).



REFERENCES

Content included in this leaflet is referenced from Young Minds.