

# What is Trauma?

Trauma affects people in many ways. An event that feels small to one person may cause deep pain for someone else. Because people react differently, trauma can be hard to treat. It is important to listen to each person's story, no matter how severe the event may seem.

Trauma can come from any event that feels overwhelming. In the United States, about one in four children has a traumatic event by age 16 (National Child Traumatic Stress Network). Around the world, about seven in ten adults will face trauma at some point.

The effects of trauma can last long after the event. Trauma can lead to problems with mental and physical health (World Health Organization). Some people may develop depression, anxiety or substance use issues. Others may have long-term physical problems such as heart disease or autoimmune conditions.

## There are three main types of trauma:

**Acute trauma** comes from one sudden event, like a natural disaster or an assault. Symptoms often last one to three months.

**Chronic trauma** occurs when symptoms last longer than three months. Some people get better with time, but others may feel worse.

**Complex trauma** comes from many harmful events that take place over months or years. These events often involve other people. A child who lives with years of neglect or abuse may carry this trauma into adult life.

Severe trauma can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. People with PTSD may have flashbacks, unwanted memories, fear or numb feelings. Not everyone with trauma develops PTSD, and not everyone fits a clear diagnosis. Trauma affects people on a wide range, and all experiences matter.

No trauma is too small to seek help. If something keeps bothering you, harms your well-being or disrupts your daily life, you deserve support. Healing often starts when you name your pain and reach out for care.

## #HealTrauma

If you or someone you know is struggling with trauma, you can find additional resources through the National Center for PTSD, including the PTSD Coach mobile app. Veterans can contact the Veteran Crisis Line by dialing 988, then pressing 1.

*Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine*



25% of U.S. children will experience at least one traumatic event by age 16.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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