



# Potential Effects and Impact of Trauma Briefing



Trauma Informed  
Stoke-on-Trent  
and Staffordshire

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TRAUMA INFORMED CONSULTANCY SERVICES

# What is Complex Trauma?

Complex Trauma refers to children or young people who have experienced several traumatic experiences of a threatening nature. Such events will be chronic and repeated. Some examples can be found in the image below:



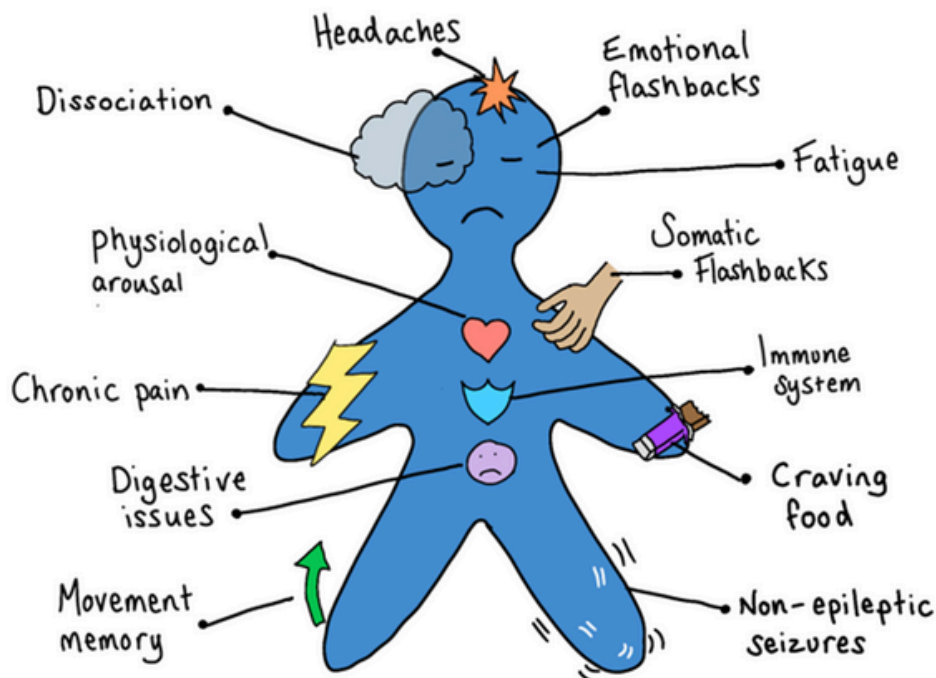
# What are some of the Impacts?

- Experience difficulties with focusing
- Experience challenges around retaining information memory
- Have a reduction in their executive functioning (executive functioning controls factors such as planning, following instructions, meeting goals)
- Be in survival mode e.g. watching out for threats (hypervigilance)
- Experience ongoing low mood, depression anxiety, depression or challenges around regulating their emotions.

Some of the health impacts can be seen in the image below:

## How Does the Body Keep the Score?

When an overwhelming traumatic event occurs, the threat memory can manifest in real physical issues



@creative.clinical.psychologist

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The impact on both physical and mental health has been found to reduce the socioeconomic outcomes in some people. Due to some of the risk-taking behaviours that can be a way of coping or self-expression for those with unresolved trauma who have not received the support they require, the levels of unemployment and/or involvement with the criminal justice system are higher than for those who have not had these experiences growing up.

However, can do a lot of preventative work if we consider strengths-based approaches. This **model** might be a good starting point.

## Why Do We Need a Trauma-Informed Approach?

- Experiencing trauma can change the shape of the brain
- When confronted with danger, our non-survival functions may shut down, leading us to respond with fight, flight, freeze, or faint reactions. These become defaults after a while.
- The encouraging aspect is that the brain is plastic and can adapt. Every positive experience or interaction a child has contributes to the ongoing process of rewiring, gradually leading to a brain less inclined towards the fear default.
- Understanding that a child's responses may resemble those of a younger child, owing to a delay in brain development caused by trauma, can foster a more compassionate and forgiving perspective.

## Some Helpful Tips

### Immediate response

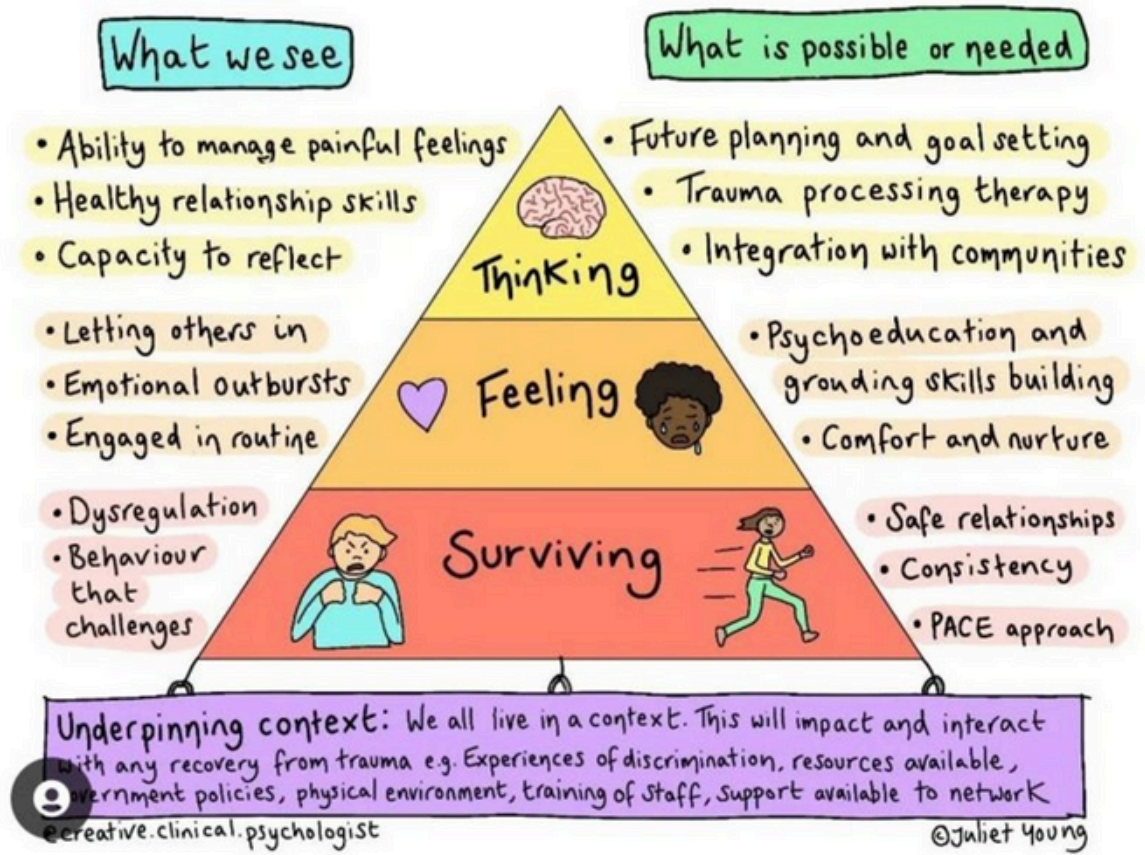
When you next support a child in the immediate aftermath or in the first few days that follow a traumatic event, remember:

- Being present, calm and compassionate will be hugely beneficial.
- Keep language simple and reassuring whilst remembering not to minimise the situation or give the child false hope/promises.
- Support the child/young person to share any emerging feelings but do not push them to do so.
- Use active listening and give the child space, time and encouragement to share.
- If they do choose to share anything in this early phase, acknowledge the difficulty of doing so and what they have been through, e.g., “that must have been difficult.” (More on language use in the language guide).



# Recovery From Relational Trauma

Trauma (Adapted from the trauma recovery model by Skuse & Matthew, 2014)



## Ongoing support

- Whilst we may not be able to change their circumstances, we can provide specific routines/standard approaches to how we do things with the child, which can help the child feel more grounded.
- As soon as the child is receptive to discussions e.g. they are more emotionally regulated, teach them age appropriately that how they are feeling and reacting is normal.
- You may find some of the books on this website useful for younger children.
- UK Trauma Council have developed a series of animations available here which have been designed by young people for young people.

# Support Long Term Recovery



## Playfulness

- Playfulness in interactions can diffuse conflict and promote connection  
e.g. Maintaining a relaxed 'lightness' and can involve making a joke (though this has to be done carefully)



## Acceptance

- Accepting needs and emotions that drive behaviour (not necessarily the behaviour) without judgement



## Curiosity

- Being curious to where a behaviour has come from (in your head or out loud..)



## Empathy

- Really connecting with how they are feeling and showing compassion



P.A.C.E is an approach developed by Dr Dan Hughes aimed at supporting recovery from developmental trauma. However, it can be a useful attitude to adopt with anyone who is emotionally dysregulated

Illustrated by Juliet Young

- Remain vigilant to any signs of depression, anxiety and the indicators of PTSD (more on this in the introduction to trauma guide).
- Use your organisation's referral processes to pass on any concerns you have about a child or young so that additional support can be implemented.
- The earlier we do this, the better for the child.
- Consider how you can support the child to join in with their peers e.g. playing/interacting/talking with other children.
- The child may need your support to talk to new children and make new friends.
- Sometimes a greeting or an introduction between children and young people can go a really long way!

Wellbeing action plans have been found to be very beneficial. Here is one example for **school aged children** and one for those of **college age**.

Some of the things they may consider putting on their plan are:

- **Self-soothe boxes**
- **Trauma safe grounding techniques**
- **Journaling**

Sometimes we need to hold onto hope for those who have grown tired of holding theirs alone



# Suggested Reading

Anna Freud (2024) Trauma. Available from:

<https://www.annafreud.org/resources/under-fives-wellbeing/common-difficulties/trauma/> [Accessed: 3.04.2024].

PTSD UK Website has a range of information and resources: <https://www.ptsduk.org/>

SAMHSA (2023) Understanding Trauma. Available from:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/understanding-child-trauma> [Accessed: 3.04.2024].

UK Trauma Council Website has a range of information and resources::

<https://uktraumacouncil.org/>



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