

What is Trauma? Definition, Symptoms, Responses...

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Human life sometimes runs on unstable waves, and can affect the physical, psychic and mental state of people. Therefore, these changes can interfere in different areas such as family, work, relationships and many more.

The effects of trauma can be dangerous, for the person who has experienced certain events, as well as for those around him.

In this article, we will discuss briefly the subject of trauma, with the survival responses adopted by people when faced with an event, with a professional approach.



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Trauma is defined by the emotional and psychological effect or response that happens to people after a terrible event, and not so much by the event itself, since the same event can be more traumatic for some people than for others. So after this event, immediate shock and denial are typical. But there are also long-term reactions that can occur such as flashbacks, unpredictable emotions, physical symptoms like headaches, vomiting, ... Although these feelings are normal, some people will have difficulty moving forward, and lead a normal life.

Trauma Responses

Trauma can create stress, fear and anger reactions. It may also lead people to find themselves unable to stop thinking about what happened or even forgetting entirely what has happened. Traumatic events can create a high level of arousal—or feeling alert or "on guard"—as well, which causes people to react strongly to sounds and sights around them.

The Four F's of trauma response each describe a set of responses that someone may have when faced with threatening or abusive situations.

These various trauma responses may have been learned as a means of survival in childhood, abusive relationships, or severe trauma. The type of response then reoccurs later in life as a default every time the person faces anything they perceive as a threat.

The 4 F's of Trauma Response

Fight: It's self-preservation, it doesn't matter who gets hurt by this process.

Sometimes it's a helpful response when used in an appropriate way to respond healthy to a threat. It helps to assert oneself, protect oneself and others, create limits, find courage, ... However, when exposed to intense trauma over time, it becomes unhealthy. People find themselves on high alert, ever ready to fight, and lead to narcissistic tendencies, controlling behaviors, feelings of entitlement, and even to anger without reason, intimidation, demanding perfection, ...

Flight: When it is impossible to fight, the person tends to leave the situation completely. And like the response to combat, it can be healthy or unhealthy. In a healthy situation, this leads to disengaging from harmful conversations, leaving unhealthy relationships, physically escaping dangerous situations, and properly assessing anger. When the trauma is unresolved, people will perceive everything as danger, resulting in obsessive or compulsive tendencies, constant panic and fear, the need to stay busy all the time, being a workaholic, ...

Freeze: In this case, the person will stop instead of running away or fighting. For example a child to avoid the wrath of his parents, he can be as calm and silent as possible. And this can lead to: isolation, dissociation, laziness, fear of achieving or trying new things, fear of making decisions and taking action.

Fawn: Surrounded by toxic people, the person will learn to surpass themselves to please them and make them happy. If it's healthy, it will lead to compassion, compromise, active listening, ... But if it's unhealthy, it causes co-dependent relationships, pleases people to destruction and loss of self, and having few or no boundaries.



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How to help a traumatized person?

Any traumatized person surely needs support to be able to continue, and sometimes it takes a long time. For this, it is necessary to understand the case of the person, since it is difficult to adapt to the need for solitude or to be surrounded. Being flexible in order to provide a feeling of not being alone will help a lot in the path of accompaniment.

These are little tips you can adopt if someone around you is facing a bad situation: listen and be present, validate their trauma, proclaim that you will be there anyway, don't compare their experience, accept if they don't want to talk, help them find mental health support, keep watching, do nice things with them.

It's never too late to ask for help, even if the effects are lasting. Thus, recovery and renewal are always possible at any time and at any stage of life.

Therapy is the golden tool for changing behavioral patterns, especially those that are deeply ingrained. So having the ability to respond to stress in healthy ways can help in many areas of life, regardless of the past.

Institut Therapiea can help people, who have experienced trauma, find constructive ways to manage their attitude, emotions, reactions, actions and much more, in order to rebuild and find stability and balance in their daily lives.

You can make an [appointment](https://www.psychotherapeute.pro/contact) with our psychotherapist

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