## Child Development and Trauma Impacts for Practitioners

Children are different and each develops at their own rate. For some children and adolescents the trauma and stress of being homeless or experiencing family violence can affect their development.

### Development

- **Babies**
  - Develop rapidly
  - Learn to interact with others
  - Language and communication
  - Physical development

- **Toddlers**
  - More independent
  - Social development
  - Emotional development

- **Pre-Schoolers**
  - Language development
  - Social development
  - Physical development

- **Primary Schoolers**
  - Greater awareness of the world
  - Social development
  - Emotional development

- **Adolescents**
  - Greater awareness of the world
  - Social development
  - Emotional development

### Trauma Impacts on Health, Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Learning across all Developmental Ages and Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Babies</th>
<th>Toddlers</th>
<th>Pre-Schoolers</th>
<th>Primary Schoolers</th>
<th>Adolescents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Failure to thrive</td>
<td>• Failure to thrive</td>
<td>• Difficulty with separation</td>
<td>• Undiagnosed health issues may become more apparent</td>
<td>• Strong emotions including anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feeding and sleeping problems</td>
<td>• Increased eye contact</td>
<td>• Reluctant to attend familiar places such as kinder</td>
<td>• Become withdrawn or aggressive</td>
<td>• Believing or re-visiting traumatic events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoidance of eye contact</td>
<td>• Increased startle response</td>
<td>• May revert to toddler behaviours eg. thumb sucking and bed wetting</td>
<td>• Act out school or the playground</td>
<td>• Change in desire to be with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inability to be soothed</td>
<td>• Separation anxiety and clinginess</td>
<td>• Reluctance to go to bed</td>
<td>• May have nightmares</td>
<td>• Acting out /risk taking/self harming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased startle response</td>
<td>• Regression of acquired skills</td>
<td>• Difficulty sleeping</td>
<td>• Lack of sleep</td>
<td>• Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regression of acquired skills</td>
<td>• Passivity, withdrawal, lack of initiative, disinterest</td>
<td>• May become difficult to settle</td>
<td>• School work may suffer</td>
<td>• Depression/anxiety/mood swings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduced capacity to attach to carer</td>
<td>• Increased tension, irritability, reactivity, and inability to relax</td>
<td>• Nightmares</td>
<td>• Withdrawal from previously enjoyed activities and friends</td>
<td>• Return to childlike behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduced capacity to manage emotional states or self soothe</td>
<td>• Fearful of strangers</td>
<td>• Language skills may revert to toddler levels</td>
<td>• Anxiety/depression / mood swings</td>
<td>• Seek support from peer networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lowered immune system</td>
<td>• Distress of separation with caregiver</td>
<td>• Changes in established behaviour</td>
<td>• Feel responsible for family situation</td>
<td>• Self medicating with drugs, alcohol and intimate relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Failure to reach developmental milestones</td>
<td>• Lack of inhibition with strangers</td>
<td>• May become aggressive or withdrawn</td>
<td>• Takes on adult roles</td>
<td>• Disturbed sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• • May become very quiet, passive or appear to be disininterested in anything</td>
<td>• Increased irritability and tantrums</td>
<td>• More easily upset by events</td>
<td>• Headaches and stomach aches</td>
<td>• Self absorption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• • Little eye contact with others</td>
<td>• May become very quiet, passive or appear to be disininterested in anything</td>
<td>• May find playing co-operatively more difficult</td>
<td>• May be bulled or display bullying behaviours to siblings or friends</td>
<td>• Impact on education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• • May become overly upset to minor events</td>
<td>• • May become very quiet, passive or appear to be disininterested in anything</td>
<td>• • Increase in tantrums</td>
<td>• • May display overt sexualised behaviours</td>
<td>• Impulsive decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• • Regress and lose known skills</td>
<td>• • May become very quiet, passive or appear to be disininterested in anything</td>
<td>• • Increase in tantrums</td>
<td>• • Feel responsible for family situation and take on adult role</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Potential Impacts of Trauma

- **Babies**
  - Increased irritability
  - Sleep problems
  - Loss of appetite

- **Toddlers**
  - Impulsive decision making
  - Self-absorbed
  - Disturbed sleep

- **Pre-Schoolers**
  - Impulsive decision making
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Loss of appetite

- **Primary Schoolers**
  - Impulsive decision making
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Loss of appetite

- **Adolescents**
  - Impulsive decision making
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Loss of appetite

### Tips

- **Provide opportunities for the adolescent to talk about their experiences**
- **Provide reassurance**
- **Discuss feeling of distress and anger and let teens know that this is normal**
- **Respect their emotions and reactions**
- **Support them to gain perspective of the situation**
- **Be honest**
- **Encourage teens to make time for fun**
- **Encourage them to maintain communication with their school and teachers**
- **Encourage regular routines, ie school**
- **Promote ways to deal with stress, ie, exercise, healthy eating**
- **Make time for family activities**
- **Seek professional help if they are struggling to cope**

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www.statewidechildrenresourceprogram.weebly.com