



CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER OF CENTRAL PA.

Guide for Caregivers

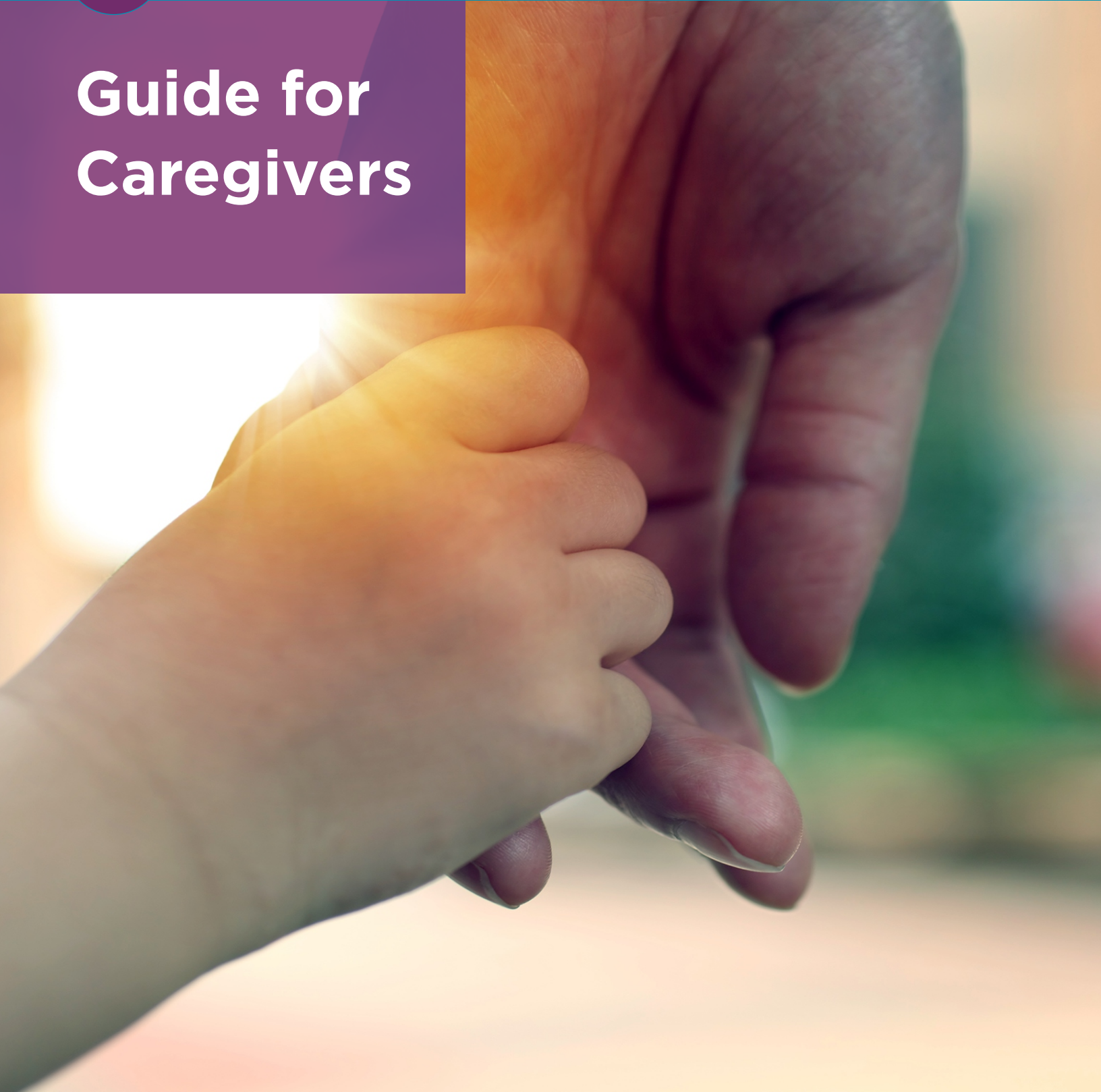
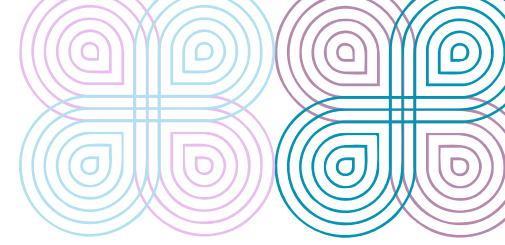


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UPMC Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa.

Who We Are

The UPMC Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa. (CAC) is dedicated to reducing the trauma and aftermath of abuse for children and their families. The CAC provides efficient, quality care in a safe, child-friendly environment for children suspected of having been abused or neglected. The CAC is one of the first nationally accredited child advocacy centers in Pennsylvania. Opened in 1994, the CAC provides services to 1,200 children a year suspected of having been physically or sexually abused, neglected, or who have witnessed violence in their home or community. The CAC offers a central location for child-protective services, law enforcement, district attorneys, victim's services, and mental health agencies to approach your child's case as a team. Using a team approach helps all agencies to communicate and make sure the best interests of the child are being met.

Our Mission

The Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa. is dedicated to reducing the occurrence and aftermath of child abuse, thereby improving the health, welfare, and safety of children and families in Central Pa.

Our Vision

The Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa. will be recognized as the pre-eminent advocacy center for the comprehensive care of abused children in the Central Pa. region.

Our Values

- Respect, honor, and advocacy for the rights of children
- Recognition and respect for the diversity of the community
- Involvement of the family as an essential and integral element in the healing process
- Collaboration with partner agencies to find the truth, always focusing on the best interests of the child
- Promotion of awareness of child abuse through education
- Commitment to continued learning for all associates of the Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa.

What to Expect

With children as our focus, we interview them in a non-leading, non-suggestive way, provide medical exams to ensure a child's health and safety, and connect children and families to mental health services.

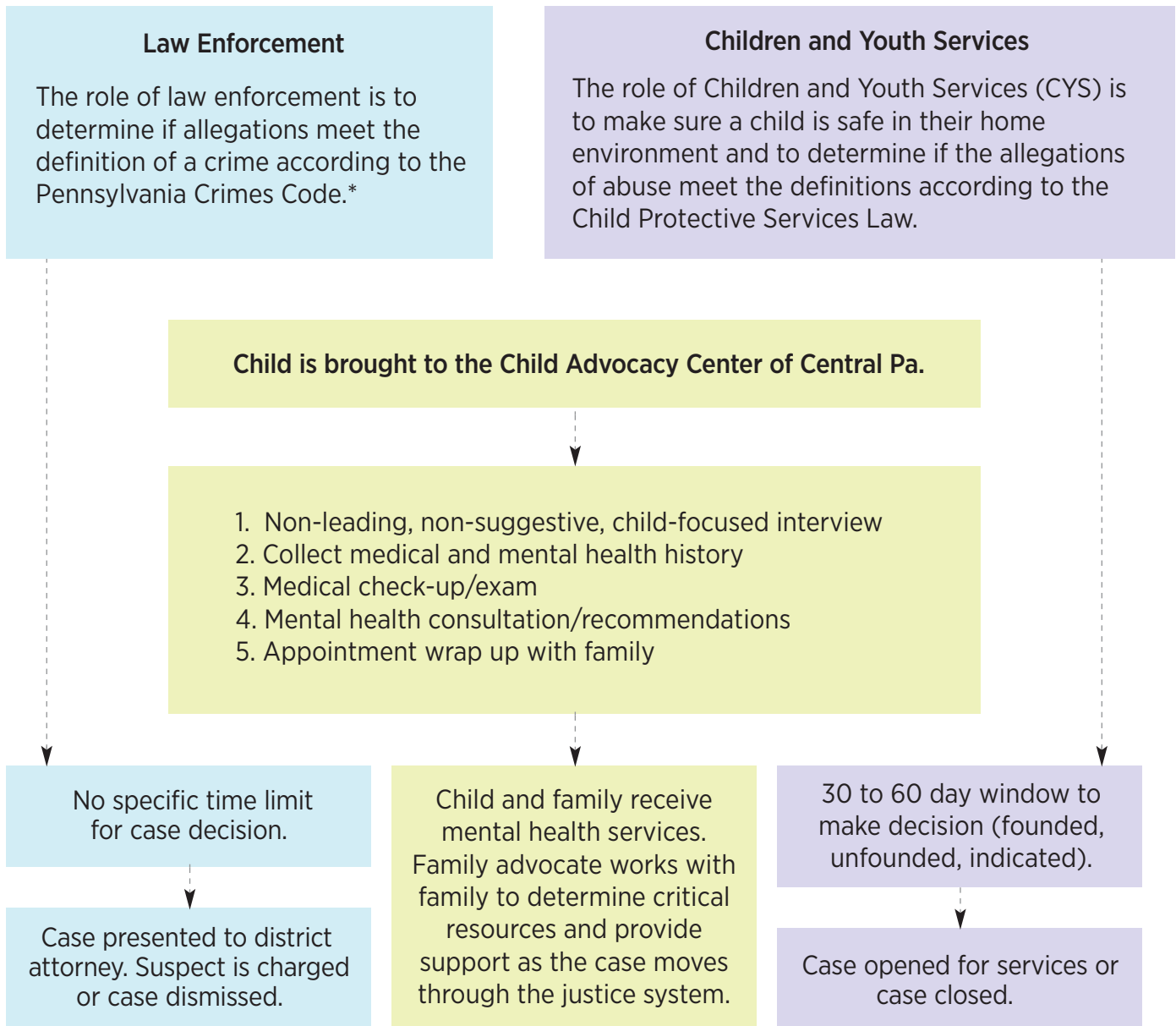
Once your child has an appointment at the CAC, you may wonder, "What's next?" You may have questions about what happens after the appointment or may be confused about why your child was referred to the CAC. You may also wonder how you can support your child and what you can do to take care of yourself.

This booklet will answer these questions and give you information about other resources that may be helpful to you and your child.

A Team Approach to Child Abuse Investigations

Children are often referred to the Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa. (CAC) when there are concerns of abuse or neglect, or the child is a witness to crime. CAC offers a child-friendly, neutral environment for child and youth services, law enforcement, district attorneys, and victim/mental health services to approach your child's case as a team. This team helps all agencies communicate and make sure all information is shared and your family is supported. The chart below is an example of how the process works.

The CAC is a neutral agency who does not have influence over the outcome of an investigation.



10 Facts About Child Abuse

1 Child abuse happens in every part of society.

Rates of physical abuse and neglect are affected by socioeconomic status.² Child sexual abuse occurs in all parts of society.⁸

2 Children are usually victimized by someone they know.

In 2015, **91.6% of victims (all types) were maltreated by one or both parents.** Other perpetrators known to victims included foster parents, other relatives, neighbors, and daycare providers.¹ **For child sexual abuse, about 90% of victims know their abuser.**³

3 Children rarely tell someone they are being abused.

Research has found that **most child victims delay or never disclose child sexual abuse** to friends, family, or the authorities.^{4,5,6}

4 It is extremely rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse.

False allegations of sexual abuse by children and adolescents are statistically uncommon, occurring at the rate of 2 to 10% of all cases.⁷

5 Medical evidence is rarely discovered after a child discloses sexual abuse.

Medical evidence is found in less than 5% of substantiated child sexual abuse cases.^{9,10}

6 While all types of abuse are possible in the home, child neglect is more common than sexual abuse.

Child neglect is the most common type of abuse experienced in the home.¹¹

7 Children who are sexually abused are not destined to continue the cycle of abuse as adults.

Sexual abuse victims **rarely go on to become perpetrators** of sexual abuse.^{12,13}

continued>

8

Men and women are both capable of sexual abuse.

At least 20% of substantiated child sexual abuse cases are **perpetrated by females**.^{14,15,16}

9

Boys and girls react in similar ways to sexual abuse.

The severity of traumatization among male victims of sexual abuse is equal to that of female victims.^{17,18,19,20}

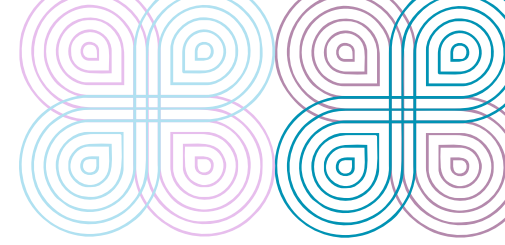
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Children with disabilities are more likely to become victims of abuse than children without disabilities.

Children with disabilities are 2 to 3 times more likely to experience child sexual abuse than children without disabilities.^{21,22,23,24}

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Common Questions from Caregivers

Should I talk about the traumatic event?

- Listen to your child, answer questions (when able), and provide comfort and support.
- It is fine to tell your child that you do not know why something happened or that you get confused and upset by it too.
- A caregiver who listens to and believes their child is the most important factor in the healing process.

How should I talk about the event?

- Use words your child can understand.
- Allow your child to talk about their experience on their own. Do not force them.
- Remain calm and reassure them they are safe.

Should I talk to others about the traumatic event?

- When needed, talk to people you trust. They may be able to help in your child's healing.
- While it may be hard to talk about what happened, friends and professionals can often be a source of comfort.
- Do not be afraid to protect your child from activities that may be stressful or harmful.

What happens after an appointment at the CAC?

- The visit at the CAC is one piece of a process used by investigators to help determine what happened.
- A child's disclosure usually happens over time.
- Your child may have additional things to say on the way home or soon after your visit.
- They may "test the waters" to determine what you can handle hearing.

What can I say to my child?

- Remind your child they are not in trouble.
- Let them know you are not going to ask a lot of questions, but you will listen if they want to tell you something.
- It is best if you let your child tell you in their own time and in their own way.
- You can ask them, "Is there anything else you want me to know?"

You may find the following statements helpful:

- **I am glad you told/talked to me, I am proud of you.**
- **I love you.**
- **I believe you.**
- **It was not your fault.**
- **I feel sad/angry that this happened to you.**
- **I will work to keep you safe; I will take care of you.**

Who can I call for help?

- Following your visit at the CAC, your child may remember information about the event; if this occurs, it is important to contact your caseworker and/or law enforcement right away.
- While you may have the urge to contact the person who abused your child, it is best not to speak to the individual or provide them with any information about your child's disclosure.
- If you notice ongoing different patterns in behavior, reach out to a mental health professional.

For assistance, call us at **717-782-6800** and ask to speak with a mental health therapist.

Resources from Bruce D. Perry and The Child Trauma Academy

Why Some Children Do Not Tell About Abuse

What is a disclosure?

A disclosure is when someone talks about new or secret information. When visiting the Child Advocacy Center of Central Pa., this information often relates to forms of neglect, physical or sexual abuse, or witnessing crime or violence.

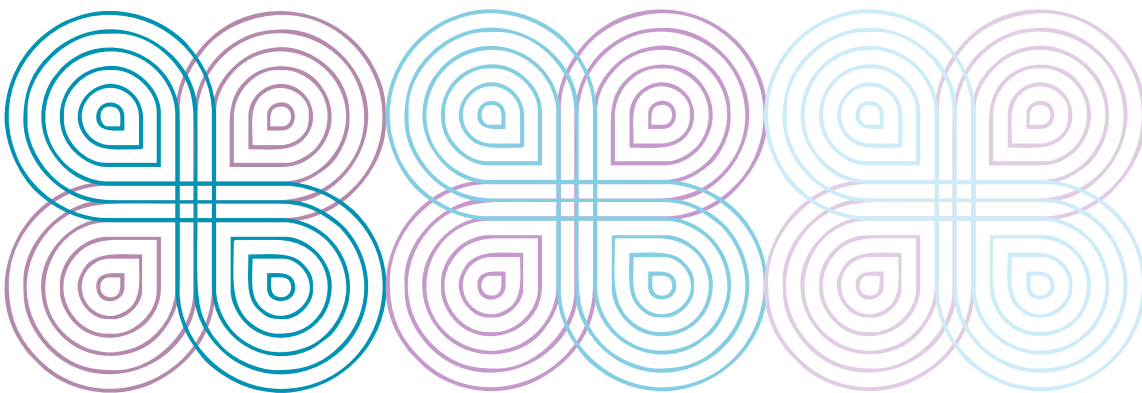
Your reaction is important to your child. They will share information when they are in a calm and supportive environment.

Disclosures can happen in a process and can be accidental or purposeful:

- Children can disclose with words or actions through play
- Children can disclose abuse at any time
- This may happen immediately after the abuse has ended or years later
- Many children do not disclose abuse at all during childhood due to feeling unsafe
- Some children share information when they are involved with therapy or an education/school program
- They may deny it at first or say they forget
- They may “take back” what they said. This does not mean they lied about the information
- They may say this was a mistake, or that it happened to someone else

Delays in disclosure may be linked to a range of factors including:

- Emotional pain
- Shame
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of being blamed
- Fear of punishment
- Feeling partly responsible
- Other traumatic reactions (feeling shocked, confused, not wanting to think about the event)
- Worry that nothing will be done
- Cultural or religious reasons



What is Trauma?


The word “trauma” is used to describe experiences that are extremely distressing and overwhelm a person’s ability to cope.

These events cause intense fear and/or anxiety and can lead to a wide variety of negative short and long-term outcomes. The degree of trauma is a direct result of how an individual feels about an event.


3 Possible Survival Responses




Signs of Trauma

Physical 

- Blowing up when being corrected
- Fighting when criticized or teased
- Resisting transitions or change
- Very protective of personal space
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Frequently seeking attention
- Reverting to younger behaviors
- Poor memory
- Trouble focusing or concentrating
- Alcohol and drug use
- Dental problems
- Self-harm

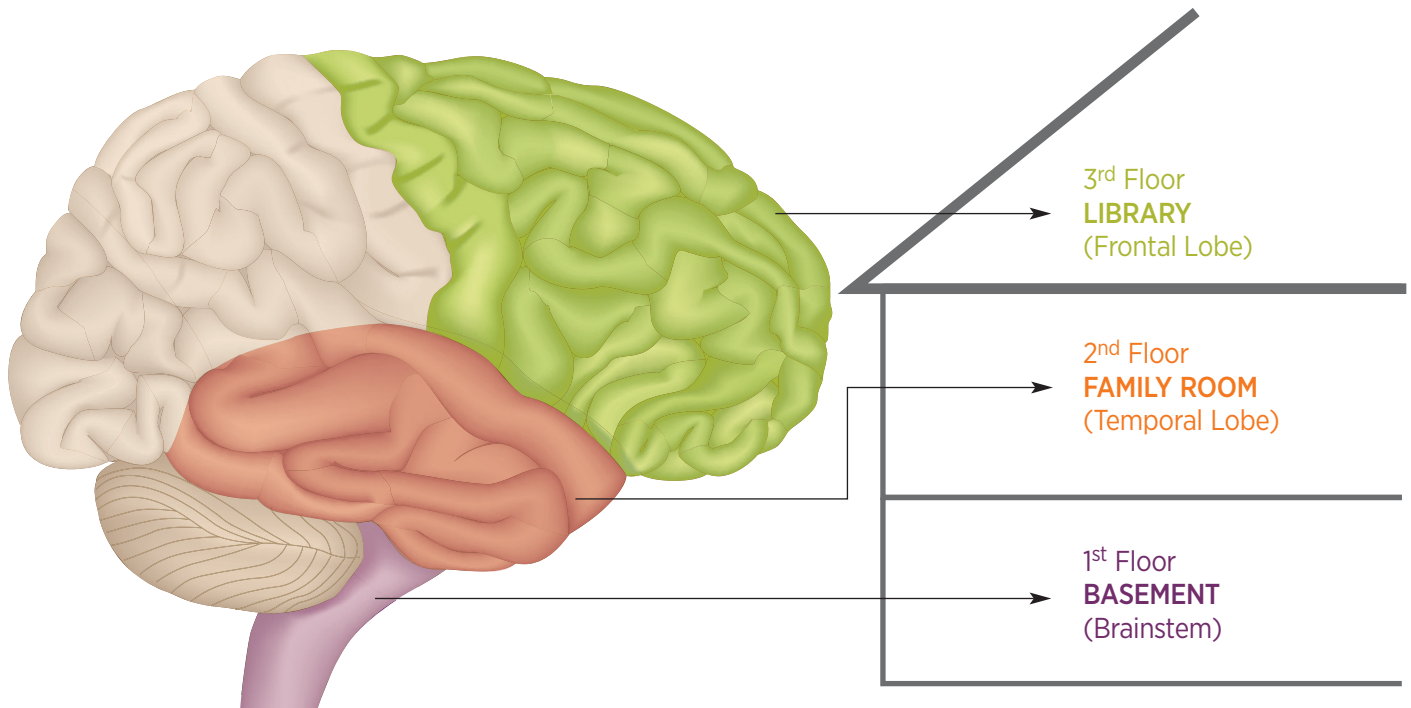
Emotional 

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Sensitive to noise or to being touched
- Fear of being separated from family
- Difficulty trusting others
- Feeling very sad, angry, afraid; mood swings
- Unexplained medical problems
- Fear of feeling or feeling emotionally numb
- Inappropriately blames self or others
- Lying
- Disassociation (loss of reality)
- Traumatic bonding
- Excessive watchfulness, anxiety, shame, or sadness

Cognitive 

- Confusing what is safe and what is dangerous
- Difficulty imagining the future
- Compulsive need to be right
- Takes themselves very seriously
- Attitude of “I have no needs, I can do it myself, thank you”
- Lives in a black and white world
- Suffers from denial
- Hypersensitive to the needs of others
- Poor memory
- Perfectionism/fear of failing
- Flashbacks
- Always expecting something bad to happen

Regulate, Relate, Reason



Regulate in the **BASEMENT**

- Essentials for survival
- Food
- Bathroom
- Heating/cooling system
- Fire extinguisher
- Electricity

What to do:

- Help them manage their stress, offer soothing and reassurance
- Plan activities such as walking, singing, and playing catch
- Reassure your child you are not mad and they are not in trouble
- Get down on their level
- Encourage hugs, (weighted) blankets, and music
- Actively work on trying to understand their experience and emotions

Relate in the **FAMILY ROOM**

- Friendships
- Feelings and emotions

What to do:

- Validate your child's feelings so they feel seen and heard
- Remind them of fun things or things about them you are proud of
- Connect with their interests
- Be silly! Kids laugh 400 times a day as compared to adults 17 times a day
- Focus on each other, not the problem. (Problems make us forget ourselves, but we need ourselves to fix the problem.)

Reason in the **LIBRARY**

- Thinking
- Memories
- Pictures
- File Folders

What to do:

- Once your child is calm and connected, they are able to learn, reflect, and remember
- Problem solve together
- Share your own feelings
- Ask questions
- Encourage confidence, give compliments
- Reflect on the situation together by neatly packaging what happened

Possible Reactions Children Experience After a Traumatic or Stressful Event

Here are some examples of behaviors that may suggest trauma reactions; however, all children react differently. Your child may experience some of these reactions listed below.

Child's Reaction	What You Can Do to Help
<p>Fear (clingy) A child may not want to separate from you and may need constant support.</p>	<p>▶ Reassure your child that they are safe now.</p>
<p>Embarrassment/guilt A child may be embarrassed to talk about what happened. Older children often feel a sense of guilt.</p>	<p>▶ Tell your child that the abuse is not their fault, and they are not responsible for what happened.</p>
<p>Anxiety/loss of control A child may feel out of control or vulnerable. They may develop a low self-image of themselves.</p>	<p>▶ Create situations in which your child feels in control and empowered. Keep a schedule of normal household routines and rules.</p>
<p>Withdrawal (regression) A child may stop talking. Remembering things may be hard. It may be hard to talk about the abuse. They may start bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, or lose toilet training.</p>	<p>▶ Help your child feel secure and in control. Explain the purpose of the legal investigation, the medical exam, and treatment in an age-appropriate manner.</p>
<p>Sleep disruption A child may not want to sleep alone, may have nightmares, or have difficulty sleeping.</p>	<p>▶ Have a check-in with your child before bed. Have comfort items available such as a stuffed animal, nightlight, and blankets. Develop a plan of what to do if your child has disrupted sleep.</p>
<p>Physical reactions A child may have disrupted eating habits (hoarding food or reluctant to eat), stomachaches, or headaches.</p>	<p>▶ Allow your child to talk about their fears. Show understanding about physical complaints. Reassure your child that they are safe.</p>
<p>Aggressive behaviors A child may engage in behaviors such as name calling, fighting, and the use of threats. At home, you might notice an increase in defiance, such as not listening and rule breaking.</p>	<p>▶ Be sure to set positive examples at home. Remain calm when speaking with your child about their behavior. Teaching empathy is another way to increase the likelihood of positive behavior. Praise your child when they show compassion for others.</p>

If you notice ongoing different patterns in behaviors, reach out to a mental health professional. For assistance, call us at **717-782-6800**.

Impact of Childhood Trauma

Cognition

- Impaired readiness to learn
- Difficulty problem-solving
- Language delays
- Problems with concentration
- Poor academic achievement

Brain Development

- Smaller brain size
- Less efficient processing
- Impaired stress response

Physical Health

- Sleep disorders
- Eating disorders
- Poor immune system functioning
- Cardiovascular disease
- Shorter life span

Behavior

- Acting out behaviors
- Social withdrawal
- Aggression
- Poor impulse control
- Risk-taking/illegal activity
- Sexually acting out
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Drug and alcohol misuse

Emotions

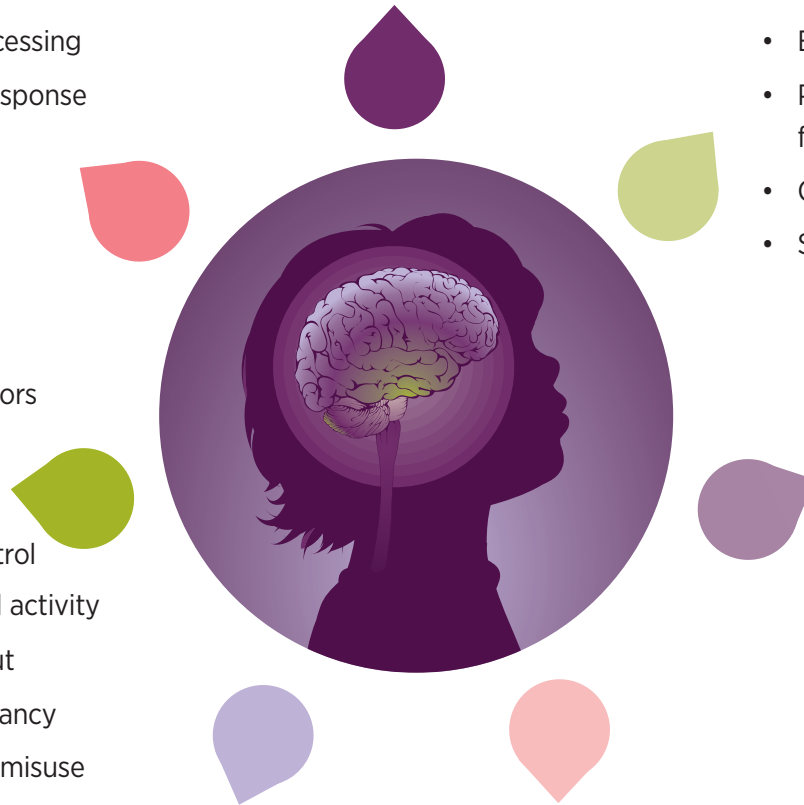
- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Trouble recognizing emotions
- Limited coping skills
- Increased sensitivity to stress
- Shame and guilt
- Excessive worry, hopelessness
- Feelings of helplessness/lack of self-efficacy

Mental Health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Negative self-image/low self-esteem
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Suicidal thoughts
- Self-injurious behaviors

Relationships

- Problems connecting to others
- Poor understanding of social interactions
- Difficulty forming relationships with peers
- Problems in romantic relationships
- Continuing abuse and neglect with the next generation









Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE):

Traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.

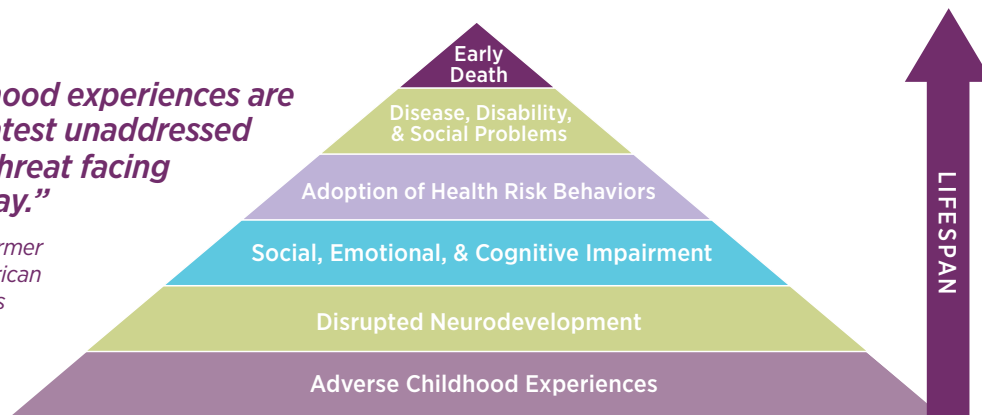


67% of the population have at least 1 ACE.
1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs.

4 or More ACEs	
 3x the levels of lung disease and adult smoking	 11x the level of intravenous drug abuse
 14x the number of suicide attempts	 4x as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15
 4.5x more likely to develop depression	 2x the level of liver disease

“Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today.”

—Dr. Robert Stock, former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics



As you are looking at your ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) score and your child’s potential ACE score, ask yourself where more support or resources may be needed to decrease the risk of something bad happening to your child. By taking a closer look at yourself and being honest with how you can lower your child’s ACE score, you can directly impact their ability to become a well-adjusted, high-functioning adult. The more informed you are, the better decisions you can make.

10 Healthy Discipline Strategies

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends positive discipline strategies that effectively teach children to manage their behavior and promote healthy development. These include:

- 1 Show and tell.** Teach children right from wrong with calm words and actions. Model behaviors you would like to see in your children.
- 2 Set limits.** Have clear and consistent rules your children can follow. Be sure to explain these rules in age-appropriate terms they can understand.
- 3 Give consequences.** Calmly and firmly explain the consequences if they do not behave. For example, tell your child that if they do not pick up their toys, you will put them away for the rest of the day. Be prepared to follow through right away. Do not give in by giving the item back after a few minutes. Remember, never take away something your child truly needs.
- 4 Hear them out.** Listening is important. Let your child finish the story before helping solve the problem. Watch for times when misbehavior has a pattern, like if your child is feeling jealous. Talk with your child about this rather than just giving consequences.
- 5 Give them your attention.** The most powerful tool for effective discipline is attention to reinforce good behaviors and discourage others. Remember, all children want their parent's attention.
- 6 Catch them being good.** Children need to know when they do something bad—and when they do something good. Notice good behavior and point it out, praising success and good choices. Be specific. For example, “Wow, you did a good job putting that toy away!”
- 7 Know when not to respond.** As long as your child is not doing something dangerous and gets plenty of attention for good behavior, ignoring bad behavior can be an effective way of stopping it. Ignoring bad behavior can also teach children natural consequences of their actions. For example, if your child keeps dropping their cookies on purpose, they will soon have no more cookies left to eat. If they throw and break their toy, they will not be able to play with it. It will not be long before they learn not to drop their cookies and to play carefully with their toys.
- 8 Be prepared for trouble.** Plan ahead for situations when your child might have trouble behaving. Prepare them for upcoming activities and how you want them to behave.
- 9 Redirect bad behavior.** Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored or do not know any better. Find something else for your child to do.
- 10 Call a time-out.** A time-out can be especially useful when a specific rule is broken. This discipline tool works best by warning children they will get a time-out if they do not stop, reminding them what they did wrong in as few words—and with as little emotion as possible—and removing them from the situation for a pre-set length of time (1 minute per year of age is a good rule of thumb). With children who are at least 3 years old, you can try letting them lead their own time-out instead of setting a timer. You can just say, “Go to time out and come back when you feel ready and in control.” This strategy, which can help the child learn and practice self-management skills, also works well for older children and teens.

Talking to Kids About Digital Safety

The Internet provides opportunities for children to learn, explore, and socialize with friends. By understanding the potential dangers children face, you can educate them and help them establish safer digital experiences.

General Tips and Guidance

- Make sure your schools and community activities have and enforce communication policies that protect children. Teachers, instructors, and other youth workers should not be communicating privately with children. Instead, they should use group texts, messages, or other communications, and include parents.
- Do not underestimate the level of sophistication that an abuser will use to approach your child. Pay attention to all downloaded apps and their capabilities—even ones that do not seem to be chat-related.
- Smartphones and tablets have a “location services” feature which allows devices to broadcast their location to the users’ apps and contacts. Make sure this feature is turned off so your child’s location remains private.
- If you discover questionable communications from your child to an adult or other youth, remain calm. Talk to your child without accusing them and with the goal of resolving the situation.
- Report sexual solicitation, bullying, or child pornography immediately to your local law enforcement.

For Younger Children

- Consider supervision for children under 8 while using computers, smartphones, and other devices. Know which games, apps, and learning tools have communication and chat capabilities.
- Keep children’s personal information off online profiles and talk to them about what information is private and should not be shared.
- Parents, use your name and email when signing up for games or services. That way you are the primary contact rather than your child.
- Talk honestly with your child about inappropriate questions and language. Use age-appropriate examples and tell them to come to you if anything uncomfortable or questionable is said.

Pre-teens

- Set time limits on electronic device usage and limit use to common areas when possible.
- Set privacy settings to the highest levels.
- Talk to children about the apps and gaming systems they use and how they use them to communicate.
- Monitor texts, messages, and other digital communication.
- Talk to your children about topics like sexting and cyberbullying.

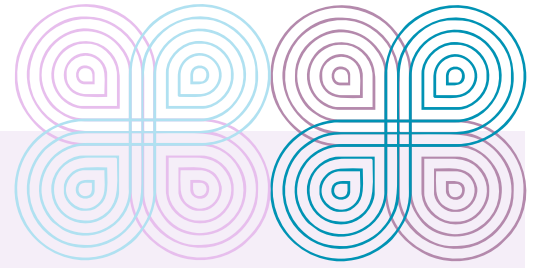
Teenagers

- Explain the dangers and permanence of communication sent digitally, including on social media and blogs.
- Periodically monitor emails, photos, messaging, and app use.
- Advise teens to come to you if they ever have questions about a communication, or if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.

All Ages

- Never chat with or arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they do not know.
- Never give out identifying information.
- Never post public photos of themselves, send photos to someone they do not know, or send inappropriate photos to a friend or significant other.
- Never download pictures from someone they do not know.
- Never respond to messages or posts that are suggestive, obscene, bullying, or harassing.

How You Can Help Your Child



Strengthen Natural and Professional Supports

- **Doctors** (regular checkups)
- **Therapist** (ongoing support)
- **School** (being active in child's education)
- **Case Management** (provides help with navigating the mental health system)
- Connecting or reconnecting with **supportive family members** or friends (natural supports)
- Use **community supports** (after school programs, libraries, boys and girls club, sports, church, and support groups)

Tips:

- Learn to **notice and avoid (or lessen) triggers**. Find out what distracts or makes your child anxious.
- **Set up a routine** for your child so they know what to expect.
- Give your child a **sense of control**. Give simple choices. Respect your child's decisions.
- Do not take your child's behaviors **personally**.
- Try to **stay calm**.
- **Do not yell** or show aggression.
- When you can, **stay away from discipline that uses physical punishment**.
For a child who was abused this may cause panic and out of control behavior.
- Take a **break**.

Source: Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs, HealthyChildren.org

Taking Care of Yourself and Your Child: Trauma Recovery Tips

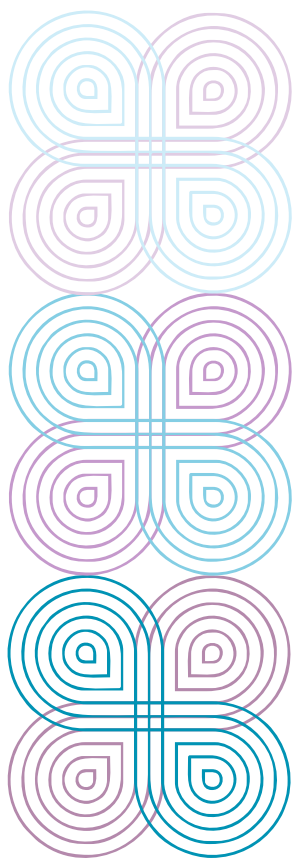
1 Get Moving

Trauma disrupts your body's natural state, making you feel overly aware or fearful. **Exercise and movement** can help repair your nervous system.

Try to exercise for 30 minutes or more on most days. If it is easier, three 10-minute spurts of exercise each day is just as good.

Some examples of this are walking, running, swimming, playing basketball, or even dancing.

Instead of focusing on your thoughts or distracting yourself while you exercise, focus on your body and how it feels as you move. Notice how it feels when your feet hit the ground, for example, or the rhythm of your breathing, or the feeling of wind on your skin. Boxing, weight training, or martial arts can make this easier—after all, you need to focus your body movements during these activities to avoid injury.



2 Do Not Isolate

Following a trauma, you may want to withdraw from others, but this can only make things worse. Connecting to others face-to-face will help you heal, so make an effort to **avoid spending too much time alone**.

You do not have to talk about the trauma. Connecting with others does not have to involve talking about the trauma. Comfort comes from feeling engaged and accepted by others.

Ask for support. While you do not have to talk about the trauma itself, it is important that you have someone to share your feelings with face-to-face, someone who will listen closely without judging you.

Participate in social activities, even if you do not feel like it. Do “normal” activities with other people, activities that have nothing to do with the traumatic experience.

Reconnect with old friends. If you have retreated from relationships that were once important to you, make the effort to reconnect.

Join a support group for trauma survivors. Connecting with others who are facing the same problems can help reduce your sense of isolation, and hearing how others cope can help inspire you in your own recovery.

Volunteer. As well as helping others, volunteering can be a great way to challenge the sense of helplessness that often accompanies trauma. Remind yourself of your strengths and reclaim your sense of power by helping others.

Make new friends. It is important to reach out and make new friends. Take a class or join a club to meet people with similar interests, connect to an alumni association, or reach out to neighbors or work colleagues.

3 Self-regulate Your Nervous System

No matter how angry, anxious, or out of control you feel, it is important to know that you can **change your body and calm yourself**. Not only will it help relieve the anxiety associated with trauma, but it will also create a greater sense of control.

Mindful breathing. If you are feeling disoriented, confused, or upset, practicing mindful breathing is a quick way to calm yourself. Simply take 60 breaths, focusing your attention on each 'out' breath.

Sensory input. Does a specific sight, smell, or taste quickly make you feel calm? Or maybe petting an animal or listening to music works to quickly soothe you? Everyone responds to sensory input a little differently, so experiment with different quick stress relief techniques to find what works best for you.

Staying grounded. To feel in the present and feel more grounded, sit on a chair. Feel your feet on the ground and your back against the chair. Look around you and pick 6 objects that have red or blue in them. Notice how your breathing gets deeper and calmer.

Allow yourself to feel what you feel when you feel it. Acknowledge your feelings about the trauma as they arise and accept them.

4 Take Care of Your Health

It is true: **having a healthy body can increase your ability to cope with the stress** of trauma.

Get plenty of sleep. After a traumatic experience, worry or fear may disturb your sleep patterns. A lack of quality sleep can increase your trauma symptoms and make it harder to maintain your emotional balance. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day and aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

Avoid alcohol, drugs, and limit caffeine. Their use can increase your trauma symptoms and increase feelings of depression, anxiety, and isolation.

Eat a well-balanced diet. Eating small, well-balanced meals throughout the day will help you keep your energy up and minimize mood swings. Avoid sugary and fried foods and eat plenty of omega-3 fats such as salmon, walnuts, soybeans, and flaxseeds to give your mood a boost.

Reduce stress. Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises. Schedule time for activities that bring you joy such as your favorite hobbies.

Devereux Adult Resiliency Survey

Authored by Mary Mackrain, the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS) is a 23-item reflective checklist that helps adults see their personal strengths.. The information can be used to help build on strengths, such as creativity and setting limits, so that you can better cope with the stresses of daily life.

Statistical analysis shows that the DARS is an excellent tool for providing adults with an opportunity to gain insights, particularly in these 4 areas:

Relationships: The mutual, long-lasting, back-and-forth bond we have with another person in our lives.

Internal Beliefs: The feelings and thoughts we have about ourselves and our lives, and how effective we think we are at taking action in life.

Initiative: The ability to make positive choices and decisions and act upon them.

Self-Control: The ability to experience a range of feelings, and express them using the words and actions society considers appropriate.

The purpose of the DARS is to give adults the opportunity to see their personal strengths. Upon completion of the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey, individuals are encouraged to use the *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You Adult Journal*. This journal provides suggested strategies for strengthening adults' resilience.

It takes effort to change any negative thoughts we might have and to learn new behaviors that are good for us. You are worth it. Even if you are already a strong, happy person, you will want to continue building yourself up to maintain or increase your level of well-being.

For a free copy of the DARS visit www.centerforresilientchildren.org.

Take time to reflect and complete each item on the survey below. There are no right answers. Once you have finished, reflect on your strengths and then start small and plan for 1 or 2 things that you feel are important to improve.

Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
Relationships			
1. I have good friends who support me.			
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.			
3. I provide support to others.			
4. I am empathetic to others.			
5. I trust my close friends.			
Internal Beliefs			
1. My role as a caregiver is important.			
2. I have personal strengths.			
3. I am creative.			
4. I have strong beliefs.			
5. I am hopeful about the future.			
6. I am lovable.			
Initiative			
1. I communicate effectively with those around me.			
2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.			
3. I have a hobby that I engage in.			
4. I seek out new knowledge.			
5. I am open to new ideas.			
6. I laugh often.			
7. I am able to say no.			
8. I can ask for help.			
Self-Control			
1. I express my emotions.			
2. I set limits for myself.			
3. I am flexible.			
4. I can calm myself down.			

When to Reach Out for Help

Recovering from trauma takes time, and everyone heals at their own pace. But if months have passed and your symptoms are not letting up, you may need help from a trauma expert.

Seek help for trauma if you are:

- Having trouble doing normal activities at home or work
- Suffering from severe fear, anxiety, or depression
- Unable to form close, satisfying relationships
- Experiencing memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- Avoiding people, places, things that remind you of the trauma
- Emotionally numb and disconnected from others
- Using alcohol or drugs to feel better

Working through trauma can be scary and emotionally painful, so it is best to seek out a therapist who is trauma informed. It is very important that the therapist you choose has experience treating trauma, but the quality of the relationship with your therapist is equally important. Choose a trauma specialist you feel comfortable with. If you do not feel safe, respected, or understood, find another therapist.

Ask yourself:

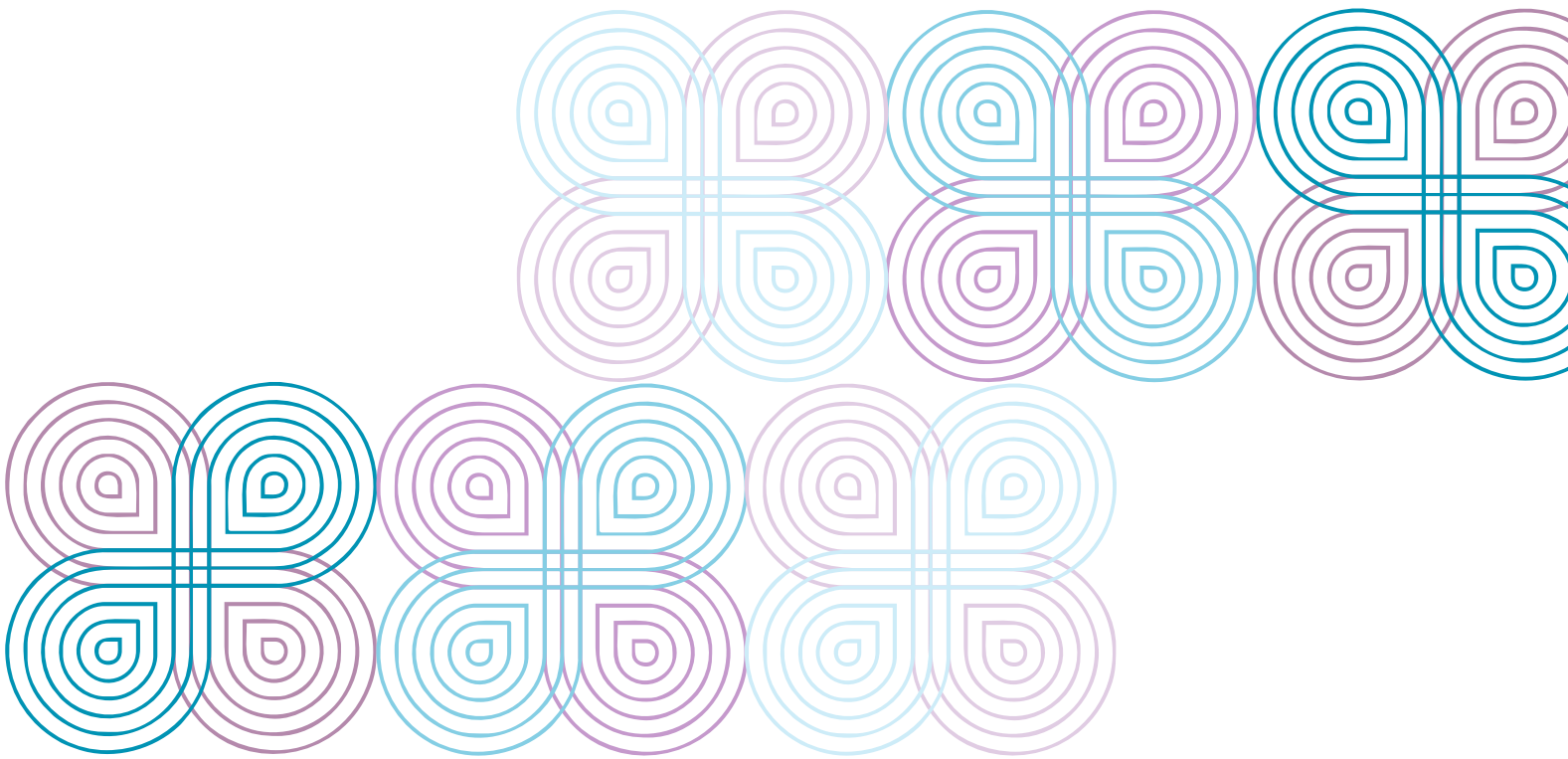
- Did you feel comfortable discussing your problems with the therapist?
- Did you feel like the therapist understood what you were talking about?
- Were your concerns taken seriously or were they minimized or dismissed?
- Were you treated with compassion and respect?
- Do you believe that you could grow to trust the therapist?

If you have questions or trouble accessing resources, please call us at **717-782-6800** and ask for a mental health coordinator.

If connecting to others is difficult ...

Many people who have experienced trauma feel disconnected, withdrawn, and find it difficult to connect with other people. If that describes you, there are some actions you can take before you next meet with a friend.

- **Exercise or move.** Jump up and down, swing your arms and legs, or just flail around. Your head will feel clearer and you will find it easier to connect.
- **Vocal toning.** As strange as it sounds, vocal toning is a great way to open up to social engagement. Sit up straight and simply make “mmmm” sounds. Change the pitch and volume until you experience a pleasant vibration in your face.





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