

# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

Stress reactions can affect a person physically, emotionally, behaviorally, or cognitively (how your mind works).

The following are some reactions & symptoms that are commonly experienced by individuals who have been through a trauma.

This is the body's way of trying to adjust and cope with what has happened.

This list is to help identify and normalise what you're experiencing.



# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS IN ADULTS

## PHYSICAL (SOMATIC)

- Racing heart / chest pains
- Sweating / flushed
- Frequent Illness
- Shortness of Breath / Hyperventilation
- Digestive problems
- Loss of appetite / craving junk food
- Insomnia / nightmares
- Feeling of exhaustion, fatigue
- Muscle Tremors / soreness
- Muffled hearing
- Loss of Coordination
- Frequent headaches/migraines
- Compulsive talking
- Difficulty sitting or relaxing
- Dizzy or fainting
- Dryness of mouth
- Frequent need to urinate
- Grinding of teeth
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Change in sexual functioning or desire
- Missed menstrual cycle

## THINKING (COGNITIVE)

- Disbelief
- Horror
- Trouble prioritizing
- Confusion, Disorientation
- Poor concentration / spaciness
- Poor decision-making abilities
- Poor memory
- Preoccupation with trauma memories
- Preoccupation with health
- Time distortion (slows down or speeds up)
- Inability to understand consequences
- Increased rigidity and closed thinking
- Feeling omnipotent (can do anything)
- Cynicism or negativism
- Absolute thinking (always / never)
- Negative / critical judgment against self
- Hindsight thinking (i.e. If only...)
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts
- Flashbacks or other intrusive imagery

## MEANING / MINISTRY

- Increasingly task oriented
- Loss of sense of purpose/role
- Less meaning in ministry
- Disappointment with God
- Loss of motivation
- No interest in faith-related practices
- Questioning former beliefs





## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS IN ADULTS

### EMOTIONAL (AFFECTIVE)

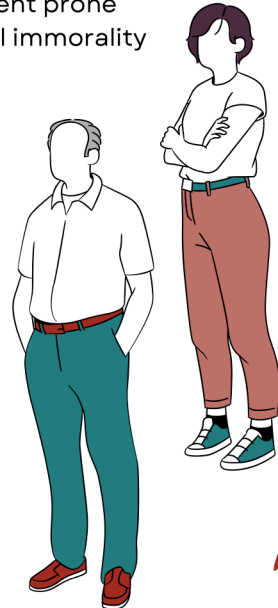
- Numb / Emotionally shut down / Shocked
- Anxious / Fearful
- Sadness / Depression
- Grieving
- Panicked or fearful (specific or general)
- Overwhelmed
- Anger / resentment (at self, others, God)
- Mood swings
- Feeling helpless / inadequate
- Apathy
- Sense of guilt
- Loss of sense of humor
- Less able to cope with new and/or ongoing stress

### INTERPERSONAL

- Irritability / easily frustrated
- Insensitivity
- Isolating / Distancing (avoiding fellowship)
- Insecurity
- Avoidance of intimacy
- Suspicious
- Clingy
- Critical of others
- Blaming others
- Hypersensitivity (feelings easily hurt)
- Family problems

### BEHAVIORAL

- Avoidance behaviors (withdrawal)
- Use of alcohol / drugs to numb
- Loss of interest in daily and/or fun activities
- Overly involved in work
- Desire to leave field
- Less productive
- Losing / misplacing things
- Easily startled / hyperalert to environment
- Slowed down or Hyperactivity
- Aimless wandering
- Dejection
- Hysteria
- Sudden lifestyle changes
- Sleep disorders
- Excessive spending or eating
- Accident prone
- Sexual immorality





## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS IN ADOLESCENTS

### BEHAVIOURAL (& INTERPERSONAL)

- Difficulty taking on responsibilities
- Going back to old habits
- Withdraw socially
- Down on yourself
- Abuse alcohol/drugs
- Decline in school performance
- Sudden changes in personality, styles, relationships
- Act “too old, too soon” (dropping out, pregnancy...)
- Apathy – don’t care as much about things
- Aggressive
- Changes in friends
- Difficulty following rules



### THOUGHTS (COGNITIVE)

- Problems concentrating
- Concerns about health
- Intellectualization or Rationalization (staying in own head not wanting to talk about painful things)
- Confusion / Disoriented
- Fleeting thoughts of suicide (be sure to share with a trusted adult!)

### PHYSICAL (SOMATIC)

- Headaches and/or vague complaints, pain
- Frequent illness
- Skin rashes
- Loss of appetite/overeating
- Sleeping problems

### EMOTIONAL (AFFECTIVE)

- Anger, hostility
- Guilt / blame
- Chronic sadness / depression
- Anxiety / Panic
- Numbness
- Shame / Despair
- Sense of betrayal
- Feel abandoned / alone

### SPIRITUAL

- Questioning long held beliefs
- Questioning faith
- Anger at God

# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

## PHYSICAL (SOMATIC)

### Pre-school

- Pale appearance
- Loss of appetite / overeating
- Loss of bowel / bladder control
- Sleeping problems / Nightmares

### Primary School

- Complaints about visions
- Complaints about stomach problems
- Itching
- Headaches
- Pale appearance
- Sleeping problems / Nightmares

## BEHAVIORAL (& INTERPERSONAL)

### Pre-school

- Aggressive / Disobedient
- Regression (Bed wetting, wanting to be fed)
- Thumb sucking
- Repetitive play / Reenacting trauma
- Clinging, Anxious attachment

### Primary School

- Problems in school / Disobedience / Acting out
- Clinging
- Going back to outgrown habits
- Competition with siblings
- Withdrawal from friends
- Repetitive talking / Reenacting trauma
- Violent Play, Fighting
- Wanting to be fed, dressed

## EMOTIONAL (AFFECTIVE)

### Pre-school

- Generalized fears
- Numb
- Irritable / Frequent crying
- Nervous, anxious, worried
- Separation anxiety
- Fearful of reminders of incident
- Panicked, hysterical

### Primary School

- Anger, hostility, aggression, belligerence
- Guilt
- Sadness, depression
- Numb / Apathy / Withdrawal
- Fear about weather, safety, recurrence, etc
- School phobia

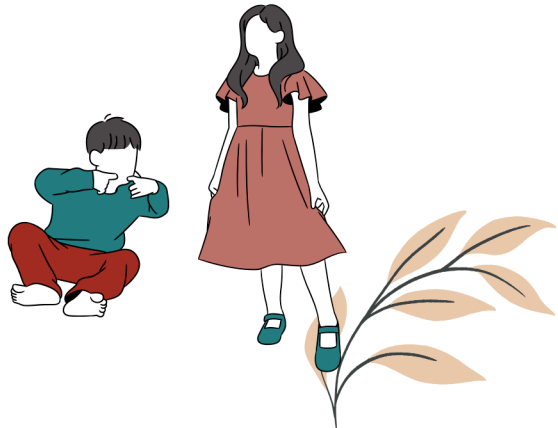
## THOUGHTS (COGNITIVE)

### Pre-school

- Short attention span
- Confusion with event, sequencing, death, etc

### Primary School

- Problems concentrating
- Confusion with event & sequencing





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://dovidka.info>

[www.traumahealinginstitutie.com/resources](http://www.traumahealinginstitutie.com/resources)

<https://www.europsy.net/resource-page/>



**YWAM EUROPE MCRT**  
**UKRAINE RESOURCES DROPBOX**





\*These lists were compiled from ICISF, NIMH,  
Lystad, MMCT, Cross Bar X, Johnson, and Metzgar



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