

# Towards Recovery

## Blue Knot Foundation fact sheet for people with disability and experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

- Trauma is when bad things happen to a person. Childhood trauma is when bad things happen as a child.
- Trauma happens between people. It often happens more than once.
- Trauma can go on for a long time and it can be very bad.
- Trauma happens with abuse. Trauma is when another person hurts you. The person can hurt your feelings. The person can hurt your body.
- The person can do things to you that you do not want them to do. The person can hurt you in private places.
- Sometimes trauma means that you do not get your needs met. This is called neglect.
- Some trauma happens when a person in the family hurts another person. This is called family violence.
- Sometimes a person looking after a child cannot care for them. The person cannot meet the child's needs. A person may not be able to look after a child if the person had their own trauma. This can happen if that trauma is still affecting them.
- Some people experience trauma when they are an adult. This can happen with refugees. It can also happen if there is violence in the family or community.
- Trauma as an adult can make the effects of trauma as a child bigger.
- Trauma which happens between people over a long time or many times is called complex trauma.



- Research tells us that people can and do recover (heal) from complex trauma. But they need the right support.
- Parents and other people looking after children can pass trauma to them. When people with trauma heal, their children do better.
- Some people with trauma seem okay. But the health of many people with complex trauma is often not good.
- People with trauma often have similar problems. But each person is different too. The effects of trauma change with the support a person gets. It also changes with who they are, and with their culture and background.
- People with trauma experiences are called survivors. Many survivors find it hard to feel and be safe. Many survivors also find it hard to trust people. Some trust too easily.
- Many survivors do not feel good about themselves. Many are isolated and lonely. Many survivors find it hard to have good relationships.
- Many survivors blame themselves. They feel shame. Being hurt by another person is not your fault.
- Sometimes children blame themselves for their abuse. Abuse is never the child's fault. Sometimes people who abuse make the child believe that the abuse is their fault.
- Some communities blame victims for speaking about their abuse. This should not happen.
- Trauma can make you jumpy. This is the way people react to danger.
- Survivors can sometimes react when there is no danger. This is because something sets them off. This is called a trigger. Triggers can cause big reactions for people with trauma.
- Survivors are not only jumpy. Survivors can also shut down and go numb. Some survivors dissociate (separate from the present).
- Dissociation from trauma can start in childhood. It is a way that a person protects themselves. It can continue as an adult. The person has no control over it.
- Being jumpy and shutting down are trauma responses. Survivors can be jumpy sometimes and shut down at others.
- Survivors also often have strong feelings. Many survivors cannot manage their strong feelings.



- Children do things to try and stop the pain and distress of their trauma. These things are called coping strategies.
- Many coping strategies are good at first. Many coping strategies are not good later on.
- Some survivors use alcohol, drugs, eating or work to stop try and stop their pain and distress. Some people avoid other people. Some of these strategies can make people sick.
- When people understand why they use their coping strategies they can start to heal. They can also learn new strategies. This can take time.
- Survivors can and do recover (heal) from trauma. There are lots of different ways to heal. The main thing is to know that recovery is possible. It is possible with good support.
- Bad relationships can cause trauma. But good relationships can help you heal.
- Good relationships are safe. They can be with friends, family (if supportive), support workers, advocates or counsellors.
- Recovery can take time. Learning how trauma can affect the body and brain can help. Learning ways to stay calm can help too.

**There is more information here [www.blueknot.org.au](http://www.blueknot.org.au) The website has more fact sheets, videos and podcasts too.**

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If you or someone you support lives with disability and experiences of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation OR is affected by the Disability Royal Commission, you can call the **National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 458** between 9am and 6pm AEST Monday to Friday and between 9am and 5pm AEST Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

If you or someone you support has experiences of childhood trauma or is considering the National Redress Scheme, you can call the **Blue Knot Helpline and Redress Support Service on 1300 657 380** between 9am and 5pm Monday to Sunday AEST.

