

Blue Knot Foundation

How to support adults with complex trauma

Easy Read fact sheet



How to use this fact sheet



Blue Knot Foundation wrote this fact sheet.
When you see the word 'we', it means
Blue Knot Foundation.



We wrote this fact sheet in an easy to read way.
We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Normal
Bold

We have written some words in **bold**.
This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.
There is a list of these words on page 33.



This Easy Read fact sheet is a summary of
another fact sheet. This means it only includes
the most important ideas.



You can find the other fact sheet on our website at
www.blueknot.org.au



You can ask for help to read this fact sheet.
A friend, family member or support person
may be able to help you.

Support for you



In this fact sheet, we talk about things that might upset some people.



If you get upset and need support, we have services you can contact.



We offer free **counselling support** to people with disability and trauma.



Counselling support is when you:

- talk to someone about how you feel
- talk about ways to help you feel better.



You can contact us by phone.

1300 657 380

We are open every day.

We are open between 9am and 5pm AEST/AEDT 7 days a week.

You can also contact us by webchat.

<https://blueknot.org.au/survivors/blue-knot-helpline-redress-support-service/>



You can contact us by email

helpline@blueknot.org.au



In this fact sheet we also talk about suicide.

Suicide is when someone chooses to end their own life.

If you need to talk to someone, please contact:



Lifeline

13 11 14



Beyond Blue

1300 224 636

What's in this fact sheet?

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What is trauma?

Trauma is something bad that happens to you that can make you feel:



- sad



- scared



- stressed



- worried.

Trauma can affect:



- how you think



- how you feel



- your body.

Trauma can happen:



- once
- more than once.



Everyone deals with trauma in different ways.

What is complex trauma?



Complex trauma is when people experience trauma:

- from other people
- for a long time
- lots of times.



Sexual abuse is a type of complex trauma.



Sexual abuse is when someone makes you do sexual things you:

- do not want to do
- are too young to do.



Emotional abuse is a type of complex trauma.



Emotional abuse is when someone:

- says mean things to you
- calls you names
- puts you down
- ignores you
- stops you from seeing your friends or family.



Violence is a type of complex trauma.



Violence is when someone hurts you physically.



Neglect is a type of complex trauma.



Neglect is when your parents or carers don't care for you the way they are supposed to.



Domestic and family violence is a type of complex trauma.

Domestic and family violence is when you are hurt by someone close to you, such as:



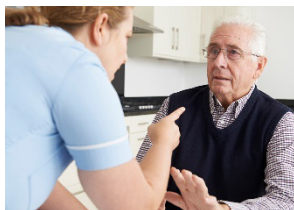
- your boyfriend or girlfriend



- your husband or wife



- a member of your family



- someone who takes care of you



- someone who lives with you.

What is childhood trauma?



Childhood trauma is a type of complex trauma.



Childhood trauma is when something bad happens to someone as a child.

People can experience childhood trauma:



- once



- more than once

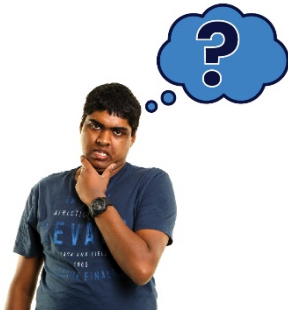


- over a long period of time.



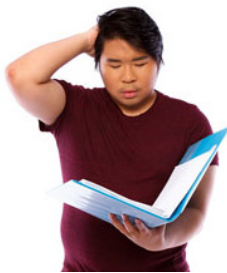
Childhood trauma also happens when people experience neglect.

How can complex trauma affect adults?



Complex trauma can affect how people think.

Complex trauma can make it hard to:



- focus



- remember things.

Complex trauma can make people feel:



- stressed



- worried



- alone



- angry



- confused.



Complex trauma can affect someone's body.

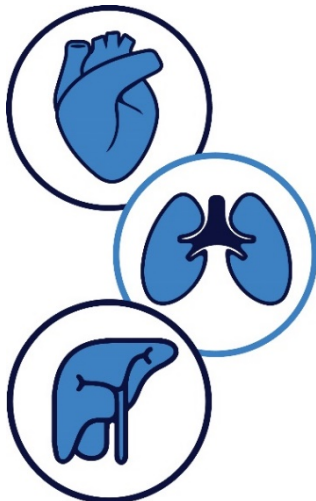
Complex trauma can cause physical health problems such as:



- headaches



- stomach aches



- problems with your:
 - heart
 - lungs
 - liver.



Complex trauma can make it hard to have close relationships with other people.



Complex trauma can make someone react badly to things other people deal with easily every day.

How people react to triggers



Triggers are things that make people with trauma react.



People can have different triggers.



It can be hard to know what might trigger someone.



Triggers can make someone remember some of their trauma.



This can make them feel like they are in danger.

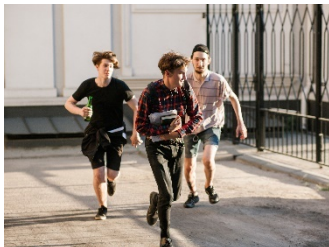


People might react to triggers in 3 different ways:

- fight
- flight
- freeze.



Fight is when they try to fight the danger.



Flight is when they run away from the danger.



Freeze is when they can't move or speak.



People often have strong feelings when they are triggered.



Some people's feelings shut down so they don't feel anything.

How to support an adult with complex trauma

If you support an adult with complex trauma, it's important to understand:



- what complex trauma is



- how it can affect people.



We know that adults with complex trauma can get better with the right support.

This includes support from:



- family



- friends



- carers



- **advocates.**



Advocates are people who speak up for:

- people with disability when they can't speak up for themselves
- the rights of people with disability.

When you support an adult with complex trauma you must:



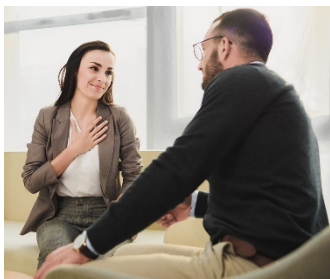
- listen



- be patient



- understand how they feel

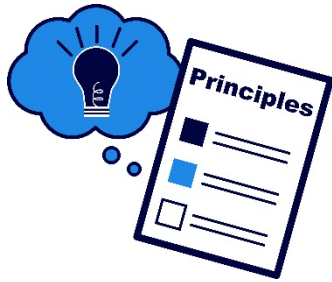


- show them respect



- use trauma-informed principles.

What are trauma-informed principles?

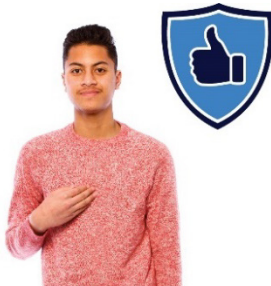


Principles are important ideas to think about.



Trauma-informed principles are important ideas to think about when we speak to other people.

There are 5 trauma-informed principles:



- Safety – helping someone feel safe



- Trust – building trust with the person you are supporting



- Choice – giving the person choices about:
 - when they talk to you
 - where they talk to you
 - what they talk about



- Working together – working as a team with the person you are supporting



- **Empowerment.**



The Empowerment principle is about the person taking back the power in their life.

Trauma-informed principles makes sure you look at:



- the type of support you are offering

and



- the way you offer support.

How adults can get better after complex trauma

Complex trauma can affect a person's:



- brain



- body



- feelings or emotions.



Complex trauma can affect the way someone's brain, body and feelings work together.

Support for complex trauma should include support for the person's:



- brain
- body
- feelings or emotions.

Some types of complex trauma support include:



- counselling support



- yoga

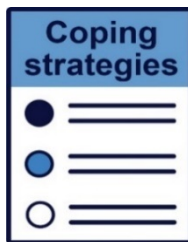


- art and music therapy.

Coping strategies



Getting better from trauma can take a long period of time.

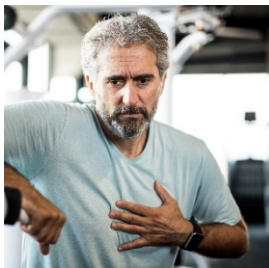


People create **coping strategies** to help them live with trauma.

Coping strategies can help people manage:



- how they feel



- how your body feels.



The person might have one coping strategy.



Or they might have more than one coping strategy.



Coping strategies can make the person feel good in the beginning.

But some coping strategies can:



- be bad for the person if they use them for a long time



- hurt the person or other people.



When coping strategies become bad for the person, they can put them in danger.

Coping strategies that can be bad for the person include:



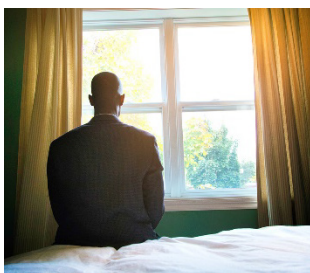
- drinking a lot of alcohol



- using a lot of drugs



- hurting yourself



- thoughts or attempts of suicide.

People can start to get better after trauma
when they:



- know what their bad coping strategies are



- create coping strategies that are good for them.

Support for supporters



It's normal to feel alone when you are supporting someone with complex trauma.



You can also feel stressed.

It's important to:



- take care of yourself



- find coping strategies that are good for you.



There is support available when you need to talk to someone.



You can contact us.

Our contact details are on page 4.

More information

The National Counselling and Referral Service can help you support people with disability who have experienced:



- violence



- abuse



- neglect



- **exploitation** – when someone takes advantage of you.

Their contact details are on page 38.

Word list

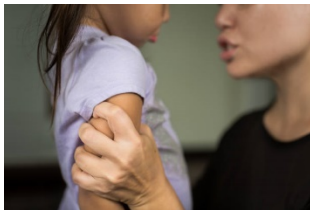
This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Advocates

Advocates are people who speak up for:

- people with disability when they can't speak up for themselves
- the rights of people with disability.



Childhood trauma

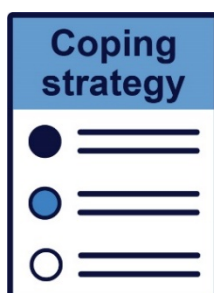
Childhood trauma is when something bad happens to you as a child.



Complex trauma

Complex trauma is when you experience trauma:

- from other people
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Coping strategies

Coping strategies are things people do to try and live with the trauma.

Counselling support

Counselling support is when you:



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- talk about ways to help you feel better.

Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence is when you are hurt by someone close to you, such as:



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Emotional abuse

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Empowerment

Empowerment is when you gain the power to control your life.



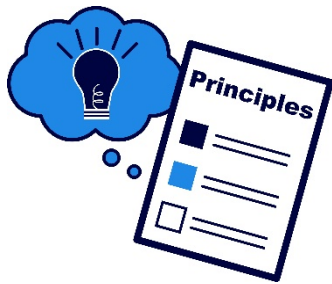
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Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of you.



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Trauma

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- scared
- stressed
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Trauma-informed principles

Trauma-informed principles are important ideas to think about when we speak to other people.



Triggers

Triggers are things that make people react to trauma.



Violence

Violence is when someone hurts you physically.

Contact us



You can call the Blueknot Helpline and Redress Support Service.

1300 657 380



You can also send an email to

helpline@blueknot.org.au

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We are open between 9am and 5pm
AEST/AEDT.



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