

## Blue Knot Foundation

How adults with complex trauma can get better

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 27.



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](http://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/](https://blueknot.org.au/survivors/blue-knot-helpline-redress-support-service/)



You can contact us by email  
[helpline@blueknot.org.au](mailto: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 someone ignores you or doesn't look after you.



**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:



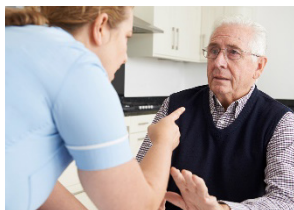
- your boyfriend or girlfriend



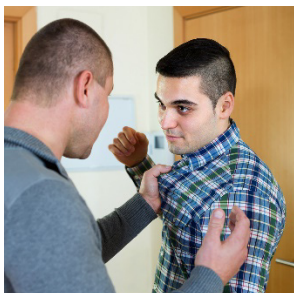
- your husband or wife



- 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 you as a child.



Childhood trauma is never the child's fault.

You can experience childhood trauma:



- once



- more than once

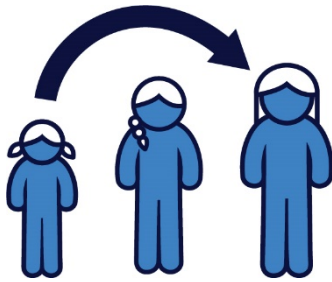


- over a long period of time.

Childhood trauma can affect the way:



- your mind grows



- you grow as a person



- you connect with people.



Childhood trauma also happens when you experience neglect.



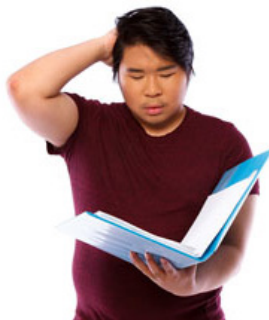
Neglect can happen when your parents or carers are still affected by their own trauma.

## How complex trauma can affect you



Complex trauma can affect how you think.

This means it can be hard for you to:



- focus



- remember things.



Complex trauma can affect how you feel.

This means you can feel:



- stressed



- worried



- alone



- angry



- confused.



You can also find it hard to trust people who want to help you.



Complex trauma can affect your body.

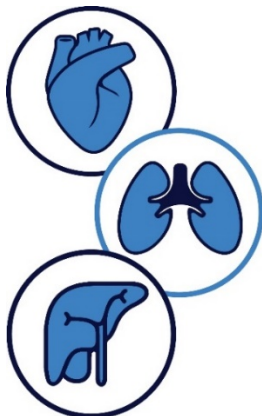
Complex trauma can cause physical health problems such as:



- headaches



- stomach aches



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



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



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



Complex trauma can also make it hard for other people to understand your **triggers**.

## How triggers can affect you



**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 you remember some of your trauma.



This can make you feel like you are in danger.

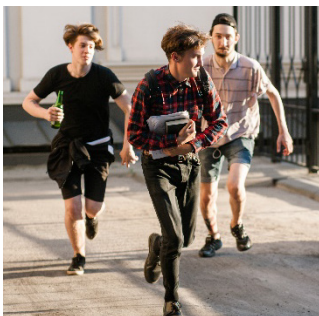


You might react to triggers in 3 different ways:

- fight
- flight
- freeze.



Fight is when you try to fight the danger.



Flight is when you run away from the danger.



Freeze is when you can't move or speak.





People often have strong feelings when they are triggered.

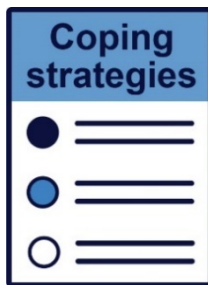


Some people's feelings shut down so they don't feel anything.

## 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 you manage:



- how you feel



- how your body feels.



You might have one coping strategy.



You might have more than one coping strategy.



Coping strategies can make you feel good when you use them in the beginning.

But some coping strategies can:



- be bad for you if you use them for a long time



- hurt you or other people.



When coping strategies become bad for you, they can put you in danger.

Coping strategies that can be bad for you include:



- drinking a lot of alcohol



- using a lot of drugs



- hurting yourself



- thoughts or attempts of suicide.

You can start to get better after trauma when you:



- know what your bad coping strategies are



- create coping strategies that are good for you.



## Support for people with complex trauma



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.



What works for someone else might not work for you.

## 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 31.

## Word list

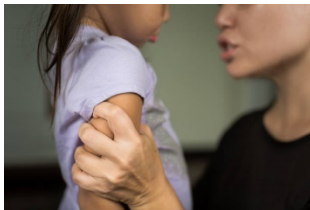
This list explains what the **bold** words in this fact sheet mean.



### **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**

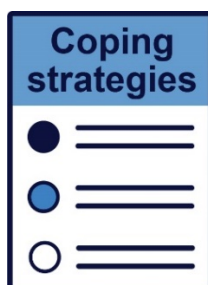
Childhood trauma is when something bad happens to you as a child.



### **Complex trauma**

Complex trauma is when you experience trauma:

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



### **Coping strategies**

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

## Counselling support



Counselling support is when you:

- talk to someone about how you feel
- 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:



- your boyfriend or girlfriend
- your husband or wife
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you
- someone who lives with you.





## Emotional abuse

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.



## Empowerment

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



## Exploitation

Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of you.



## Neglect

Neglect is when someone ignores you or doesn't look after you.



## Sexual abuse

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

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



## Trauma

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

- sad
- scared
- stressed
- worried.



## Triggers

Triggers are things that make people react to trauma.



## Violence

Violence is when someone hurts you physically.

## Contact us



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**1300 657 380**

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You can contact us by email

**[helpline@blueknot.org.au](mailto:helpline@blueknot.org.au)**



**[www@blueknot.org.au](http://www.blueknot.org.au)**



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