

**Addressing Systemic Racism and Health
Disparities through a Trauma- Informed Lens**

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What is Trauma?

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach* (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). Rockville, MD: Author.

The Three E's in Trauma

Events

Events/circumstances cause trauma.

Experience

An individual's *experience* of the event determines whether it is traumatic.

Effects

Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach* (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). Rockville, MD: Author.

Potential Traumatic Events

Abuse

- Emotional
- Sexual
- Physical
- Domestic violence
- Witnessing violence
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Institutional

Loss

- Death
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Separation
- Natural disaster
- Accidents
- Terrorism
- War

Chronic Stressors

- Poverty
- Racism
- Prejudice/discrimination
- Community trauma
- Historical trauma
- Incarceration
- Time in a detention center
- Family member with substance use challenges

Signs of Trauma



Behavioral

- 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**



Emotional/Physical

- Nightmares or sleeping problems**
- Flashbacks**
- Sensitive to noise or to being touched**
- Fear of being separated from family**
- Difficulty trusting others**
- Feeling very sad, angry, afraid, numb, irritable, anxious; emotional swings**
- Unexplained medical problems**



Psychological

- Confusing what is safe and what is dangerous**
- Trouble focusing or concentrating**
- Difficulty imagining the future**
- Being excessively watchful or hypervigilant**

Early Distress Signals: What might you or others notice or what you might feel just before losing control?

- **Clenching teeth**
- **Wringing hands**
- **Bouncing legs**
- **Shaking**
- **Crying**
- **Giggling**
- **Heart Pounding**
- **Singing inappropriately**
- **Pacing**
- **Withdrawal**
- **Breathing hard**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Clenching fists**
- **Loud voice**
- **Rocking**
- **Can't sit still**
- **Swearing**
- **Restlessness**
- **Other _____**



What Does Not Help When You are Upset?

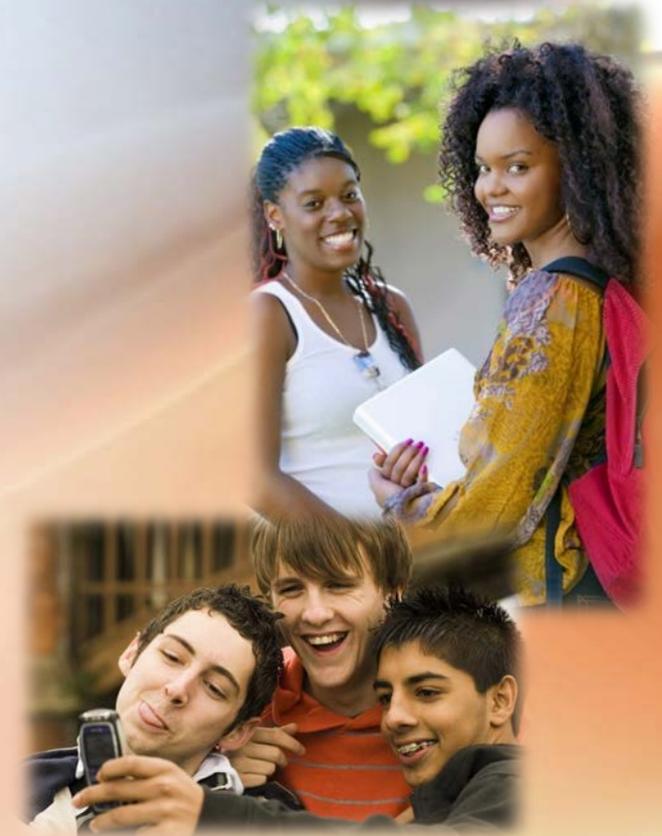


- Being alone
- Not being listened to
- Being told to stay in my room
- Loud tone of voice
- Being told to calm down
- Humor
- Being ignored
- Having many people around me
- Having space invaded

“If I’m told in a mean way that I can’t do something ... I lose it.” -- Natasha, 18 years old

What are some things that help you calm down when you start to get upset?

- Reading a book
- Pacing
- Coloring
- Deep breathing
- Being left alone
- Talking to others
- Exercising
- Using cold face cloth
- Eating
- Writing in a journal
- Listening to music
- Calling friends/family
- Speaking with therapist



SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

- **Safety**
- **Trustworthiness and Transparency**
- **Peer Support**
- **Collaboration and Mutuality**
- **Empowerment, Voice, and Choice**
- **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues**

Core Concepts of Trauma-Informed Care

- **Safety First**
- **What happened to you vs. What's wrong with you**
- **All behavior has meaning and purpose**
- **Healing is possible**
- **Comfort vs. Control/ Stabilize the Brain**
- **Everyone needs meaning and purpose**



Race & Racism Defined

- **Race - A social construct based on physical characteristics**
 - **We as a species share 99.9% of our DNA with each other**
- **Racism – The false belief in the superiority of one group of people over another based on race**
 - **Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities**
 - **Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities**
 - **Saps strength of the whole society by wasting human resources**

Types of Racism

- **Structural racism – Differential access to goods, services and opportunities by race**
- **Personally mediated racism – Prejudice and discrimination based on assumptions about capabilities, motives and intent**
- **Internalized racism – Acceptance by the stigmatized “races” of negative messages about ones own abilities and intrinsic worth**

Internalized Racism To COVID-19 Testing

- **Fear of discovery**
- **Fear of stigma: Black disease**
- **Lack of trust in “system”**
- **Lack of clear understanding of benefits of test or what results mean**



Causes of COVID-19 Health Inequities

- **Higher exposure because of public facing jobs**
- **Higher susceptibility – Chronic disease disparities**
- **Social determinates of health**

Understandings and Strategies

1. **One size does not fit all**
2. **Seek to understand and listen for the opportunity to build bridges**
3. **Embrace diversity as an asset.**
4. **Stop focusing on treating everyone the same**
5. **Connect, don't correct.**
6. **Understand that friends and peer pressure continues to influence decision-making.**
7. **Neurobiologic development important in understanding the 'why's' of behavior.**
8. **Faith-Based Initiatives are powerful tools.**
9. **TAMAR inclusion in strategies has proven to be helpful.**

Thank You!

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