

What is trauma?

Trauma is a psychological, emotional and physical response to an extremely frightening incident or series of events. When kids experience a traumatic incident – or it happens to someone they care about – their ability to cope can be overwhelmed.



Types of trauma

Kids in out-of-home care can experience various types of trauma including:

- *Acute trauma* - single incident, time-limited events that have a beginning and an end such as dog bites, car accidents and natural disasters. Even when an event is time-limited, the effects of the associated trauma may be lasting
- *Intergenerational trauma* – negative impacts of personal or historical experiences are transferred from survivors to their kids, and continue to influence later generations
- *Chronic Trauma* - ongoing, repeated patterns of trauma such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse, domestic violence and neglect
- *Complex trauma* - a sub-type of chronic trauma. It includes multiple traumatic events that begin at a very young age, and are perpetrated by a parent or caregiver whose role is to protect the child
- *In-utero trauma* - In-utero trauma is caused when a pregnant woman is exposed to traumatic experiences including domestic violence or substance misuse. If a pregnant woman repeatedly experiences stressful situations, the development of her baby can be affected.

Most kids in out-of-home care have experienced complex trauma. The adults in their lives play vital roles in supporting healing and recovery.

Time In

This means staying with your kids when they are overwhelmed or struggling to manage their emotions and behaviours. Time In helps kids learn to cope with big feelings, and shows that you will not punish or abandon them when things get tough.

During Time In:

- stay calm and take charge
- listen closely and respond with empathy

Healing from Trauma

LINKS Training and Support

- stay close to your child/teen, offering the level of touch or closeness they are comfortable with
- use a soothing voice. Reassure them that this will pass, and they will soon feel calm again
- praise them for calming down, no matter how long it takes.

Returning to Chilled

The Cooling stage is an important time, as it helps kids return fully to the Chilled stage. Focus on:

- reassuring them of your ongoing support
- helping them name their feelings
- helping them to determine what triggered their behaviour including the feelings associated with this.
- helping them to understand what has happened and talk about their behaviour - keep your language positive and simple
- problem-solving with them for next time
- helping them update their Managing Emotions Guide

If you're still trying to identify triggers for your kids' trauma responses, this is the time to complete a Moment-by-Moment assessment.