

Trauma and its Impacts

To work effectively in this space, it is key that we acknowledge trauma and its potential impacts. Individual trauma results from an event or series of events/circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening. It often has adverse effects on an individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being. (National Library of Medicine, n.d.)

Levels of Trauma

Trauma doesn't just happen to individuals. According to [SAMSHA](#), or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, trauma may be experienced at three different levels: micro (individual, family), mezzo (groups), and macro (organizations/ community). These levels can overlap and contribute to the collective impact.



Credit: <https://ecosocialwork.wixsite.com/ecosocialwork/blank-1>

Types of Trauma

There are different types of traumas¹ as well, including but not limited to:

Acute trauma can arise from intense distress in the immediate aftermath of a **one-time event** – the reaction is typically for a shorter duration.

Chronic trauma can arise from harmful events that are **repeated or prolonged**. It can develop in response to persistent bullying, neglect, abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual)

Complex trauma can arise from experiencing **repeated or multiple traumatic events** from which there is no possibility of escape. It is often grounded in a sense of being trapped.

Secondary or vicarious trauma can arise from **exposure to other people's suffering** and often affects first responders and social workers. This trauma is every bit as real and can lead to compassion fatigue.

***Survivors of childhood sexual violence
may experience one or all types of trauma.***

***....so can everyone else.
It is part of being human.***

***It is important we remember that
we each bring our own lived experience to this work.***

***It is important we remember that
others may be carrying trauma that we cannot see.***

Let's take care of each other.

¹ Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma>

Safeguarding Against Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue describes the physical, emotional, and psychological impacts of helping others. Compassion fatigue is often mistaken for burnout, but it is a unique experience tied directly to experiencing the trauma of others you care about.

Compassion fatigue can affect your ability to engage in your work or advocacy. Fortunately, there are clear signs that you or someone you know may be developing compassion fatigue.



Mood Swings

You may experience moderate to severe mood swings. Compassion fatigue may lead to pessimistic or cynical thinking.



Detachment

You may experience a withdrawal from social connections. You may feel emotionally distant from friends, family, or colleagues.



Addiction

You may experience secretive self-medication or addiction – in alcohol/drug addictions, gambling addiction, or even workaholism.



Anxiety/Depression

You may experience anxious or depressive feelings. You may view the world as overly dangerous or feel demoralized about yourself.



Productivity Issues

You may experience trouble concentrating, remembering or being productive in your personal or professional life.



Insomnia

You may experience a disruption in your sleep or disturbing images or intrusive thoughts. This often results in feelings of exhaustion.



Physical Symptoms

You may experience unprocessed trauma through a host of bodily symptoms:

Exhaustion

Fatigue

Changes in
appetite

Digestive issues

Headaches

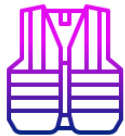
Muscle pain

***To learn more about compassion fatigue and its impacts
From WebMD, [click here.](#)***

Trauma-informed Practice or Policy

A **trauma-informed practice or policy** simply refers to the recognition that every person we interact with may have experienced some trauma, so we proactively create and establish protective factors to respond to this. For a deeper dive into trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and the phases of trauma [click here](#) for resources and video by the Army of Survivors.

The Brave Movement bases our trauma-informed approach in the following 6 Guiding Principles [found here](#) as outlined by the Army of Survivors:



Safety

Ensuring emotional and physical safety



Trustworthy / Transparency

Decisions are made with transparency to build and maintain trust for all



Peer Support

Utilizing lived experiences and stories to promote healing



Collaboration

Everyone has a role to play in this healing process



Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Individuals strengths are recognized, built on, and validated



Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Actively moving past stereotypes and biases to offer inclusive services

Stop & Reflect

It is important that we understand how our trauma affects us both as individuals and as a movement.

Take time to think about potential trauma with videos [found here](#) from the Canadian Survivor Group, [Phoenix 11](#). Their hope for these videos is that they can help you grow compassion for all the ways your body and mind, or those of someone you care about, adapted to survive.