

Psychological reactions to war and trauma:

A webinar series for psychologists, psychology students and other helpers



How can we understand and support trauma exposed children? Some things to do.

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Trauma – What is it?



How does trauma affect children?



How may trauma affect children?

How they feel

Scared
Stressed
Angry
Sad
Guilt
Shame



How does trauma affect children?

How they think:

The world is a scary place
Bad things can happen any time
No one can be trusted
I will never be the same
It's my fault
I'm a bad person



How does trauma affect children?

How they behave:

Avoiding people and places

Hurting themselves

Eat too much or too little

Concentration – school problems

Sleep problems

Self medicate - Substance abuse

Regression – wet their bed, clinginess

Dysregulated





Hiller et al., 2016;
McLaughlin et al., 2012;
Miller-Graff & Howell, 2015

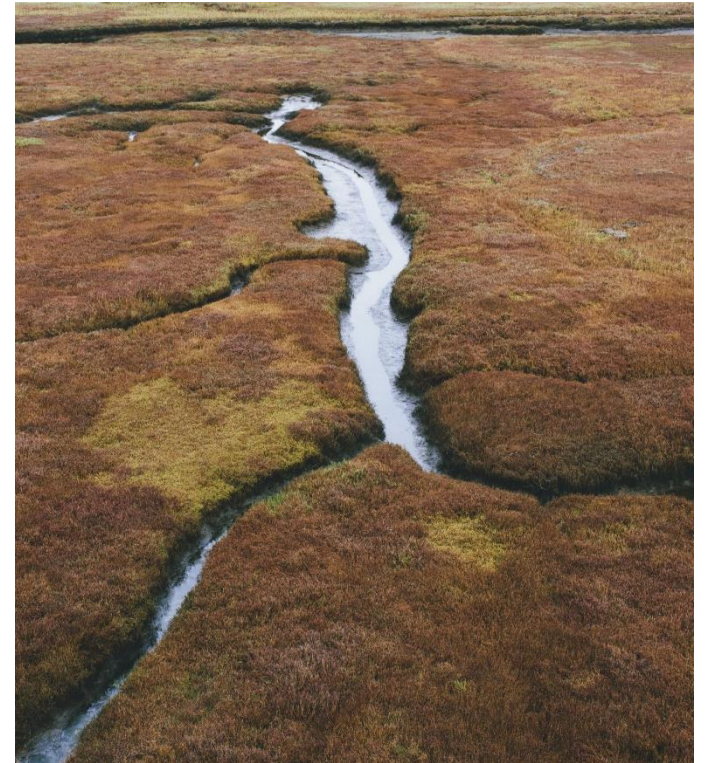
Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – ICD-11

- **Re-experiencing** of trauma
- **Avoidance** of reminders
- Heighten **sense of threat**

Complex PTSD

PTSD plus

- **Emotional dysregulation**
- **Interpersonal difficulties**
- **Negative self-concept**



What maintains posttraumatic stress?

(Ehlers & Clark's cognitive model for PTSD -2002)

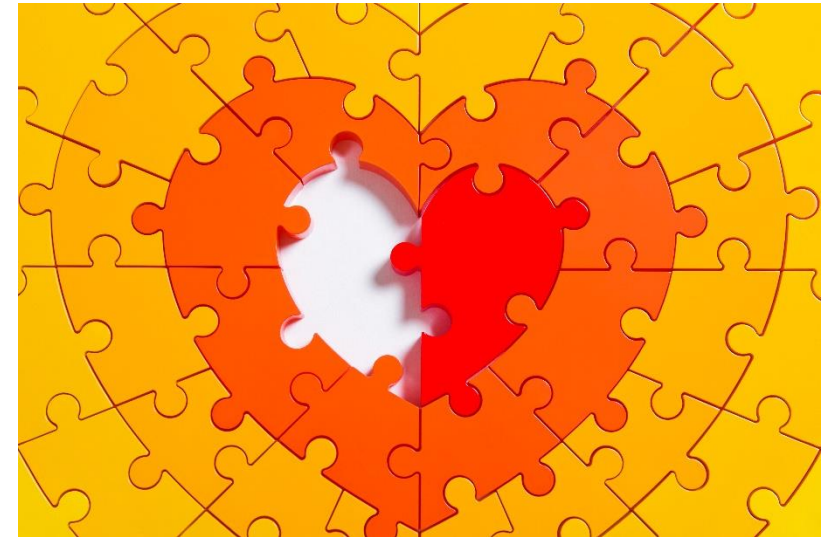
- Memory
- Meaning
- Maladaptive coping



What can we do?

The overall aim is to:

- ✓ **Help regulate their feelings**
- ✓ **Challenging their ways of thinking**
- ✓ **Provide better coping strategies**
- ✓ **Help them talk about what happened**



How?

✓ Provide information



- About the situation
- About normal reactions
- Ask them if they have any questions
- Be truthfull!!

How?

✓ Instill hope



- They are safe (if they are)
- People are helping
- Building a sense of mastery

How?

- ✓ **Maintain as many daily routines and activities as possible**



- Bedtime
- School/Homework
- Positive activities

How?

✓ Teach stress management



- Breathing exercises
- Muscle relaxation
- Think of safe place
- Listen to music / read
- Be with others

How?

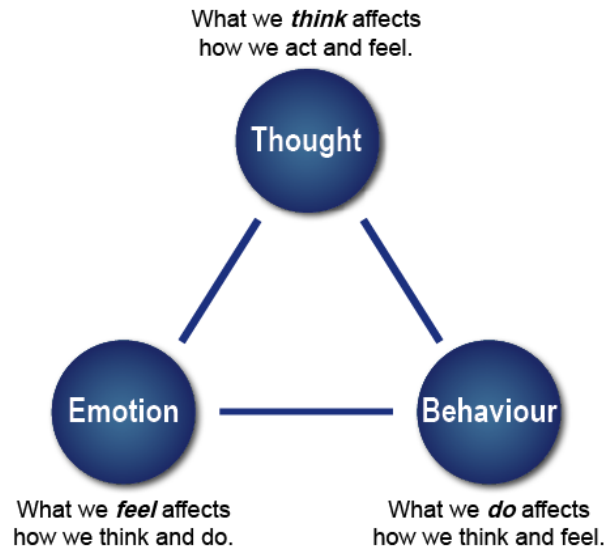
✓ Help them express feelings



- Talk about feelings
- Validate their feelings
- What makes them feel better?

How?

- ✓ Help them express thoughts – contribute to meaning making



- Teach the triangle
- What are they thinking?
- Are these thoughts helpful?
- Are they true?
- Alternative thoughts?

How?

✓ Talking about what happened



- Some experiences get stuck on our minds and body
- Let them express these experiences
- But don't pressure them to talk

How?

✓ Strengthen social support



- Identify support
- Build new support
- Identify social support barriers

How?

✓ Help parents cope



- Teach same skills?
- «Give oxygen mask to parents»

Common elements in trauma focused therapy (TF-CBT)

- **P**sychoeducation and **P**arenting skills
- **R**elaxation
- **A**ffect regulation
- **C**ognitive coping
- **T**rauma narrative and cognitive processing
- **I**n Vivo exposure
- **E**nhancing future safety and consolidation

(Cohen, Mannarino, Deblinger 2018)

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Resilience

- Strengths
- Relief
- Proud
- Cope



Thank you for your attention

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