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In Delaware:

Trauma Peer Support Specialists— These are individuals working in community-based mental health programs throughout the state. They have experienced trauma in their lives and they are examples of individuals experiencing success through healing. They can offer advice and support to individuals coping with trauma.

This booklet was produced by the staff and Trauma Peer Support Specialists of the **Mental Health Transformation Grant on Trauma-Informed Care** in the State of Delaware.

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DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

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Mental Health Transformation Grant on Trauma-Informed Care
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.
1901 N. DuPont Highway
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About Trauma



A Guide to Healing

Definition

What is Trauma?

Trauma occurs when an individual experiences an event or series of events which causes extreme emotional distress that overwhelms normal coping mechanisms. This can include: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, natural disasters, harassment, discrimination, bullying, or war experiences.

These experiences are of a degree of intensity that they continue to affect the individual who experienced them for a long period of time, and this can make day-to-day living difficult.



Words of Advice and Inspiration

CHANGE

by *DREAM YVONNE J. PERKINS* ~ Trauma Peer Support Specialist in Delaware

Change, whether good or bad, right or wrong, studied or dismissed, **change** can not alter the present until it actually happens. **Change** can open the door to your future. . . Or close the door to your past. **Change** is accepting the fact that a **change** is needed. One needs to, if not wants to, accept **change** because **change** is a reflection of maturity. Maturity is a reflection of growth. Growth stimulates ambition and desire to do more with your life, your thoughts, and progresses toward a recovery one may only dream of. Dreams restore ambitions; ambitions to fantasize. Fantasy builds character in a world only invented by dreams. With fantasy, one can bring forth challenges of the mind. The mind, not where only dreams can enter, but where ambition and desire can conquer and thrive.

. . . And we *do* thrive to survive.

Change can be stubborn, or **change** can be gradual. **Change** can challenge, or **change** can bring forth successes. With success, endless opportunities turn into the journeys of one's life. We can shun **change**, we can edit **change**, we can follow **change**, or we can hide from **change**. We can even **change—change**. However we occupy, manipulate, deny, or accept **change** we must learn our true beliefs about **change**.

Because what you refuse to learn, surely you will refuse to know; and knowledge is power. Without inner knowledge there can be no **change**. And life will stagnate. Merit and stability will perish.

There is not anything that isn't, or should not be un**change**able. Yes, there can be minute **change**, but when **change** is feeble and useless, what's the point? How will a feeble and useless **change** pattern your path to recovery? The very recovery you dream and fantasize about. Or, will this be the recovery you have longed for? Your milestone? The recovery of acceptance, promotion, self-honor, and success! Invite recovery as one of your most fulfilling **changes**!

Change is growth. **Change** is healing. **Change** is freedom. **Change** is asking for help. **Change** is adventure. **Change** is an emotion . . . And emotional. **Change** is fear. . . And fearful. **Change** is conquering and abolishing destructive habits; those very same habits that stripped you of your **change**.

Change is whatever you want it, or YOU, to be.

Realize the essence and rewards of **change**.

Trust in your own good, your own worth.

Be patient with yourself.

Change everything that you can of *yourself*, not of others. . .
and lovingly accept the rest.

Resources

- ◆ Contact Life Line www.contactlifeline.org Rape , Abuse or Incest 800-656-HOPE, 302-658-2958, 800-262-9800
- ◆ Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.dcadv.org 302-658-2958
- ◆ LaRed www.laredhealthcenter.org 302-855-1233
- ◆ Lenape Valley Foundation <http://www.lenapevf.org> Crisis 800-499-7455
- ◆ National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) <https://www.nasmhpd/GeneralInfo?MHL.aspx> 703-739-9333
- ◆ National Center for PTSD <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/> 802-296-6300, veterans Crisis Line 800-273-8255 press 1
- ◆ The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care: <http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/>
- ◆ National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women www.ncdbw.org 215-351-0010
- ◆ People's Place www.peoplesplace2.com/, 302-674-2286
- ◆ Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) www.SAMHSA.gov 877-SAMHSA7 or TDD 800-487-4889
- ◆ Sidran Institute Traumatic Stress Education and Advocacy www.sidran.org/ 410-825-8888
- ◆ State of Delaware, Office of Women's Health , <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/chca/dphfpservices1.html> 302-744-4700
- ◆ Survivors of Abuse and recovery, Inc. (SOAR) www.soarinc.com/
For information or schedule an appointment 302-655-9049
- ◆ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network [http://www.nctsn.org./](http://www.nctsn.org/)
- ◆ Women Empowered Against Violence in Every Relationship (WEAVER), <https://www.dcadv.org/weaver> 302-658-2958 or 800-701-045
- ◆ Women of Color Task Force www.dcadv.org/wocft 302-658-2958 or 800-701-0456 DE only

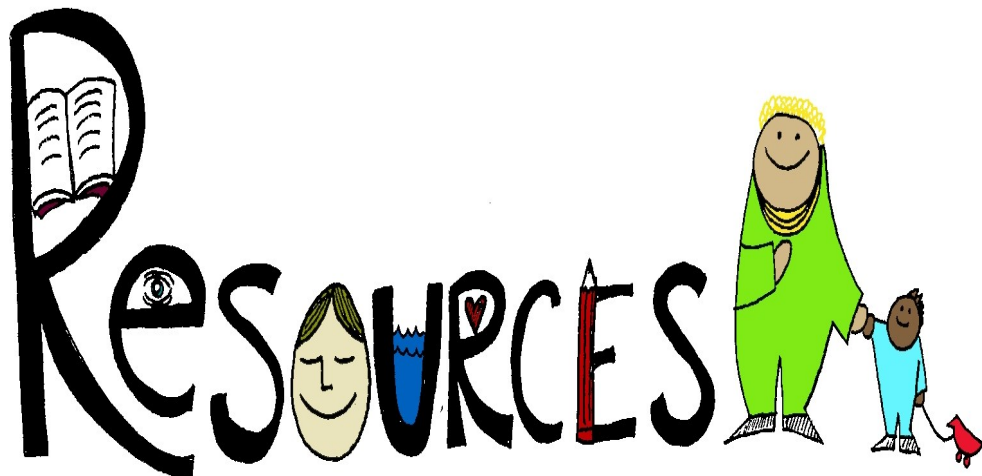


The Effects of Trauma

Trauma impacts individuals differently, but there are some similarities in how it can affect individuals. It can reduce an individual's ability to deal with intense emotions or stressful events. Trauma survivors frequently experience feelings of distrust, insecurity, confusion, and isolation.

The feelings that come after experiencing trauma can make an individual feel overwhelmed, making it difficult to manage emotions, connect with other people, and deal with day-to-day stresses. This can lead to drug use, alcohol use, or engaging in other harmful behaviors in order to reduce the intensity of these difficult emotions.

Trauma's impact can be long-lasting. Traumatic events experienced in childhood can continue to follow an individual into adulthood.



Causes of Trauma

An event can lead to emotional or psychological trauma if:

- It happened unexpectedly
- It happened repeatedly
- You were unprepared for it
- Someone was intentionally cruel
- You felt powerless to prevent it
- It happened in childhood

Types of events that can cause trauma include:

One time incidents like:

- Accidents
- Natural disasters
- Violent attacks

Ongoing experiences like:

- Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional)
- Living in a crime-ridden neighborhood
- Life changing health problems



Successful Recovery



- Many people have successfully overcome and recovered from traumatic experiences becoming very well known individuals, such as:
 - Oprah Winfrey—famous TV personality
 - Charlize Theron—Actress
 - Tyler Perry—Movie Director/Writer/Actor
 - Joe Torre— Major League Baseball player and manager
- Here are some words of advice from ordinary people, who are survivors of trauma:
 - “Talk as much as you can, write things down, enlist the help of gentle and patient people such as patient therapists, family, and friends.”
 - “Have compassion for yourself.”
 - “Take it one step at a time and challenge yourself when you are thinking negatively.”
 - “Bottling up the feelings doesn’t work in the long run. Find some body to talk to.”
 - Most importantly, “Remember that it is not your fault.”
 - “Have a life of your choosing, be a one who **thrives!**”

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Trauma Recovery Suggestions

Stay Connected:

- Ask for help and support from others
- Participate in social activities
- Join a support group for trauma survivors
- Volunteer

Stay Grounded:

- Stick to a daily routine
- Break large jobs into smaller, manageable tasks
- Find activities that make you feel in the body (like exercise, art, music, spending time with friends or family, etc.)
- Allow yourself to feel (being present in the physical body) what you feel when you feel it

Take Care of Your Health:

- Get plenty of sleep
- Avoid drugs, alcohol and other addictive behaviors
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Reduce stress



Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

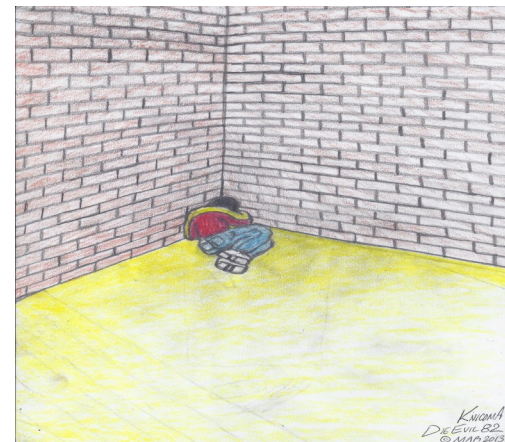
It is important to recognize that how an individual reacts to trauma is not “wrong.” Rather, the reactions are really normal responses to abnormal situations. These can include:

Emotional and psychological symptoms:

- Shock, denial, disbelief
- Anger, irritability
- Mood Swings
- Guilt, shame
- Feeling hopeless or sad
- Confusion
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling numb or disconnected

Physical signs and symptoms:

- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Agitation
- Aches and pains
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Nightmares
- Easily startled
- Racing heartbeat
- Edginess
- Muscle tension
- Digestive/gastrointestinal problems



Childhood Trauma



When a child experiences trauma, it can have a lasting impact on how they see the world. It can cause them to see the world as a fearful and dangerous place. This sense of fear and helplessness can carry into adulthood if not addressed and healed. Trauma survivors experience the world as unsafe, and therefore expend a lot of energy simply attempting to avoid any harm. Avoidance causes the individual to become disconnected from themselves and others and unable to experience the joys and satisfactions of life.

Childhood trauma can result from the child experiencing any of the following situations:

- An unstable or unsafe environment
- Serious illness
- Intrusive medical procedures
- Separation from a parent
- Sexual, physical or verbal abuse
- Neglect or not being protected
- Bullying and community violence

Healing from Trauma



There is hope for those experiencing psychological or emotional trauma. With treatment and guidance provided by a trained individual/therapist, and with social support, an individual can engage in the healing process and lead a happy, healthy, and productive life.

Healing from trauma includes:

- Processing trauma-related memories stored in the body and learning to identify and connect with feelings
- Discharging pent-up “fight, flight, freeze” energy and behaviors
- Learning how to regulate strong emotions
- Building or rebuilding the ability to trust people
- Developing healthy coping skills