ADULTS & TEENS | EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

Understanding Trauma: A Beginner's Guide



WHAT THIS IS

Trauma is a lasting response to an overwhelming experience. It is about what happened to you, not what is wrong with you.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Read the guide at your own pace.
2. Notice what feels familiar. No pressure to share.
3. Continue to page 2 for what helps.

EXAMPLE

"I used to think I was overreacting. Learning about trauma helped me see my reactions made sense."

What is trauma?

Trauma is the emotional and physical response to an event or series of events that overwhelmed your ability to cope and felt threatening or unsafe. What makes something traumatic is not only the event, but how it affected you and whether you had support afterward.

Types of trauma

Single event

An accident, assault, disaster, or sudden loss

Repeated

Ongoing experiences, such as abuse or violence

Complex

Prolonged, often early in life and within relationships

Developmental

Early neglect or unsafe caregiving

How it can show up

Body

- Tension, fatigue
- Startle response
- Sleep trouble

Emotions

- Fear, anger
- Numbness
- Shame

Thoughts

- Flashbacks
- Self-blame
- Hypervigilance

Behavior

- Avoidance
- Withdrawal
- Irritability

Go at your own pace. Skip anything that feels like too much, and stop any time. Trauma education and self-help materials are not a substitute for individualized trauma-informed care.

Educational self-help resource from Therapy with Sazzy, an initiative of Beyond Boundaries Consulting, LLC. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individualized professional care. In a crisis call or text 988, or call 911.

PART 2

Understanding Trauma · What Helps

What helps recovery

- [ ] Safety and predictability
- [ ] Supportive relationships
- [ ] Sleep, food, and movement
- [ ] Learning how trauma affects the body
- [ ] Gentle routines
- [ ] Professional trauma-informed care
- [ ] Patience with yourself

What does not help

- Being told to "just get over it"
- Forcing yourself to talk before you are ready
- Isolating completely
- Using alcohol or drugs to numb
- Judging your reactions

Self-check: Have I noticed any of these lately?

- [ ] Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- [ ] Feeling on edge or easily startled
- [ ] Avoiding reminders
- [ ] Feeling numb or disconnected
- [ ] Strong guilt or shame
- [ ] Difficulty trusting
- [ ] Sudden strong emotions
- [ ] Trouble concentrating

Noticing these does not mean something is wrong with you. They are common responses. If they last or interfere with life, support can help.

When to reach out for help

- Your reactions are getting in the way of daily life or relationships
- You are having thoughts of harming yourself or others
- You are using substances to cope
- You feel stuck, hopeless, or unsafe

Call or text **988** for crisis support, or **911** in an emergency.

A reminder

Healing and growth do not have to happen all at once. Progress is not about perfection. It is about building safety and skills, one step at a time.

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