

How to help if your child is experiencing trauma



What causes trauma?

Trauma is a reaction to the experience of events involving threat or danger to yourself or others. Personal experience can cause this, or sometimes through witnessing or hearing about terrible events that have happened to others. Children and young people sometimes witness or are involved in things they find very scary or stressful such as accidents, violence or terrorist attacks. It's quite normal to be upset for even quite a while after a frightening event. Trauma has been described as 'normal reactions to extraordinary events'. If reactions continue for over three months, then it may be necessary to explore professional support.

What you might see in your child

Your child may display or experience different behaviours, signs and feelings, including:

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Panic attacks
- Hyper-vigilance - a state of increased awareness
- Poor concentration
- Continuous minor physical complaints such as stomach aches or headaches
- Unusual and untypical behaviour
- Feeling angry, sad, guilty confused or any combination of feelings.

How you can support your child

1. Try and make things as normal as possible - your child will feel safer when he/she is reassured and knows what to expect.
2. Help your child to understand what's happening by explaining the truth, giving facts about the situation.
3. Make sure your child understands you are available to talk when he/she is ready, don't avoid the subject.
4. Your child may find using dolls, toys, or even drawing pictures helpful to understand what's happened.
5. Answer questions truthfully, but keep them simple. Your child may ask questions several times, which could be his/her own way of accepting what's happened.
6. If someone has died, make sure your child understands what this means, that it is permanent.
7. Avoid statements such as 'David has gone away', instead, say, 'David has died' and keep repeating if necessary, if your child keeps asking about the person.

If your child is still giving you cause for concern, you may wish to discuss with your school or your GP.
Or, visit www.liverpoolcamhs.com/need-advice