

There are options to begin the healing process

Gathering Information:

Check our web site, trauma-informed.ca for a list of excellent websites, books and other resources on trauma and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

Talk about it:

Trauma needs to be talked about and brought out into the open. This is one of the most important steps on the road to healing. It is also one of the hardest things to do. Talking to someone who you trust and feel comfortable with is a way to let some of the difficult feelings out. Talking to someone who has experienced trauma is a great way to get support and will provide you with a safe place to learn that you are not alone, other people are living with the same difficulties and it's normal.

Get counselling:

Counsellors are there to provide you with a safe place to begin and/or continue your healing process. You deserve a space where you will be heard, not judged, and accepted for who you are despite what you've been through. Counselling is a place where you can start to work on issues that are keeping you stuck.



www.trauma-informed.ca

Seek help online:

www.trauma-informed.ca

Visit our web site for additional resources. Our workbook, *Trauma-Informed Toolkit*, is aimed at those who work with Trauma Survivors. Also check out these sites:

Canadian Mental Health Association:
www.cmha.ca

Center for Mental Health and Addictions
www.camh.net

Center for Suicide Prevention:
www.suicideinfo.ca

Klinik Community Health Centre:
www.klinik.mb.ca

Men Overcoming Sexual Abuse:
www.mosa.ca

Mental Health Resource of Canada:
www.mherc.mb.ca

The National Center for Trauma Informed Mental Health:
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic

The National Institute of Mental Health:
www.nimh.nih.gov

The National Trauma Consortium (NTC):
www.nationaltraumaconsortium.org

Books for survivors of trauma:
www.parentbooks.ca/Abuse_Trauma_Adult_Survivors_&_Therapists.html



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Trauma

A normal reaction to abnormal events

"Trauma refers to experiences or events that by definition are out of the ordinary in terms of their overwhelming nature. They are more than merely stressful—they are also shocking, terrifying, and devastating to the victim, resulting in profoundly upsetting feelings of terror, shame, helplessness, and powerlessness."

(Courtois, 1999)



Trauma-informed

violence abuse suicide crime war murder assault

Anyone can be traumatized.

No one is immune. It is widespread throughout the world and affects every part of the population.

One in ten Canadians are living with the impacts of trauma.

These events cause terror, intense fear, horror, helplessness, and physical stress reactions. The impact of these events does not simply go away when they are over. Instead, traumatic events are profound experiences that change the way children; adolescents and adults see themselves and their world.

A **traumatic event** involves a single experience, or enduring or repeated events, that completely overwhelm the individual's ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved in that experience.

Simply put, traumatic events are beyond a person's control. It is not the event that determines whether something is traumatic to someone, but the individual's experience of the event.

Events that cause trauma:

Sexual abuse, neglect, physical abuse by a caregiver or significant other, residential school, genocide, war, accidents, major losses, suicidal loss, homicidal loss, torture, natural disasters.

Many people have survived these types of events and are still feeling their impacts and it is compromising their quality of life.

Because the traumatic experience was so terrible, it is normal for people to block the experience from their memory, or try to avoid any reminders of the trauma; this is how they survive. However, the consequences of these survival mechanisms are a lack of integration of the traumatic experience, such that it becomes the experience in a person's life rather than one of many.

This lack of processing of the trauma means that it is ever-present for the survivor, and they feel as if the trauma happened yesterday when it could have been months or many years since.

The impact of traumatic events:

The impact of trauma is felt physically, emotionally, behaviorally, cognitively and spiritually. This is normal, and is the body's way of coping with very difficult emotions that may not have been dealt with.

Talking about traumatic experiences is hard and takes courage.

- **It is not your fault.**
- **You have survived.**
- **Healing is possible.**

Experiencing trauma changes people, you may worry that you will never feel normal again. Healing is the road to feeling normal and grounded. This journey is different for everyone, but the goal is the same: to feel whole.



www.trauma-informed.ca

The Truth About Trauma

There are myths in our society about people who have experienced trauma.

Dispelling them makes it easier to heal and move on.

MYTH: It happened a long time ago, time heals all wounds; you should be over it by now.

MYTH: You are exaggerating how bad it was to get attention and blame other people for their problems.

MYTH: You will never really be normal again.

MYTH: Once you get on the right medication you will be fine.

FACT: Trauma survivors *rarely exaggerate* their feelings and experiences. Just finding the courage to talk about it can take years because they are afraid they will be disbelieved and blamed for the terrible experiences that they were powerless to prevent.

FACT: The impacts of traumatic events are often *delayed* because people will banish the memories from their consciousness. This is a way to survive. By the time people actually feel the full impact it could be *many years* since the trauma occurred.

FACT: Trauma survivors may become *stronger* and *more resilient* as a result of surviving and healing from their experiences.

FACT: Medication is only *one option* for people in healing from the impacts of trauma. Healing is a process that involves *time*, and happens in partnership with supportive and understanding friends, family, community, and helping professionals.