

# Helping Children And Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma

Much as we try to protect our children and adolescents, sometimes they may encounter scary or dangerous situations that may change their behaviors or the way they feel about themselves and others. When these events are significant, they are often referred to as traumas. Traumas include physical abuse, sexual abuse, severe neglect, neighborhood or school violence, bad car accidents, animal attacks such as a dog bite, scary medical procedures, household accidents leading to injury, bullying, or the unexpected death of a loved one. Sometimes the child or youth may have experienced the traumatic event firsthand. Sometimes they may see it happen to someone else or they may hear that it happened to someone close to them. When a child or young person experiences these events, they may respond with worry, anger, shame, sadness, irritability, depression, less time playing or talking with others, hyperactivity, aggression, or other changes. They may have trouble talking about what happened; on the other hand, they may have trouble focusing on anything else.

If your child has trouble making sense of something bad that happened, or if their behaviors and feelings have changed a lot since the difficult situation happened, the good news is there is help available.

There are a number of types of therapy that can help a child or young person make sense of trauma and reduce their symptoms. These types of therapy have been researched and found effective in a number of different circumstances. Some examples include Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Trauma Systems Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and play therapy. While some of these terms may be unfamiliar, these different types of therapy all use different strategies to help the child or youth handle their thoughts and feelings about the trauma and ensure that the traumatic event does not adversely impact them for the rest of their lives. While no one can take the traumatic event away, good treatment can reduce or eliminate many of the child's symptoms and ensure that they have the best possible perspective on themselves and their situation as they grow and heal.

To find a qualified trauma therapist, you can speak to your pediatrician, contact your insurance company, use on-line search resources, or contact your local mental health providers. Credentialed providers of TF-CBT can be located at: <https://tfcbt.org/members/>. Credentialed play therapists can be located at: [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org). Credentialed EMDR providers can be located at: <https://emdria.site-ym.com>.

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Maryland Family Resource, Inc., provides Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Trauma Systems Therapy, and trauma-informed play therapy.