

# PARENTING A CHILD WHO HAS EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

## WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm. Potential traumatic events include abuse, neglect, poverty, familial separation, bullying, natural disasters, and witnessing violence. Trauma can be the result of a single event, or it can result from exposure to multiple events over time.

## HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT A CHILD?

Trauma can affect a child's brain, body, emotions, and behavior. Examples of the effects of trauma include chronic illness, impaired memory, low self-esteem, trust issues, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and more. Everyone experiences trauma differently and may have different symptoms.

## UNDERSTANDING THEIR BEHAVIOR

One of the most helpful things is identifying a child's trauma triggers. Triggers may be harmless on the surface, but may remind the child of a traumatic event. Examples include sounds, smells, places, and tones of voice. Identifying and avoiding these triggers will help your child heal.

## STRATEGIES TO HELP

Besides identifying triggers, other strategies to help your child recover from trauma include listening, helping them relax, being consistent & predictable, and encouraging self-esteem. In some cases, it may be appropriate to seek treatment with a mental health provider. Try to find a provider who has experience treating children who have experienced trauma.

