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## Trauma-informed care for Kids

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### What is Trauma Informed Care?

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Trauma Informed Care is a treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma Informed Care also emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both children and care-givers, and helps children build a sense of empowerment and resiliency.

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### What is Trauma?

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Trauma occurs when a powerful and dangerous event threatens a person's physical or emotional wellbeing, and overwhelm their capacity to cope.

- Traumatic events can come in many forms:
    - natural disasters, war, terrorism, witnessing or being a victim of violence, injury, medical procedures, or abuse.
  - Not every traumatic event will result in trauma.
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### What does Trauma look like?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional outbursts</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Behavioral Changes</li><li>• Difficulty paying attention</li><li>• Academic Difficulties</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical symptoms<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aches/pains</li><li>• Stomach issues</li><li>• Headaches</li><li>• Difficulty sleeping and eating</li></ul></li></ul> |
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### What trauma looks like at different developmental stages:

Developmental Stage	How trauma is experienced
3-7 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of hopelessness</li> <li>• Inability to express their feelings</li> <li>• Loss of sense of trust and security</li> <li>• May lose developmental stages</li> </ul>
7-13 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protective of family</li> <li>• Guilt over what they were doing when the trauma occurred</li> <li>• May be overwhelmed by worry</li> </ul>
13-16 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of fear about the vulnerability of their emotional response to the trauma.</li> <li>• Shame that the traumatic event happened to them</li> <li>• May dream of revenge</li> </ul>

### What now?

- Recognize that trauma does not have to cripple a child, and in fact can provide them with greater coping skills and resiliency.
- Remember that you are not the counselor, but the care-giver.
- Seek to understand how the cultures you are working with understand mental health.
- Provide opportunity for kids to play. Examples of this include: Art projects, music class, dancing, drawing, going to a playground, creating a kid area with age-appropriate toys and allow them to engage in creative play. (See document: What can churches do?)
- Watch for emotional outbursts or withdrawn behavior. If you see consistent behavior like this alert a mental health professional.

- Allow children to initiate any physical touch. Once trust is established safe physical touch can be healing.
- Watch for signs of neglect, or inappropriate physical touch between kids as this may be a sign of traumatized parents that need help.
- Have activities for kids and parents to play together, and keep families involved as much as possible.
- Make sure that all adults or teens working with youth are informed about trauma, and are engaging in self-care so that they don't experience compassion fatigue.
- Connect with cultural advocates so that bonds with the community can be formed, and activities can be cultural relevant.

Trauma is a life-altering event for kids, but caring for them well can help the event build resiliency and connection rather than brokenness and disengagement. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and walk next to traumatized refugee youth in love.

*"... knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. "*

*Romans 5:3b-5*