

Emerging Minds.

Understanding and supporting children's responses to trauma and adversity: 0-24 months

Facilitator's handbook:
Workshop 2

National
Workforce
Centre for Child
Mental Health



Introduction

Note to facilitators

It is recommended that you **prepare before leading** this workshop by:

1. Reading through these facilitator notes and reviewing the accompanying slides
2. Highlighting the most relevant reflection questions for your audience
3. Identifying and photocopying any relevant additional resources to provide to each participant.

Introduction to the workshop

Professionals and volunteers working with children and families have a unique role to play in promoting resilience, wellbeing and recovery in children (0-12 years) who have experienced adversity or traumatic events. Workshop 2 is designed to:

1. Support participants' understanding and awareness of:
 - trauma responses in children aged 0-24 months
 - ways to support children aged 0-24 months who have experienced trauma.
2. Support participants to:
 - reflect on their experiences of working with children who have experienced trauma or adversity
 - consider how they might alter their approach based on knowledge of how children might be affected by trauma and adversity.

Audience

This workshop is designed for professionals and volunteers working with children and/or their families.

It can be completed individually or with a group of workers.

Time

Workshop 2 is an additional optional workshop with a focus on children aged 0-24 months. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please note: It is required that **ALL** participants complete Workshop 1 – *An introduction to trauma and adversity* **before** completing this workshop.

Participant resources

Workshop 2 contains:

- slide presentation
- facilitator notes
- printable resources
- additional resources.

Note to facilitator:

The following facilitator notes are provided as a guide. We encourage you to tailor the presentation to suit the needs of your group. Various reflection activities are included throughout the workshop; we suggest you consider these in the context of your group and use only those that are applicable.

The Presentation

Workshop 2 – Understanding and supporting children’s responses to trauma and adversity: 0-24 months

Slide 1

Welcome to this workshop series from the Emerging Minds: National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health.

Facilitator’s notes:

Commence by introducing topic and self, then before anything else, do the ‘acknowledgement of country’ (slide 2).

Slide 2

Acknowledgement of country

Facilitator’s notes:

Amend the wording to acknowledge the Country you are meeting on – i.e. Kurna Country. It shows a commitment to respectful practice in the acknowledgement of the many diverse Nations and a respect for cultural protocols.

For more examples/further information, see Reconciliation Australia’s resource: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Welcome-to-and-Acknowledge-ment-of-Country.pdf>

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today on the traditional Lands of the [*Aboriginal nation*] people and pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the deep connection the [*Aboriginal nation*] people have with the land and the waters of this country and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are here today.

Slide 3

Understanding and supporting children’s responses to trauma and adversity: 0-24 months

The content for this workshop has been drawn from the Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit. Additional resources will be provided at the end of this workshop, but the toolkit can also be accessed for free via the Emerging Minds website at www.emergingminds.com.au.

Audience

This workshop is designed for professionals and volunteers working with children and/or their families.

It can be completed individually or with a group of workers.

Time

Workshop 2 is an additional optional workshop with a focus on children aged 0-24 months. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. It is required that **ALL** participants complete Workshop 1 – *An introduction to trauma and adversity* **before** completing this workshop.

Topics we will cover include:

- Trauma responses in children aged 0-24 months.
- Supporting children aged 0-24 months who have experienced trauma.
- Reflection on practice.

Slide 4

Workshop objectives

1. Support participants' understanding and awareness of:
 - trauma responses in children aged 0–24 months
 - ways to support children aged 0–24 months who have experienced trauma.
2. Support participants to:
 - reflect on their experiences of working with children who have experienced trauma or adversity
 - consider how they might alter their approach based on knowledge of how children might be affected by trauma and adversity.

Slide 5

Being mindful

Facilitator's notes:

You are welcome to set the pace in completing the workshop. Be aware of your own emotions, as well as the emotional and sensory responses of participants, and take a break if needed.

It is important to recognise that we all bring our experiences of adversity and of feeling overwhelmed into the workshop today. Speaking about traumatic events may be triggering for some, and it is important to be aware of how you are feeling as you go through the workshop. Remember to practice self-care and to seek help if needed.

During this workshop:

- Be aware of your emotional and sensory responses and take a break if needed. The following services also offer support.

If you find you are struggling, please talk with your supervisor, seek help, or call [Lifeline](tel:131114) on 13 11 14 or 1800RESPECT, or visit the [1800RESPECT website](http://1800RESPECT.org.au).

Slide 6

Babies (0–24 months)

Trauma responses can vary greatly between children. It is important to understand that some of the signs discussed are common for many children immediately following exposure to a traumatic event. If these symptoms persist or worsen over time however, they can be more serious. If the signs are still present after a month, the child may require additional assistance to manage their difficulties.

- Babies are especially dependent on their caregivers to nurture them and meet their needs for physical contact, comfort, food, sleep and attention. Developing a secure attachment with a primary caregiver is a crucial task for this stage of development.
- Babies have minimal skills to communicate or cope with pain or strong emotions, making them highly reliant on their caregivers to feel safe and secure and to regulate their emotions.
- This period is also when separation anxiety and fears of 'strangers' or unfamiliar people develop. Minimise separations from parents wherever possible.

Key message 1: Children under the age of 5 are **NOT** immune to the effects of trauma. In fact, they may be the most vulnerable group as they are currently undergoing rapid changes in emotional and physiological development, have limited coping skills, and are very dependent on their primary caregiver to protect them physically and emotionally.

Key message 2: Infants and toddlers are particularly at risk of adverse outcomes if they witnessed threat to their parent, were separated from their parent or if their parent reports significant psychological distress.

Key message 3: There is enormous variability in trauma responses. Some children will be quiet and withdrawn, others will exhibit more overt behavioural problems. Behaviour problems are not necessarily just ‘bad behaviour’ – they may instead be behavioural manifestations of the traumatic event.

Children who experience trauma may use behaviours to try to protect themselves, or to influence their environment, in order to feel safe. These behaviours can continue well after the traumatic event has passed, because the child may still feel or respond as though the stress or threat is imminent.

Internalising and externalising behaviours:

Some children may show ‘externalising behaviour’ such as becoming aggressive towards others; while some may avoid any perceived aggression, conflict or potentially fearful situations.

Some children may become withdrawn, quiet, or more introverted, known as ‘internalising behaviours’. These children can be overlooked, or thought to be ‘doing well’, when they may not be – internalising behaviours are often mistaken as signs a child is calm and settled.

Key Message 4: Early intervention is recommended to ensure that the behaviours do not become ingrained and the child maximises their development.

To recap:

- Children aged 0-24 months are vulnerable to the negative effects of trauma.
- Early intervention is recommended to ensure that the behaviours do not become ingrained and the child maximises their development.

Facilitator’s notes:

Fact sheet - [Trauma responses in children aged 0-24 months](#).

Refer to table of resources at the conclusion of the *Workshop 2 handbook*.

Slide 7

Psychological reactions to trauma (0-24 months)

Facilitator’s notes:

Invite participants to think of a family or child they have been working with in this age bracket.

Play video.

***Please note: Playing this video will require an internet connection when presenting.**

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/PWWSuHcjkO>

From the video:

Responses to trauma include:

- Heightened arousal (e.g. disturbed sleep, jumpy or easily startled, hard to settle or soothe).
- Changes in appetite (e.g. fussy eating, no appetite).
- Failure to meet developmental skills (e.g. rolling over, sitting, crawling).
- Decrease in vocalisations (e.g. less babbling or cooing).
- Behavioural changes (e.g. increased irritability, extreme temper tantrums, fussiness, attention-seeking, aggressive behaviour).

Facilitator's notes (continued):

- Excessive clinginess to primary caregiver (e.g. crying upon separation, insisting on being picked up more often than usual).
- Clinginess to anyone - even complete strangers.
- Decrease in responsiveness (e.g. lack of emotional responses, numb appearance, lack of eye contact, little interest in environment/objects around them).
- Inconsolable crying.
- Alarmed by reminders of the event (e.g. sights, sounds, smells).

Early intervention is recommended.

- *How do you respond to the child and/or family? What did you say or do?*
- *Reflecting on these encounters, what practices might you continue individually or as a team, and what might you change?*

Additional resources

Fact sheet – [How professionals can help children aged 0-24 months](#)

Refer to table of resources at the conclusion of the Workshop 2 handbook.

Slide 8

Reflecting on experience and practice

Facilitator's notes:

Reflection Activity

Aim: To encourage participant engagement and sharing of experiences.

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of working with infants who have experienced trauma. Stress the need to deidentify information so that the child cannot be identified by others and confidentiality is maintained.

- *What reactions did you notice in the video that you have encountered in your practice with children?*

Slides 9 and 10

Summary - Children and trauma

Key messages:

- Self-care is vital for any professional to support others, particularly children.
- Children aged 0-24 months are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of trauma.
- Early intervention is recommended to ensure that behaviours do not become engrained and the child maximises their development.
- A stable routine and boundaries help children recover following trauma.
- Most children recover well after a traumatic event; however, a small minority will experience long-term impacts requiring additional support.
- Children can play a role in positive preparation and recovery efforts in both their families and communities.

Key messages (continued):

- Children need adults to help them to recognise and voice their feelings.
- Basic foundational knowledge about trauma can be helpful for everybody.

Slide 11

What next?

Facilitator's notes:

Additional resources

- Fact sheet - [Trauma responses in children aged 0-24 months](#).

This fact sheet highlights some of the common trauma reactions that may be seen in children aged 0-24 months, as well as outlining signs that may indicate further assistance is required.

Age: 0-24 months

- Fact sheet - [How childcare professionals can help children 0-24 months](#).

This fact sheet outlines how professionals can help children aged 0-24 months following a traumatic event, as well as ways to identify when further assistance is required.

Age: 0-24 months

- Fact sheet - [The perinatal period: Trauma and families](#).

This tip sheet provides some information about trauma during the perinatal period. The perinatal period generally refers to a woman's pregnancy, delivery and the first 12 months after the baby is born.

Age: 0-12 months

- Video - [Infant and perinatal wellbeing: Risk and resilience factors](#).

This video, featuring Dr. Andrea Baldwin from the Queensland Centre for Perinatal & Infant Mental Health, outlines some of the things children need to get the best start in life. It also discusses some of the strengths and vulnerabilities that can affect children's responses to disaster.

Age: 0-4 years

- Video - [The Importance of story and play for young children following a natural disaster](#).

This video, featuring Andrea Murray from the Queensland Centre for Perinatal & Infant Mental Health, discusses the importance of stories and play for children after a disaster, and how adults can support this.

Age: 0-5 years

- Video - [Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental health: Natural disaster resources](#).

This video, featuring Andrea Murray, talks about the development of the Birdie's Tree storybooks by the Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health team. The books cover flood, cyclone, fire and drought. The stories try to portray disasters from children's point-of-view and help them understand the event.

Age: 0-12 years

- Podcast - [The power of play](#).

Discover the benefits of child-led play for parent-child relationships and healthy child development.

Age: 0-12 years

Facilitator's notes (continued):

- e-Learning course - [The Impact of Trauma on the child](#)

This course explores a trauma-informed approach to understanding the prevalence of trauma, and its impacts on the child and family. It briefly explores the implications of this approach to caring for, or working with, young people. It does not explore trauma-specific therapies.

Age: 0-12 years

- Toolkit - [Community Trauma Toolkit](#)

This toolkit contains resources to help and support adults and children before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event. It will help you to understand some of the impacts of disaster and how you can help to lessen these impacts.

Age: 0-12 years

Slide 12

Thank you.