

Emerging Minds.

Understanding and supporting children's responses to trauma and adversity: 5-12 years

Facilitator's Handbook:
Workshop 4

**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 4 is designed to:

1. Support participants' understanding and awareness of:
 - trauma responses in children aged 5-12 years
 - ways to support children aged 5-12 years 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

Workshops 4 is an additional optional workshop with a focus on children 5-12 years. 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 4 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 4 – Understanding and supporting children’s responses to trauma and adversity: 5-12 years

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-Acknowledgement-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: 5-12 years.

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

Workshops 4 is an additional optional workshop with a focus on children 5-12 years. 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 covered include:

- Trauma responses in children aged 5–12 years.
- Supporting children aged 5–12 years who have experienced trauma.
- Reflection on practice.

A handout containing additional resources will be provided at the end of the workshop.

Slides 4

Workshop objectives

1. Support participants' understanding and awareness of:

- trauma responses in children aged 5–12 years
- ways to support children aged 5–12 years 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 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).

Slide 6

Children aged 5–12 years

After a trauma, children aged 5–12 years:

- often feel out of control and overwhelmed
- are more likely to worry about and/or develop fears related to the event
- may have more coping skills than younger children, but still observe adults to determine how serious the situation is
- will often copy adults' responses.

Exposure to trauma can undermine the child's confidence.

Post-trauma reactions may impact cognitive abilities (e.g. memory and attention) and as a result, deficits in knowledge may emerge in the months or years following trauma exposure.

- Middle childhood is a period of exploration and learning. However, children are still dependent on their parents to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

- School-aged children may discount verbal explanations if what they observe doesn't match up with what adults are telling them. They will also use their imagination to 'fill in the blanks' when they don't have realistic information.

Trauma responses can vary greatly from child to child. 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 a sign of something more serious. If the signs are still present after a month, the child may require additional assistance to manage their difficulties.

Key message 1: Children aged 5-12 years are vulnerable to the negative effects of trauma.

Key message 2: Post-trauma reactions may interfere with the child's cognitive abilities such as memory and attention. Resulting deficits in knowledge may emerge in the months or years following trauma exposure.

Key message 3: Early intervention is recommended to ensure that behaviours do not become ingrained and the child maximises their development.

Facilitator's notes:

- Fact sheet – [Trauma responses in children aged 5-12 years.](#)

Refer to table of resources at the conclusion of the Workshop 1 handbook.

Slide 7

Psychological reactions to trauma (5-12 years)

Facilitator's notes:

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

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

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

From the video:

Responses to trauma include:

- Intrusions (e.g. distressing memories, repeated discussion about event, re-enactment of trauma in play).
- Avoidance (e.g. refusal to participate in school activities related to disaster, refusal to talk about event, memory blanks).
- Changes in arousal and reactivity (e.g. irritability, anger outbursts, difficulties concentrating, being overly alert/on edge).
- Changes in mood and thinking (e.g. flat appearance, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities).
- Emotional distress (e.g. self-blame, guilt, crying, moodiness).
- Behaviour changes (e.g. angry outbursts, non-compliance).
- Decline in school performance (e.g. difficulties with memory and attention, non-attendance, lack of motivation).

Facilitator's notes (continued):

- Physical complaints (e.g. headaches, stomach aches, rashes)
- Withdrawal from family and friends.
- Changes in appetite (e.g. fussy eating, no appetite).
- Anxiety and fear of their own and others' safety (e.g. clinginess).

Early intervention is recommended.

Slide 8

Reacting on experiences and practice

Facilitator's notes:

Reflection Activity

Aim: To encourage participant engagement and sharing of experience.

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of working with infants who have experienced trauma. As if anyone is willing to share their experience confidentially. Stress the need to deidentify information so that the child cannot be identified by others.

- *What reactions did you notice in the video that you have encountered in your practice with children?*
- *How did you respond to the child and/or their 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?*

Slides 9 and 10

Summary - Children and trauma

Key messages:

- Self-care is vital for any professional to support others, particularly children.
- Children aged 5-12 years are vulnerable to the negative effects of trauma.
- Post-trauma reactions may interfere with the child's cognitive abilities, such as memory and attention. Resulting deficits in knowledge may emerge in the months or years following trauma exposure.
- Early intervention is recommended to ensure that behaviours do not become ingrained and the child maximises their development.
- A stable routine and boundaries can help children to recover after 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 their communities.
- Children need adults to help them to recognise and voice their feelings.
- Basic foundational knowledge about trauma can be helpful for everybody.

Slide 11

Where to next?

Facilitator's notes:

Additional resources

Refer to table of resources at the conclusion of the Workshop 1 handbook.

Facilitator's notes (continued):

- Fact sheet – Trauma responses in children aged 5-12 years.
This fact sheet highlights some of the common trauma reactions that may be seen in children aged 5-12 years, as well as outlining signs that may indicate further assistance is required.
Age: 5-12 years
- Fact sheet – Helping students recover after trauma: Classroom activities.
Being familiar with the types of reactions that your students can have is the first step in helping them. Knowing how to work out if there is something more serious going on and how to help children and their families get the assistance they need is also particularly important.
Age: 5-12 years
- Fact sheet – How educators can help in the classroom.
This fact sheet outlines how educators can help children in the classroom following a traumatic event, as well as ways to identify when further assistance is required.
Age: 5-12 years
- Fact sheet – Trauma sensitive behaviour management.
Exposure to stressful events and trauma can result in children being unable to control their emotions and behaviour. Being able to see that the child's behaviour is a consequence of their physiological and emotional responses to the event – rather than perceiving it as malicious – can make it easier to be patient and calm.
Age: 5-12 years

- Fact sheet – Common severe stress reactions to traumatic events.
Following a traumatic event, children may experience a variety of reactions, ranging from mild to severe. It is important for adults to watch for any severe reactions from children as this may indicate that additional help is required.
Age: 0-12 years
- Fact sheet – Childhood trauma reactions: How and when to get help.
This fact sheet outlines how educators can understand when children might require additional help following a traumatic event, as well as what they can do to arrange help for students.
Age: 0-12 years
- 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.