Trauma and young people.

1. IMPACT

Re-experiencing (flashbacks, dreams, re-enactment). Avoidance (literal, dissociation & numbing). Hyper-arousal.

2. IMPACT OF MULTI RELATIONAL TRAUMAS

Which involve repeated interpersonal threats in childhood or adolescence e.g., abuse / neglect. Leads to issues with: Regulation (managing mood, dissociation). Negative sense of self (worthlessness, shame, self-loathing). Difficulties in relationships (mistrust, insecurity)

3. THE WAY DESTRESS IS EXPRESSED

Behaviours indicating emotional distress which may be linked to sexual abuse and/or other issues. Having nightmares or sleeping difficulties without explanation. Displaying changes in mood or demeanour (e.g., becoming fearful, withdrawing or ‘clamming up’ or demonstrating insecurity). Developing new or unusual fears of certain people or places. Appearing distracted and distant or dissociation. Rejecting/avoiding intimacy or closeness. Appearing anxious/hyper-vigilant. Regressing to younger behaviour (e.g., bedwetting or thumb sucking). Appearing depressed. Expressing negative feelings about self or body as repulsive or bad. Developing eating issues (e.g., refusing to eat or overeating). Misusing substances or alcohol. Self-harming.

4. INFLUENCE OF ATTCHMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Their psychological safety much more dependant on others (attachment figures) who can positively or negatively affect.

Think family/parent context and unresolved trauma for them.

5. FIGHT FLIGHT FREEZE.

Freeze. The first two responses; Fight and flight, are often not the reactions that happen during rape or sexual assault as these might lead to further harm or danger. Therefore, what is commonly experienced is the survival response Freeze. The brain has assessed that the danger is so great that you cannot fight or outrun it. It concludes the safest thing to do is to go into a protective state of freeze. By freezing you are temporarily immobilised mentally and physically to protect you from danger and to ensure your best chance of survival. Which is what you did you survived!

It is important to note there are also some other responses that are similar to freeze, and these are flop and friend. Flop is very similar to freeze where the muscles in the body go ‘soft’ and this works in a similar way to protect us from physical pain. Friend or be-friend is when you may try to appease or pacify the other person, negotiate or plead with them. You may also try to be-friend a passer-by or someone in the same building by calling out for help.

You can sometimes feel angry, annoyed or disappointed with yourself and the way you reacted during an assault but hopefully learning about the above responses, you can understand them. Your brain helped you survive and it did it without your conscious control.

6. HOW CAN WE SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH TRAUMA.

Understanding. Screening, assessment. Ensures trauma informed approach. Clear, non-shaming formulation. Safety/Relationships. Need to attend to relationships and help children feel safe, carers, support networks, your relationship. Hold in mind current experiences-are they safe now!

7. AFTER SAFETY AND UNDERSTANDING.

Acceptance / normalisation of experience. Regulation. Work on impact (e.g., anxiety, sleep, flashbacks). Through relationships and differing levels of professional support.

8. SUMMARY OF WHAT IS HELPFUL.

Screening. Understanding (especially behaviour) through a trauma lens. Thinking about developmental stage/delay (even in adults). Safety (past and present). Relationships.

[**T.I. L&L Session 4 "Trauma in young people"**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyzDWjKS4R0)