



**TRAUMA SURVIVORS:  
FINDING RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY**



**“MY ADDICTION GOT ME  
IN A LOT OF TROUBLE,  
WITH MORE THAN 30  
ARRESTS AND THREE  
PRISON TERMS.”**

– DEBORAH

### **THE ISSUE**

Trauma is an emotional response to an event or set of circumstances that is physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting negative effects on a person’s mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Traumatic events can include the following:

- Physical and sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Community-based violence
- War

- Natural disasters
- Acts of terror
- Violence
- Human trafficking

Trauma can affect individuals regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Trauma can also affect communities, for example, through a natural disaster or act of violence. Many adults and children experience trauma at some point in their lives:

- In the United States, 61% of men and 51% of women report exposure to at least one lifetime traumatic event.<sup>2</sup>

# HOPE IS POSSIBLE: HELPING KIDS RECOVER AND THRIVE CAMPAIGN

SAMHSA'S NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS INITIATIVE IS DEDICATED TO RAISING AWARENESS OF CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS AND THE USE OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR HELPING CHILDREN THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED A TRAUMATIC EVENT RECOVER AND THRIVE. FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO CHECK OUT THE CAMPAIGN'S PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH), VISIT [WWW.SAMHSA.GOV/CHILD-TRAUMA](http://WWW.SAMHSA.GOV/CHILD-TRAUMA).

- About two-thirds of the U.S. population reported experiencing at least one personal traumatic event before the age of 18,<sup>3</sup> and one in four children were exposed to at least one form of family violence during their lifetimes.<sup>4</sup>

Reactions to traumatic events can vary, and can appear immediately or over time.<sup>5</sup> Trauma survivors may experience stress, fear, and anger, hopelessness about the future, detachment or lack of concern about others, trouble concentrating or making decisions, feeling jumpy and getting startled easily, or have disturbing dreams and memories or flashbacks.<sup>6</sup>

Some people may turn to unhealthy behaviors and use alcohol or drugs in an attempt to cope with trauma and its effects. It is not uncommon for people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), for example, to develop substance use disorders.<sup>7</sup> For people with mental and/or substance use disorders, ignoring trauma can hinder recovery and lead to poor physical health as well.<sup>8</sup>

## FINDING SUPPORT

Resilience is the ability to bounce back, cope with adversity, and endure during difficult situations – most people will show resilience after a traumatic event. For some, however, the journey to recovery can be challenging and can also affect their families and loved ones.

Families may devote a significant time and energy helping a loved one cope with a traumatic event, sometimes leading to strained relationships, and a drain on family resources.<sup>9</sup> When a survivor turns to unhealthy coping strategies, like using drugs or alcohol, these issues may be exacerbated.

As family members adjust to the emotions and stresses of caring for someone in recovery, some of the best support often comes from others who are or were in similar circumstances.<sup>10</sup> Trauma survivors and their families can share their experiences, as well as read others' stories of hope and resilience at [www.recoverymonth.gov/personal-stories](http://www.recoverymonth.gov/personal-stories).

## PROMOTING RECOVERY

Survivors of traumatic events—and the families that support them—can find strength and resiliency, and ultimately navigate the journey to recovery.

Available resources include:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255)** ([www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)): Provides a free, 24-hour helpline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or experiencing emotional distress.
- **SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746** ([www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)): Provides year-round, free and confidential crisis counseling to disaster survivors experiencing stress, anxiety, and other disaster- or trauma-related behavioral health symptoms.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** ([www.thehotline.org/help/](http://www.thehotline.org/help/)): Provides advocates who are available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week to talk confidentially with anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.
- **Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers** ([store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Talking-With-and-Helping-Children-and-Youth-Cope-After-a-Disaster-or-Traumatic-Event-A-Guide-for-Parents-Caregivers-and-Teachers/SMA12-4732](http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Talking-With-and-Helping-Children-and-Youth-Cope-After-a-Disaster-or-Traumatic-Event-A-Guide-for-Parents-Caregivers-and-Teachers/SMA12-4732)): Helps parents and teachers recognize common reactions children of different age groups (preschool and early childhood to adolescence) experience after a disaster or traumatic event.
- **Coping with Traumatic Events: Resources for Children, Parents, Educators, and Other Professionals** ([www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/coping-traumatic-events-resources](http://www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/coping-traumatic-events-resources)): Offers information and resource links on trauma for children, parents, educators, and professionals.



61%  
OF MEN



51%  
OF WOMEN

ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE U.S. POPULATION REPORTED EXPERIENCING AT LEAST ONE PERSONAL TRAUMATIC EVENT BEFORE THE AGE OF 18. IN THE UNITED STATES, **61% OF MEN AND 51% OF WOMEN REPORT EXPOSURE TO AT LEAST ONE LIFETIME TRAUMATIC EVENT.**

Kessler RC, Sonnega A, Bromet E, et al. Posttraumatic stress disorder in the National Comorbidity Survey. Archives of General Psychiatry. 1995;52:1048–1060.

- **National Center for Trauma-Informed Care** ([www.samhsa.gov/nctic](http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic)): Develops approaches to eliminate the use of seclusion, restraints, and other coercive practices and to further advance trauma-informed approaches.
- **The National Institute of Mental Health’s Coping with Traumatic Events** ([www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events/index.shtml)): Offers resources and information and resources on trauma, coping, and resilience.
- **Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** ([www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp)): Provides information for veterans and active duty service members, the general public, and family and friends concerned about a loved one who may be experiencing PTSD.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** ([www.fema.gov/coping-disaster](http://www.fema.gov/coping-disaster)): FEMA’s mission is to support citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.
- **Survivors Art Foundation** ([www.survivorsartfoundation.org/](http://www.survivorsartfoundation.org/)): Encourages healing through the arts and empowers trauma survivors with effective expressive outlets via an Internet art gallery, outreach programs, national exhibitions, publications, and development of employment skills.
- **Family & Youth Services Bureau – Family Violence Prevention & Services Resource Centers** ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/fv-centers](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/fv-centers)): Lists resource centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provide information to improve intervention and prevention efforts at the individual, community, and societal levels.
- **Family & Youth Services Bureau – Making Sure Your Domestic Violence Program is Trauma-informed** ([ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2012/03/making-sure-your-domestic-violence-program-trauma-informed](http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2012/03/making-sure-your-domestic-violence-program-trauma-informed)): Recommends webinars, tipsheets, and other resources for health care providers to support trauma survivors and their children.
- **Family & Youth Services Bureau – Free Online Guide Provides Tips for Incorporating Trauma-Informed Practices Into Staff Trainings** ([ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2015/10/free-online-guide-provides-tips-incorporating-trauma-informed-practices-staff-trainings](http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2015/10/free-online-guide-provides-tips-incorporating-trauma-informed-practices-staff-trainings)): Provides an overview of a short online guide with tips for incorporating trauma-informed practices into training for staff.
- **Family & Youth Services Bureau – NCFY Voices: Up From Trauma** ([ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/media-center/podcasts/ncfy-voices-trauma](http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/media-center/podcasts/ncfy-voices-trauma)): Shares the story of an individual who witnessed violence in his home as a child. The story is a part of the podcast series of the Family & Youth Service Bureau’s National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth (NCFY).

Surviving trauma and leading a fulfilling, healthy life is a reality for millions. Knowing that there is hope and recovery from traumatic events helps individuals and families thrive, and in turn, encourages others to share their stories of recovery.

For more information, including **Recovery Month** resources for families and the community, public service announcements, events across the country, and social media tools, visit the **Recovery Month** website at [www.recoverymonth.gov/](http://www.recoverymonth.gov/).

This list is not exhaustive of all available resources. Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the **Recovery Month** website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Trauma. Retrieved from: [www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma](http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma).

<sup>2</sup> Kessler RC, Sonnega A, Bromet E, et al. Posttraumatic stress disorder in the National Comorbidity Survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 1995;52:1048–1060.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/ace/findings.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ace/findings.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Hamby S, et al. Children’s Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Other Family Violence. Office of Justice Programs. DOJ. October 2011.

<sup>5</sup> American Psychological Association. Trauma. Retrieved from: [www.apa.org/topics/trauma/](http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/).

<sup>6</sup> Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Traumatic Event: What To Expect In Your Personal, Family, Work, And Financial Life. HHS Publication No. SMA-13-4775. Retrieved from: [store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA13-4775/SMA13-4775.pdf](http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA13-4775/SMA13-4775.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> McCauley JL, Killeen T, Gros DF, Brady KT, and Back SE. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders: Advances in Assessment and Treatment. *Clin Psychol*. 2012 Sep 1; 19(3).

<sup>8</sup> SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions. Clinical Practice – Trauma. Retrieved from: [www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma](http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma).

<sup>9</sup> Families and Trauma. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Retrieved from: [www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/families-and-trauma](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/families-and-trauma).

<sup>10</sup> American Psychological Association. How to Cope When a Loved One Has a Mental Illness. Retrieved from: [www.apa.org/helpcenter/serious-mental-illness.aspx](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/serious-mental-illness.aspx).