

## What Parents and Caregivers Can Do

Research on resilience in children demonstrates that an essential protective factor for children is the reliable presence of a positive, caring, and protective parent/caregiver, who can help shield their children against adverse experiences. They can be a consistent resource for their children, encouraging them to talk about the experiences. And they can provide reassurance to their children that the adults in their life are working to keep them safe.

If your child, or a child you know has been exposed to trauma or a traumatic event, there is help and hope for them. Ask your therapist for more information regarding the treatment available for children and adolescents today.

*FMC Care and Counseling Center  
Counseling & Psychotherapy for  
Children, Adolescents, Adults and Families*

**2215 Cheshire Bridge Road  
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## Services Available for Clients:

Individual Counseling  
Family Counseling  
Couples Counseling  
Trauma Treatment  
Substance Abuse Counseling and Interventions  
Career Counseling  
Career Assessments

## Trauma and the Effects on Children



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*“Sometimes adults say, ‘They’re too young to understand.’ However, young children are affected by traumatic events even though they may not understand what happened.”*

## Early Childhood Trauma

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Early childhood trauma generally refers to the traumatic experiences that



occur to children aged 0-6. Because babies and young children's reactions may be different from older children's, and because they may not be able to verbalize their reactions to threatening or dangerous events, many people assume that young age protects children from the impact of traumatic experiences. However, this is not the case and young children are greatly impacted by exposure to trauma.

A growing body of research has established that young children—even infants—may be affected by events that threaten their safety or the safety of their parents/caregivers, and their symptoms have been well documented. These traumas can be the result of intentional violence—such as child physical or sexual abuse, or domestic violence—or the result of natural disaster, accidents, or war.

## Childhood Trauma is Unique

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Traumatic events have a profound impact on young children. Their sense of safety may be shattered by frightening visual stimuli, loud noises, violent movements, and other sensations associated with an unpredictable frightening event. The frightening images tend to recur in the form of nightmares, new fears, and actions or play that reenact the event. Lacking an accurate understanding of the relationship between cause and effect, young kids believe that their thoughts, wishes, and fears have the power to become real and can make things happen. Young kids are less able to anticipate danger or to know how to keep themselves safe, and so are vulnerable to the effects of exposure to trauma. Children may blame themselves or their parents for not preventing a frightening event or for not being able to change its outcome. These misconceptions of reality compound the negative impact of traumatic effects on children's development.

As with older children, young children experience both behavioral and physiological symptoms associated with trauma. Unlike older children, young children cannot express in words whether they feel afraid, overwhelmed, or helpless. However, their behaviors provide clues about how they are affected. Young children who experience trauma are at risk because their developing brains are vulnerable. Early childhood trauma has been associated with reduced size of the brain cortex. This area is responsible for many complex functions including memory, attention, perceptual awareness, thinking, language, and consciousness. These changes may affect IQ and the ability to regulate emotions, and the child may become more fearful and may not feel as safe or as protected.

## Symptoms and Behaviors

- Poor Verbal Skills
- Memory Problems
- Learning Difficulties
- Poor Skill Development
- Excessive Temper
- Demand Attention
- Aggressive Behaviors
- Regressive Behaviors
- Act Out in Social Situations
- Imitate the Traumatic Event
- Verbally Abusive
- Scream or Cry Excessively
- Startle Easily
- Unable to Trust Others
- Blame Themselves
- Fear of Adults Who Remind Them of The Event
- Fear of Being Away from Parent
- Avoidance
- Anxious
- Irritable
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting