

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Looking After Youth Mental Health

— Effects of Early Adversities on Children —

Men and women do not reach full cognitive maturity until they are in their 20's or even 30's. From the moment of conception until maturity has been completed, the things we experience influence how we develop past that point. Some experiences have a great effect and others don't seem to have much effect on us at all.

Types of Adversities in Children

Children can experience many types of adversities. Some of the most common are:

- **Bullying**
- **Community violence**
- **Sexual or physical abuse**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Loss of parent**
- **Car crash**
- **Natural disasters**

The basic definition of trauma is any event that has a significant negative impact on the individual. In many cases, what one child sees as traumatic might not be experienced as trauma by another. The safest way to confirm if a situation was traumatic is to utilize the supports of mental health professionals such as EAP, community-based counselors and school counselors when a stressful situation occurs.

Effects of experiencing childhood adversities

- **PTSD:** Intrusive (repeated) thoughts such as involuntary memories of the traumatic event, nightmares, and vivid flashbacks causing the individual intense feelings of panic
- **Aggression:** Bouts of anger and overly angry reactions to the situation presented
- **Depression:** A mood disorder that causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest. This can often lead to behaviors of seclusion, substance use, self-harm behaviors and suicide
- **Anxiety:** Feelings of fear, dread or uneasiness. Often causing individuals to fear environments, sounds or specific individuals. It is not uncommon to experience restlessness, intense rapid heartbeats and sweating.
- **Attachment issues:** Depending on the type of adversity, the child could later struggle to create or maintain connections to others. This can lead to possible issues in peer and romantic relationships as adults.

For help in addressing childhood adversities and trauma reach out to your EAP. The most effective way to address possible traumas at ANY age is to respond quickly with the support of professionals.