

***Helping Military Families and Personnel  
Cope with Grief, Loss & Trauma –  
Part 2 - Recognizing the  
Signs, Symptoms and Treatment  
for Grief & Trauma***

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**Systemic Effects**

Therapy • Trauma Services • Training • Consulting

US Army Garrison Miami

# Goals

- Become more sensitized about trauma effects
- how better to deal with trauma ourselves
- helping traumatized children and families

# Objectives

Following a lecture/discussion of helping families through traumatic responses, the learner will be able to:

- 1. Define trauma, life drama and normal life experiences.
- 2. Discuss how trauma affects families and the particular emphasis on children
- 3. Identify interventions that ameliorate trauma in affected families.
- 4. List available community resources that can be utilized to aid families affected by trauma.

# What is a Trauma?

- An extraordinarily stressful event that involves an actual or threatened death, or serious injury, or loss (In contrast to everyday dramas)



# Life is full of traumas and dramas



Kevin Higley / AP

# A Traumatized Person's Response

- involves intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
- In children, it may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.

How Do Traumas Affect Individuals, including Children?

## Four Major Classes of Traumatic Stress Symptoms:

1. Re-experiencing of the Event
2. Intense Psychological Distress at Exposure to Reminders
3. Persistent Avoidance
4. Persistent Arousal

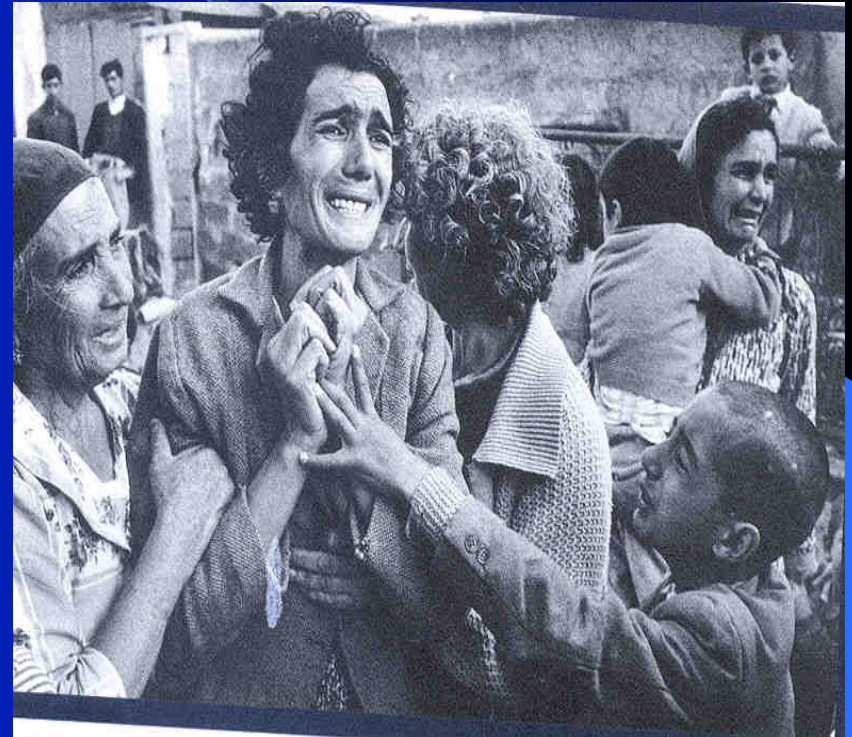




# First Class of Symptoms

*Re-experiencing the trauma includes:*

- Images
- Illusions
- Hallucinations
- Thoughts, or
- Perceptions
- Other sensations





# And in Young Children

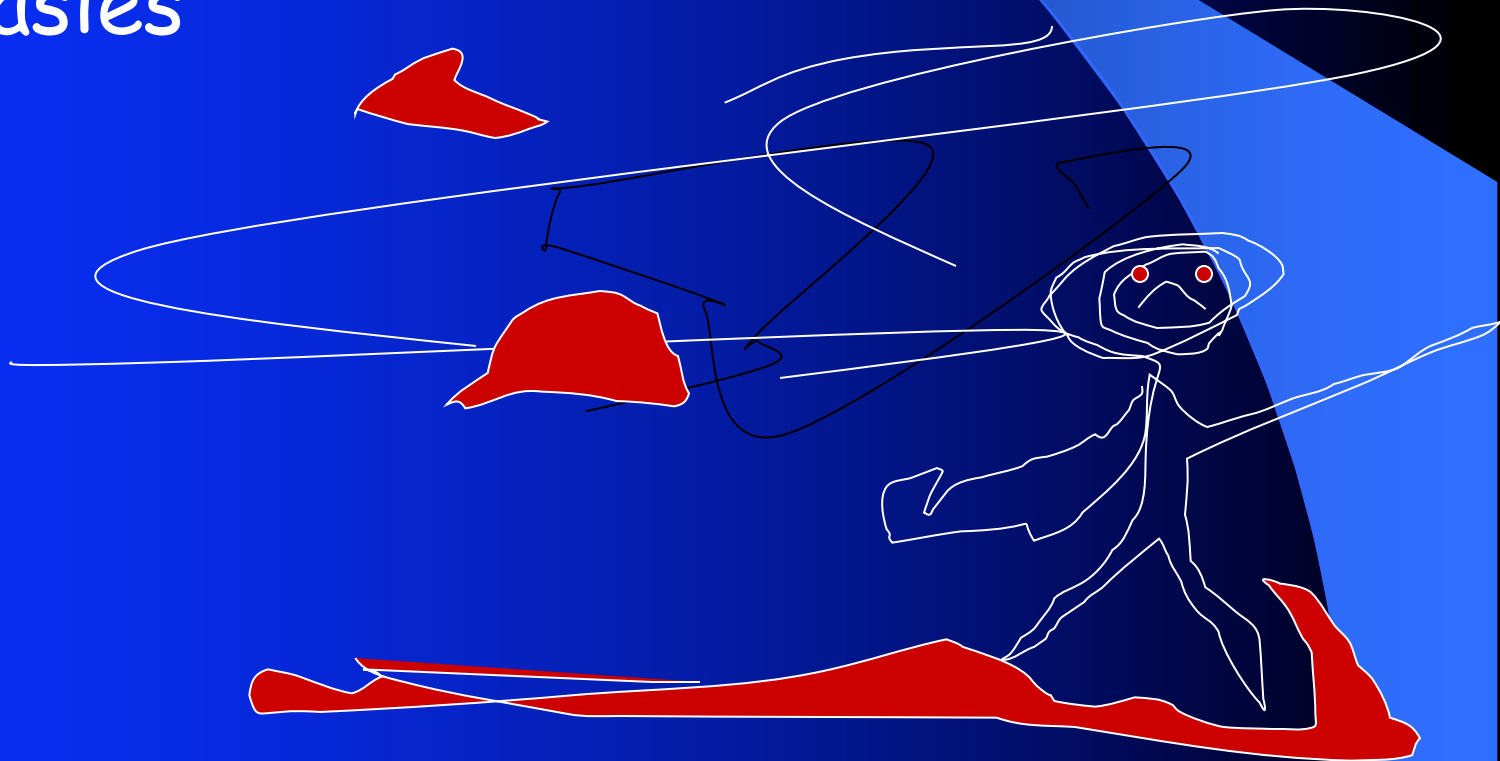


Symptoms include:

- *Repetitive play*- in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed
- And *frightening dreams* without recognizable content

Also,

- ✓ trauma-specific reenactment may occur in play, drawings, stories, and fantasies



# Second Class of Symptoms

## *Intense Psychological Distress at Exposure*

- Various cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event such as:
  1. **Internal cues** - feelings experienced during the trauma
  2. **External cues** - reminders in daily life

# Reactions include:

- Hyperventilation
- Agitation
- Nervous ticks
- Aggression

# Third Class of Symptoms

## *Persistent Avoidance of Stimuli*

- Avoiding anything associated with the trauma
- Numbing of general responsiveness to others
- As indicated by efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma;

# Third Class of Symptoms

## *Persistent Avoidance of Stimuli*

*(continued)*

- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- Significant Loss of interest in significant activities
- Attempts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma



# Other Indicators of Avoidance

- Detachment or estrangement from others
- Appearing uncaring, agitated and unloving
- For adults: a sense of foreboding (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

# Fourth Class of Trauma Symptoms

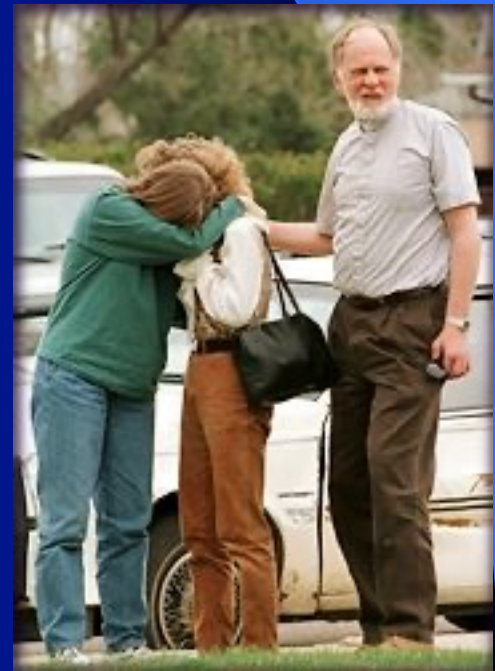
## *Persistent and Increased Arousal*

- difficulty falling or staying asleep
- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty concentrating
- hypervigilance
- exaggerated startle response



# When Does a Trauma Become an Mental Disorder?

- When many of the symptoms persist for more than a month, it becomes *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD)



# Traumatized Family

- those attempting to cope with an extraordinary stressor that disrupts normal routines, functions, and characteristics of life together.

# Trauma Symptoms in Family Systems

- Parental dysfunction
  - Violence
  - Neglect
  - Over protection
- Relationship violence
- Relationship neglect
  - Family Burnout

# Four Waves of Intervention

- Establish Safety and Routine
- Identify and Correct Lingering Fears and Confusion
- Repair Damaged Relationships
- Complete Grieving Process



# Methods for Assessing and Treating Families

- The methods change when dealing with a traumatized family (Maslow's Hierarchy)
- The trauma must be dealt with before the normal process of traditional talk therapy can begin

- A trauma technique must be utilized to desensitize the client to the trauma –

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing  
EMDR

“Place your own  
oxygen mask  
on first...”

# Questions & Answers