project reassure

Self-Advocates

Types of Trauma

Trauma and traumatic events can happen in many different ways. Below are some definitions and examples of how trauma can happen.

Single event: This type of trauma only happens once. An example of this is a car accident.

Chronic event: This type of trauma is a series of events that happens over a period of time. An example of this is the COVID pandemic.

Developmental trauma: This type of trauma happens in early childhood. It is usually chronic. An example of this is having cancer and being in the hospital for many months at 5 years old.

Relational trauma: This type of trauma is caused by someone you have a relationship with. An example of this is being physically abused by a parent or caregiver.

Complex trauma: This is when someone has many different types of trauma events. An example of this is someone whose parents divorced when they were kids, saw a family member get into a bad car accident, and was physically abused by a caregiver when they were a teenager.

Intergenerational trauma: This is when trauma responses are passed down across generations by people who experienced a trauma. This can include a trauma that affects one individual, multiple family members, or an entire community. Examples of this are slavery and the Holocaust.

Specific examples of traumatic events include:

- Natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, or tornadoes.
- Accidents like car accidents or fires.
- Abuse, including physical, mental, or sexual.
- Neglect.
- Death of a loved one or close friend.
- Medical events like surgery or chronic illness.
- School events like bullying or school shootings.
- Community events like riots or high crime levels.
- Interpersonal events like domestic violence.
- Wars and genocides like the Holocaust.
- Human trafficking.

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