

1 Trauma is a 'common human experience'. It happens to **YOU and to ME** and to individuals in the **COMMUNITIES** we live and work within.

If we can understand its' affects and consequences, we will be better placed both personally and organisationally to deal with the experience of Trauma and to help those in need.

2 The impact of trauma is profound. Trauma can elicit a sense of helplessness that may stay with a person for a long time. The weight of **shame or guilt** can erode **self-worth and increase toxic stress**. This toxic stress can increase the likelihood of **chronic health problems in later life**.

3 Everyone responds to trauma differently. Having support in the aftermath of trauma is one of the most important factors in determining the impact. **A lack of support after trauma is often more damaging than the trauma.**

7 When there is a **repeated threat**, the Amygdala becomes more dominant and access to thinking (Pre-frontal cortex) and prior experiences/memory (Hippocampus) **is impaired**. **The brain becomes more and more primed for threat** and may **respond faster** and in a more **explosive manner** or **dissociation** may be seen in the individual – as a means of **copng with the trauma**.

With repeated threat - Normal responses to stress may cease to exist.

7 Minute Briefing

The Impact of Trauma on the Brain

Parts of the brain that may be impacted by Trauma

The Amygdala enlarges - stimulating a fight, flight, or freezing response.

The Hippocampus, responsible for short term memory - shrinks and memory retrieval is interrupted.

The Pre-Frontal Cortex shrinks - making it hard to regulate thoughts and emotions.

Trauma can also impact on **psychological development and functioning**.

6 Symptoms may include **flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety**, as well as **uncontrollable thoughts about the trauma**.

5 **Research** shows that if we witness or experience trauma our brains can take on a **different structure**. Certain areas of the brain such as the **Amygdala**, may **become hyperactive**, while others such as the **Hippocampus** become **less active**, creating an imbalance.

