



Abuse. Neglect. Accidents. Tragedies. Abandonment. Disease. Loss. War.

What is trauma?

What we call “trauma” today has Greek origins meaning “wound”¹ and is defined as a psychological or emotional injury caused by a deeply disturbing experience.²

A traumatic experience generates powerful emotions and is somewhat subjectively and even culturally defined although certain events are universally perceived and experienced as traumatizing. Trauma can continue to cause emotional and physical symptoms for many years after the event has occurred.

What are trauma’s ramifications?

- Unrelieved, prolonged, or inordinate childhood stress has widespread ramifications. For example, child abuse causes stress that can disrupt early brain development with extreme stress harming the nervous and immune systems’ development.³
- Abused or neglected children have an increased risk for adult health problems including, but not limited to depression, smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, obesity, high-risk sexual behaviors, suicide, certain chronic diseases.^{4,5} As many as two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused or neglected as children.⁶
- Children who experience child abuse & neglect are about 9 times more likely to become involved in criminal activity.⁸ 14% of all men in prison and 36% of women in prison in the USA were abused as children- about twice the frequency seen in the general population.⁸
- Have you ever observed someone experiencing a disconnect between what he knows intellectually and what he feels? Experienced this? Been frustrated by this? Who hasn’t, right?! We can all think of times in which we, ourselves, and those we know worried or feared in light of actual facts to the contrary, God’s truth, common sense, and/or until growth, understanding, repeated experience, and/or healing was realized. But this is also depictive of what happens to a larger and greater degree in the mind of someone who has been impacted by traumatic events- especially during one’s earliest and most formative years.
- Our experiences in life, especially early ones with those meant to protect and care for us, inform us about what is safe or dangerous.⁹ Our beliefs about ourselves, others, God, life, love, acceptance, and so on become established in our brains based on our interpretations of these. This framework continues to filter and inform current beliefs, expectations, and evaluations.
- Some who suffer early abandonment and neglect wall off and deaden their emotions to cope, alternatively turning to things or unhealthy, sinful behaviors to survive, cope, and to experience pseudo-fulfillment. This is a “replacement defense” that fuels and perpetuates one’s addictive

Individuals who reported six or more adverse childhood experiences had an average life expectancy two decades shorter than those who reported none.⁷

behavior.¹⁰ The implications for addiction recovery, spiritual growth, and emotional healing in light of all this is stark, telling, and obvious.

It is my personal opinion that Christ may have had this in mind when He issued this warning:

“woe *to him* through whom they [offenses] do come!
It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck,
and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones”
(Luke 17:1-2, NKJV).

“Hurts of rejection, abuse, and abandonment are deep wounds inside people’s souls...If hurts are deeply healed, people do not repeat these hurts in other relationships, nor do they try to medicate their wounds in sinful ways, such as with drugs, alcohol, gambling, illicit sex, or other lusts. If the Body [Church] is there to be medicine...that heals, not just dulls the pain - then the destructive cycle of sin is broken.”¹¹

All this provides understanding, direction, and hope for those who are lovingly trying to help hurting people whose hearts seem impenetrable to freeing truths. For example, although it is important for one who was neglected in her formative years by a parent to be told that God loves her and will not forsake her, it is not enough.

What can we do?

- She needs to repeatedly experience acceptance, safety, and faithfulness in the context of safe, loving relationship to trust that both increasingly and experientially.
- Since we learn through relational experiences that which is embedded in our belief system, we cannot break free from these beliefs without going back to access and change them through the same means – repeated and emotionally charged experiences¹² that will help align one’s beliefs with God’s truth. Heart knowledge trumps head knowledge!
- This is a process that takes time and an approach to helping and healing that mindfully accounts for these facts. Unresolved traumas, especially and specifically childhood ones, and their subsequent, deleterious effects on one’s thoughts about God, self, others, life, and the world inherently and naturally spawn unhealthy, sinful behaviors and perpetuate unhealthy relating while precluding healthy interaction.
- Since we are often hurt in relationship, we need to heal within the context of healthy relationship. This can include a spectrum of positive relationships: family, friends, ministry leaders, support/growth groups, and even counselors for some. This means that whatever type of relationship you’re in with a hurting person, whether it is personal or professional, God can use you as a conduit of His grace, healing, love, and mercy! God created man for connection with Himself and with others.

God said “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him*” (Genesis 2:18, NKJV) *prior* to the Fall while Adam was still sinless, experiencing unhindered and fully satisfying relationship with the Lord, situated in a perfect environment, and never sinned against up to that point. How much more is safe relationship needful for the effective healing of those with a sin nature dwelling in a sin-cursed world who are grabbling with deep emotional wounds and their profound ramifications!?

The beginning of Isaiah 61 poignantly portrays Christ’s personal ministry as one of healing broken hearts, freeing the bound and captive, and comforting and consoling the mourning while granting joy, praise, and a solid testimony for God’s glory.

This is something Christ did during His earthly ministry and continues to do through His Body, the Church, through personal, ministerial, and professional avenues.

This is something we are striving to do by His grace here at America's Keswick as we seek to minister to the hurting, lonely, and addicted through ministries such as the Colony of Mercy, Barbara's Place, and ENRICH.

If you find yourself in need of healing, please contact us today!

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