

## Common Symptoms of Trauma by School Age Group

### Elementary Students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others (more clingy with teacher or parent)
- Worry about recurrence of violence
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Changes in behavior:
  - Increase in activity level
  - Decreased attention or concentration
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Angry outbursts or aggression
  - Absenteeism
- Distrust of others, affecting how children interact with both adults and peers
- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, overreaction to minor bumps and bruises)
- Changes in school performance
- Recreating the event (e.g., repeatedly talking about, “playing” out, or drawing the event)
- Over- or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Statements and questions about death and dying
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

## Middle School Students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:
  - Decreased attention or concentration
  - Increase in activity level
  - Change in academic performance
  - Irritability with friends, teachers, events
  - Angry outbursts or aggression
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Absenteeism
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, chest pains)
- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Repeated discussion of event and focus on specific details of what happened
- Over- or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

## High School Students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Irritability with friends, teachers, events
  - Angry outbursts or aggression
  - Change in academic performance
  - Decreased attention or concentration
  - Increase in activity level
  - Absenteeism
  - Increase in impulsivity, risk-taking behavior
- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs
- Discussion of events and reviewing of details
- Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others

- Over- or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (including suicidal thoughts, writing, art, or notebook covers about violent or morbid topics, Internet searches)
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

*Source:* Adapted from the Child Trauma Toolkit by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.