

The 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses in Children and Families

1. Traumatic experiences are inherently complex.
2. Trauma occurs within a broad context that includes children's personal characteristics, life experiences, and current circumstances.
3. Traumatic events often generate secondary adversities, life changes, and distressing reminders in children's daily lives.
4. Children can exhibit a wide range of reactions to trauma and loss.
5. Danger and safety are core concerns in the lives of traumatized children.
6. Traumatic experiences affect the family and broader caregiving systems.
7. Protective and promotive factors can reduce the adverse impact of trauma.
8. Trauma and posttrauma adversities can strongly influence development.
9. Developmental neurobiology underlies children's reactions to traumatic experiences.
10. Culture is closely interwoven with traumatic experiences, response, and recovery.
11. Challenges to the social contract, including legal and ethical issues, affect trauma response and recovery.
12. Working with trauma-exposed children can evoke distress in providers that makes it more difficult for them to provide good care.

NCTSN Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma Task Force (2012). *The 12 core concepts: Concepts for understanding traumatic stress responses in children and families*. Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: UCLA-Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.