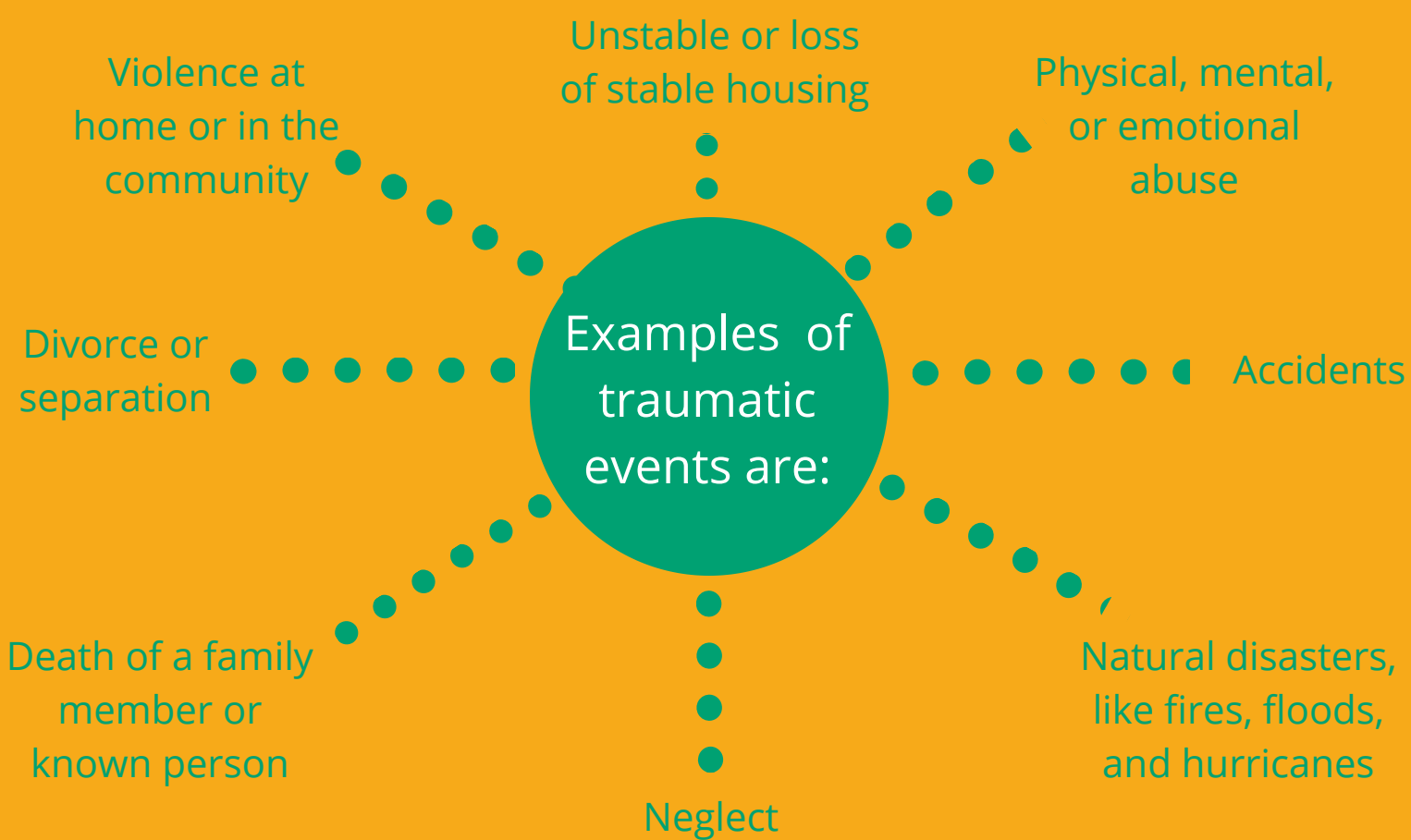


# TRAUMA

Trauma is a very scary or upsetting event or a group of events that changes how a person reacts to stress. These types of events make people feel afraid or in danger even once the scary event has passed.

When a child has gone through trauma they may have trouble dealing with some events or situations for the rest of their life. Trauma can change a child's behavior, how they relate to other people, and the way they react to everyday events. A child who has gone through trauma can sometimes even have health problems as they become an adult. The good news is children can bounce back from trauma, to improved health and behavior, if they receive help to talk about what happened!



## How can trauma impact learning?



School performance



Attendance



Physical and emotional symptoms

- Children who experience trauma may have trouble staying focused. They may have trouble remembering things, staying organized, learning language skills, and communicating with others.
- These experiences can lead students to have to poor grades, inappropriate behavior in class, and a hard time making friends or forming relationships with adults.
- Students exposed to trauma have been shown to have more reported absence or lateness than other students.

## What Can You Do?

Create a Positive and Supportive Environment

- 1** Learn to recognize and plan for known “triggers” that may come up in a child’s day.
- 2** Try to stay calm if a child has “trigger warnings”
- 3** Try to keep routines as consistent as possible so a child knows what to expect
- 4** Reassure children that you will do your best to help and protect them. Ask children about what they are thinking and feeling and reassure him/her not to feel bad or guilty about their feelings
- 5** Ask for help from medical or mental health professionals, teachers, or others you trust!

# TRAUMA

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If a child has experienced trauma, they may:

## Preschool Students (Ages 3-5)

- Get anxious when they separate from a caregiver
- Lose skills they once had, like language and problem solving skills
- Be tired a lot because they have a hard time sleeping
- Frequently miss school or arrive late
- Overreact to loud noises, physical contact, or sudden movements
- Appear to always be looking around for possible danger
- Form new fears
- Ask questions about death or dying

## Elementary Students (Ages 6-12)

- Worry about the safety of themselves and others
- Have trouble focusing
- Be unwilling to try activities
- Become aggressive or have angry outbursts
- Frequently miss school, arrive late or start having worse grades
- Interact with others in strange or unusual ways
- Find it difficult to work with adults in authority (like teachers, principals, or parents)

## TRIGGERS (Threat-cue)

Reactions don't happen for "no reason." Something has set off that reaction such as:

- A certain smell or song
- Painting a picture of family or home
- Essays about summer activities
- Specific activities
- Perceived invasion of privacy (e.g. desk check)
- Not being listened to or a stern tone of voice
- People standing or sitting too close
- Time of day or year
- Loud noises or yelling
- Criticism (even constructive)

## TRIGGER WARNINGS

There are often signs of distress that may signal the proximity of a trigger including:

- Restlessness / Agitation / Pacing
- Shortness of breath / pounding heart
- Sweating
- Clenching teeth or fists
- Hand wringing
- Bouncing legs
- Shaking / Rocking
- Crying
- Giggling at inappropriate times
- Singing or yelling
- Swearing / Aggressive language