

Symptoms of Trauma in Children

Prepared by
Frank Alabiso, PhD.

The symptoms of trauma in children six years and younger are:

Intrusive Symptoms

- Recurrent, intrusive, distressing memories of traumatic events
- Reoccurring, distressing dreams related to the traumatic event
- Flashbacks in which child reacts as if the trauma is occurring in present time
- Intense/prolonged psychological distress at exposure to the cues that symbolize or resemble the trauma

Persistent Avoidance

- Persistent avoidance of stimuli related to or associated with the traumatic event
- Avoidance of people and/or social interactions associated with the event

Negative Emotional States

- Increased frequency of emotional states for fear, guilt, sadness, shame, confusion, etc.
- Diminished interest in what were once pleasurable activities
- Reduction in expression of positive emotions
- Social withdrawal

Altered Arousal States

- Irritability ie: verbal/physical aggression
- Hypervigilance
- Startle responses
- Sleep disturbances
- Impaired relationships with peers, siblings, adults

Other Common Symptoms

- Depersonalization/Detachment
- Derealization feelings/perception of unreality

*For a fuller explanation the AFC should familiarize themselves with the section in the DSM-V on post-traumatic stress disorder in children.