



What Is Trauma?

A simple guide to understanding what happens after a hard or frightening experience

**Trauma is not the event alone.
Trauma is what may happen inside you when an experience feels too scary, painful, confusing, or overwhelming to handle at the time.**

Think of it like a smoke alarm

A smoke alarm is meant to warn you about danger. After a very hard experience, your brain and body may keep sounding the alarm - even when the danger has passed. You may feel on edge, freeze, avoid reminders, or react strongly. These responses do not mean you are weak or “broken.” They are ways your body tried to protect you.

What kinds of experiences can feel traumatic?

One sudden event	Something that keeps happening
A car crash, attack, natural disaster, serious injury, sudden loss, or frightening medical emergency.	Bullying, abuse, violence at home, neglect, racism, unsafe relationships, or living with constant fear.
Seeing or hearing about harm	A major loss or change
Watching violence, hearing painful stories, helping people in crisis, or caring for someone who is very ill.	Losing someone you love, being forced to move, family separation, or another change that leaves you feeling unsafe or alone.

Important: The same event can affect people differently. An experience may deeply affect one person and not affect another in the same way. Both responses are real.

How Trauma May Show Up

Trauma can affect more than memories. It may show up in your body, feelings, thoughts, relationships, and actions.

In your body	In your feelings
Headaches • stomachaches • tense muscles • racing heart • trouble sleeping • feeling tired	Fear • anger • sadness • shame • numbness • feeling easily overwhelmed
In your thoughts	In your actions
Trouble focusing • unwanted memories • expecting danger • blaming yourself • feeling hopeless	Avoiding people or places • shutting down • reacting quickly • trying hard to stay in control

A simple way to say it

“Trauma is the lasting effect a scary, painful, or overwhelming experience can have on a person’s body, feelings, thoughts, and actions.”

Pause and notice

You do not have to diagnose yourself. Simply ask: “After something hard happened, did I begin to feel less safe, less like myself, or more on alert?” If yes, your response deserves care and support.

Trauma can shape part of your story, but it does not have to define your future.

With safe support, healthy tools, compassion, and faith, healing is possible.

INVICTA core values: Faith • Compassion • Safety • Dignity • Hope • Healing • Restoration

Need support? Talk with a trusted adult, counselor, healthcare professional, pastor, or trauma-informed helper. If you are in immediate danger, contact local emergency services.

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