

Helping Children, Families and Staff Through Crises and Loss

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One of the more challenging tasks school counselors face is working with children who have witnessed or personally experienced unspeakable trauma, abuse or tragedy in their lives. For some of them it is a one time event such as a car accident or a tornado. For others such as victims of domestic abuse, it is a part of their daily lives. Research says, one in four children will experience a traumatic event before the age of sixteen, and up to 15 % of those will develop PTSD. Studies have shown that PTS can cause memory problems and learning difficulties, in addition to flashbacks, aggressive behaviors, sleep problems, hyper-vigilance, drug and alcohol abuse, trouble with concentration and more.

What exactly is a trauma? **The definition of trauma is:** a feeling of being totally unsafe and POWERLESS to do anything to change it.

In the last few years, we have had a lot of trauma in Iowa. I know many of you are working in communities where there has been severe flooding or tornadoes as well as a lot of tragic loss of staff and students. But, you need not have had a major catastrophe in your district to warrant some training in trauma therapy. If you consider the definition of trauma, you will realize, as counselors, we work with many students experiencing trauma every day. For example: students whose family is breaking up, students who are watching a loved one die, students who are abused physically, sexually or emotionally, or who are bullied in school. The list could go on and on!

So it is obvious! There is no doubt that we need to be well versed in techniques that are effective with traumatized children. However, as Dr. William Steele , a leading expert on trauma in children says, “ A trauma is like no other experience. Most of what works for other problems does not work for trauma related reactions and problems.”

A school counselors, we **need to know what DOES work** for this population. For this reason you will now find new resources and links for working with trauma and loss victims on the updated DE website. We hope you will take full advantage of this great new resource!