

Complex Trauma

What is Complex Trauma?

Complex Trauma differs from 'ordinary' trauma and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Instead of being caused by a single incident, it typically begins in early childhood, with multiple, ongoing incidents causing and contributing to it. There can be 'positive' causes, such as being harmed, or 'negative' causes, such as being neglected. In many cases, it is a combination of both.

Defining Features of Complex Trauma

The following are the defining features of **Complex Trauma**:

- ◆ It begins early in life
- ◆ It is pervasive and all-encompassing
- ◆ It is persistent and ongoing
- ◆ The sense of self is poor and depleted
- ◆ It is intentional and premeditated
- ◆ It is cumulative and repetitive
- ◆ It is not a single incident or a collection of incidents within a defined time-period
- ◆ It consists of multiple, sustained, abusive episodes over many years
- ◆ The brain is immature, impairing the development of the cognitive structures (especially of attachment)
- ◆ It affects the 'victim' at all levels – mental, emotional, physical
- ◆ The perpetrator is a 'close' family member or carer, compromising personal and intimate relationships
- ◆ It is often not recognised and 'diagnosed' as something else (a personality disorder, schizophrenia etc)
- ◆ It can be treated and recovered from, but it requires patience, care, expertise and understanding.
- ◆ It occurs at the hands of a 'care-giver'
- ◆ It incorporates an element of 'betrayal'
- ◆ It causes interpersonal stress and anxiety
- ◆ The perpetrator should be a 'protector'
- ◆ Capacity for healthy relationships is impaired

Complex Trauma is often not understood. Many 'survivors' do not receive the help they most need.

The Blue Knot Foundations (formerly ASCA)

The Blue Knot Foundation (Australia wide) works on behalf of complex trauma survivors. They offer support for sufferers, training for therapists and information for the public and workplaces. They estimate that there are at least 5 million Australians that have been adversely affected by childhood trauma, and so everyone needs to be 'trauma informed.' See: <https://www.blueknot.org.au>

Managing Complex Trauma

Managing Complex Trauma requires specialist skills. **The Blue Knot Foundation** offers training that explains what complex trauma is, how it differs from other forms of trauma, and how to best help those who are affected by it. Trained therapists work with clients from a more enlightened perspective and know what and what not to expect from their interactions with clients.

In addition to the insights from complex-trauma training, I offer Mindfulness therapy. Mindfulness practices provide valuable assistance to complex-trauma sufferers to regulate and manage the difficult emotions they experience. Please contact me if you think I can help you.

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