

COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA – CHILDREN

Behavioral (and Interpersonal)

Pre-school

Bedwetting
Thumb sucking
Repetitive play; reenacting trauma
Anxious attachment, clinging
Aggression/disobedience

Elementary School

Clinging
Resumption of outgrown habits
Competition with siblings
Repetitive talking; reenacting trauma
Disobedience
Drop in school performance

Junior/Senior High

Can't meet responsibilities
Resumes earlier coping styles
Withdraws socially; relationship problems/changes
Sudden changes in attitudes, styles, personality
Self-deprecation
Exhibits antisocial behavior
Abuses alcohol/drugs
Decline in school performance
Acts "too old, too soon": (leaving school early,
pregnancy, marriage)
Apathy

Affective (Emotional)

Pre-school

Generalized fears
Nervousness, anxieties, and worries
Separation anxiety
Fearful of reminders
Panicked/hysterical
Irritability
Blunted or numb

Elementary School

Fear of recurrence, related stimuli
Wanting to be fed, dressed
School phobia
Avoidance of large groups
Overconcern for family safety
Anger, hostility, belligerence, aggression
Apathy, withdrawal
Guilt
Sadness/Depression
Blunted or numb

Junior/Senior High

Anger, hostility, belligerence
Guilt
Chronic sadness/depression
Anxiety

COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA – CHILDREN

Somatic (Physical)

Pre-School

Loss of appetite
Pale appearance
Overeating
Bowel/bladder problems
Sleep disturbances
Nightmares

Elementary School

Complaints about vision
Complaints about stomach problems
Headaches
Pale appearance
Itching
Sleep disturbances

Junior/Senior High

Headaches
Vague complaints, pain
Skin rashes
Loss of appetite/overeating

Cognitive (Thoughts)

Pre-School

Shorter attention span
Confusion regarding:
 event
 locations
 sequencing
 death

Elementary School

Confusion regarding:
 event
 sequencing
Inability to concentrate

Junior/Senior High

Problems concentrating
Overconcern re: health
Intellectualization
Rationalization

Adapted from Johnson, 1993, School Crisis Management