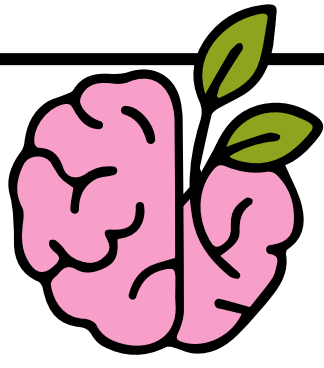


How Complex Trauma Affects Us in Life

Memory



Trauma memories can feel vivid and alive, replaying the worst moments as images or body sensations — “feeling hopeless just like I did back then.” Or, memories can become blurred and fragmented, especially with childhood trauma.

Coping and Survival Strategies



When emotional pain feels too much, the mind and body find ways to numb, distract, or avoid:

Avoidance – staying busy, avoiding reminders, or shutting down to keep emotions at bay.

Substances or Addictive Behaviours – using alcohol, drugs, food, work, social media, or sex to self-soothe or escape pain.

Emotional Numbing – disconnecting from feelings, appearing “fine” on the outside while feeling empty inside.

Control and Perfectionism – trying to feel safe by keeping tight control over yourself, others, or your environment.

Reminders (Triggers)

Everyday things — a sound, smell, image, or tone of voice — can trigger an emotional or body memory.

Example: a raised voice may instantly cause panic or shut-down.

Managing Stress

Carrying the weight of past trauma makes it harder to regulate stress and anxiety. The nervous system becomes easily overwhelmed, struggling to shift from alertness to rest and calm.

Physical Health

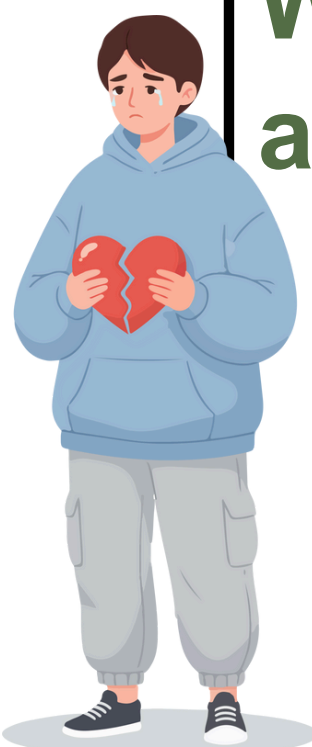


Living in a constant state of alert (fight-flight) exhausts the body.

Over time, this can lead to chronic pain, muscle tension, headaches, and digestive problems.

Relationships

You may feel disconnected or find it hard to be your true self with others. It can be difficult to voice your needs, express emotions, or manage conflict — patterns often learned in early relationships.



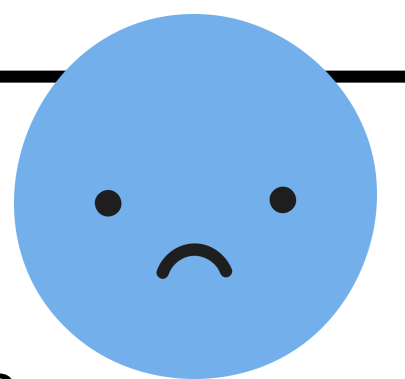
Perception of the World and Others



The world may feel unsafe or unpredictable.

It can be hard to trust others, or you may trust too easily, seeking safety through closeness.

Self-worth



Trauma can shape how you see yourself. You may become highly self-critical, feeling not good enough or undeserving of care.

This is especially true for childhood trauma, when self-worth is still forming.