

# Signs of Trauma

## Preschoolers (Age 3 - 5)



Trauma can have significant impact on a preschooler's life, but sometimes it can be hard to spot the signs.

Trauma may affect a preschooler's...

In the following ways...



### Body

- Sleeplessness
- Fear of going to bed
- Frequent nightmares
- Weight fluctuations
- Loss of appetite



### Brain (thinking)

- Lack of self-confidence
- Social or developmental delays in comparison to peers
- Difficulty focusing or learning
- Loss of previously mastered skills (e.g., speech, potty training, self-soothing, falling asleep)
- Difficulty trusting others



### Emotions (feelings)

- Difficulty managing emotions
- Intense anger
- Chronic sadness
- Often confused
- Extreme shyness
- Excessive fear or worry
- Emotionally numb (e.g., blank eyes, does not react to people/events around them)
- Easily startled



### Behaviors

- Temper tantrums
- Aggressive (e.g., hitting, kicking, throwing things, or biting)
- Scream or cry a lot
- Recurrent violent or sexual play
- Being constantly on guard
- Heightened sensitivity to environment
- Self-inflicted injuries (e.g., picking scabs, pulling hair, hitting head against walls)
- Classroom disruption
- Hyperactivity
- Restlessness
- Higher or lower activity levels compared to peers



### Relationships & attachments

- Overly bossy or controlling
- Extreme fear of punishment (e.g., running away, overly compliant)
- Clinginess
- Withdraw from previously trusted adult
- Difficulty making friends
- Not playing with other kids their age

**Note:** While this guide is meant to help you think about potential signs of trauma, it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool or checklist. Remember, these lists are not exhaustive. Individual children may exhibit a combination of signs from different age groups and signs of trauma may vary based on the developmental stage and cultural background of the child.