

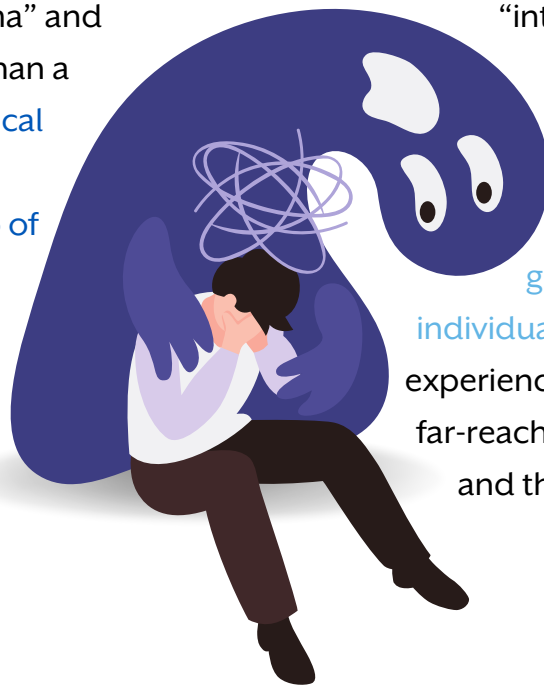
# INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

**Trauma** is a loaded term, because it can refer to a number of circumstances and symptoms. **Simple trauma** describes a single event, such as a death or an assault. **Complex trauma** occurs after a series of repeated events or when new, unique traumatic incidents occur. In incidents involving violence, addiction, or poverty, Complex trauma early in life can interfere with a child’s development and may involve entire families.

The DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition) references the following signs in those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or some other trauma or stress-related disorder:

- Intrusive symptoms, such as flashbacks or distressing memories
- Avoidance symptoms, including avoidance of internal or external reminders
- Negative alterations in mood or cognition. A person might have a persistent negative emotional state or negative beliefs about themselves or the world.
- Hyperarousal symptoms, such as anger, reckless behavior or difficulty concentrating

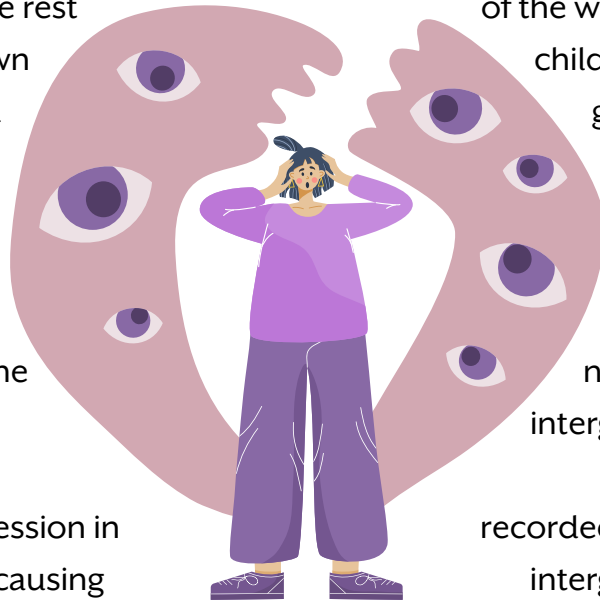
Some forms of trauma pertain to larger groups of people like families and communities. But while both “historical trauma” and defined as affecting more than a distinct in two areas. **Historical had widespread effects, malicious intent for a group of trauma, however, spans the immediate individual or group can effects can have the behaviors of families**



“intergenerational trauma” are single individual, they are **trauma is defined as having collective suffering and people. Intergenerational generations rather than just individual/community.** So while one experience a trauma, its impact and far-reaching consequences on both and their physical bodies.

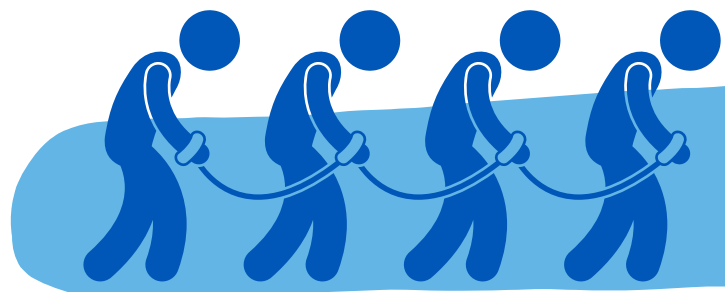
# INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

The impact of intergenerational trauma on its victims and their offspring varies – as do the ways in which it transfers from parent to child. The victims of traumatic events tend to have attitudes of mistrust or disdain toward the rest of the world. They also have trouble bonding with their own children. To cope with these feelings, they often develop a general distrust of others, a food-scarcity mentality, low self-worth, a habit of hoarding, social hostility and more. Their children see and mimic these coping mechanisms and attitudes in their own lives, propelling the impact of those traumatic events into the next generation and creating children with intergenerational trauma.



Numerous examples of oppression in recorded history can be classified as historic trauma while also causing intergenerational trauma. Three cases come to mind immediately: the forced assimilation of Aboriginal communities in Canada in the 1950s and 60s, when Aboriginal people were removed from their families and forced to assimilate into broader society, the enslavement of people of color in America, and the murder of millions of Jews in the Holocaust during World War II. Both events resulted from brutal forces working to eradicate peoples and cultures, and both directly sought to destroy the existence and identity of those peoples.

*Devastating as it is to realize, horrific systems like these remain a threat today. According to a study by the Freedom House, 46 percent of the world's population lived in a free society in 2019. Two years later, only 20.3 percent did. Put another way, eight of every 10 people are living in a society that is only, at best, partially free.*



# INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

With statistics like these, it is critical that we learn how to best respond to traumas and embody what we say every year: “Never Forget.” We must never forget what happened to our ancestors, and we mustn’t forget the survivors of any traumas, because the victims of these evils are still among us, and they need our help. This means acquainting ourselves with the best ways to engage with victims of traumatic experiences, especially those most heinous that attack the core of a person’s identity like the Aboriginal communities, communities of color, and Jews in the Holocaust.



One particularly effective method of treatment for those recovering from such traumas is “culturally mindful interventions.” Healthcare professionals often utilize this practice in treating someone suffering from traumatic experiences, both personal and intergenerational. This form of treatment operates under the proposition set by Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Frankl explains why it is necessary that people feel a secure connection to meaning in their lives:

*“Without specific meaning, it is literally impossible to live.”*

Fully treating someone who was persecuted or is suffering from intergenerational trauma requires restoring the morale, identity and purpose others attempted to take from them by incorporating traditions and practices of their core culture. Doing so can help them reclaim their sense of identity and self-worth.

While we may not all be mental health practitioners who can seek to treat those suffering from these traumatic events, we all can do our best to encourage ourselves and those around us to embrace our cultures and traditions and to create safe spaces to feel comfortable doing so. *In this way, we can work to rebuild the worlds of those who have suffered incredible losses.*



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## Activities for a Separate Sheet of Paper

### Making Space for Multiple Worlds

- What are some ways you can incorporate your particular tradition's ideas and/or practices into your life? Perhaps you can consider making a ritual out of them if they aren't already rituals to begin with.
- What are some ways you can make it safe for others to bring their own traditions and values into your shared space?



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### Building Your Own World

Explore your intergenerational values. What is important to you and has been in your family? How might you best continue to share that value with future generations?

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