

Different Forms of Trauma

What makes an experience traumatizing is whether or not a person's brain is able to process it and consolidate it into a stable long-term memory that has a clear beginning, middle and end of the event.

Let's take a look at the four categories of trauma:

Single Incident Trauma:

Traumatic events that happen in a short period of time. Can occur in both Big *T* and Little *t* Traumas. Intensity of the experience is usually greater in Big *T* Trauma.

Complex Trauma:

Trauma that occurs repeatedly over time. It becomes complex because there's no clear beginning, middle and end contained in an identifiable period of time. Can occur in both Big *T* and Little *t* Traumas. Intensity of the experience is usually greater in Big *T* Trauma.

Big *T* Trauma:

What most people think of when we think of trauma – these include major events and can be both Complex and Single Incident, depending on the intensity of the experience.

Little *t* Trauma:

These are considered minor events and can include anything that happens in life that is emotionally impactful. Not everyone will experience these events as traumatic, but if the person experiencing it is not able to experience resolution, it has not been adequately processed.

❖ Examples ❖

Examples of Single Incident Big *T* Trauma:

- Losing a home to a natural disaster or fire
- Sudden loss of a loved one
- Car accident
- Robbery
- Rape or sexual assault

Examples Single Incident Little *t* Trauma:

- Missing a bus on the way to school
- Being passed over for a part in a play
- Breaking a bone
- Falling down a flight of stairs

Examples of Complex Big T Trauma:

- Repeated child abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, emotional)
- Childhood neglect
- Spousal abuse
- Oppression from a dominant cultural/ racial group
- Prolonged disrespecting and demeaning employer
- Going through a war
- Divorce and abusive relationships can sometimes be processed as Big T trauma, but not for everyone

Examples of Complex Little t Trauma:

- Regularly being picked last in gym class
- Difficulties with learning
- Conflict with a childhood friend
- Non-aggressive sibling rivalry

NEED HELP?

Call our care team to book a free, one-time phone consultation with one of our registered Christian counsellors. Call **1.800.661.9800** weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific time, or visit **[FocusOnTheFamily.ca/Counseling](https://www.FocusOnTheFamily.ca/Counseling)** to learn more.
