

Seeing the Silent Signs

Recognizing sexual trauma in youth and finding healing.

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Welcome! Thank You for Joining Us.



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Disclosure

We are here representing only ourselves and have no formal disclosures. It is important to note, however, that this presentation is meant to deliver general information and not provide medical advice.

Let's Start with a Personal Reflection

1

In your own words, what does the term "trauma" mean? Can you think of examples you have seen or heard about? What are the contexts in which you've heard this term used?

2

Why might this be a controversial term or idea? What disagreements have you heard- or might you imagine/expect?

3

Does this term evoke any emotional responses in you that might be useful to be aware of when you discuss it with other people?

We want to get a sense of who is in the room...if you are willing to share, why did you choose to attend this webinar?

**EVERYONE can be a
trauma-informed caregiver
(parents, coaches, teachers,
peers, family, etc.) and can
perpetuate a culture of safety
and healing.**

A Framework For Creating a Trauma-informed Community Of Prevention and Healing ¹

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



Realize

The widespread impact of trauma and how it manifests in sports environments

What is Trauma? ¹

Event

Events and circumstances cause trauma

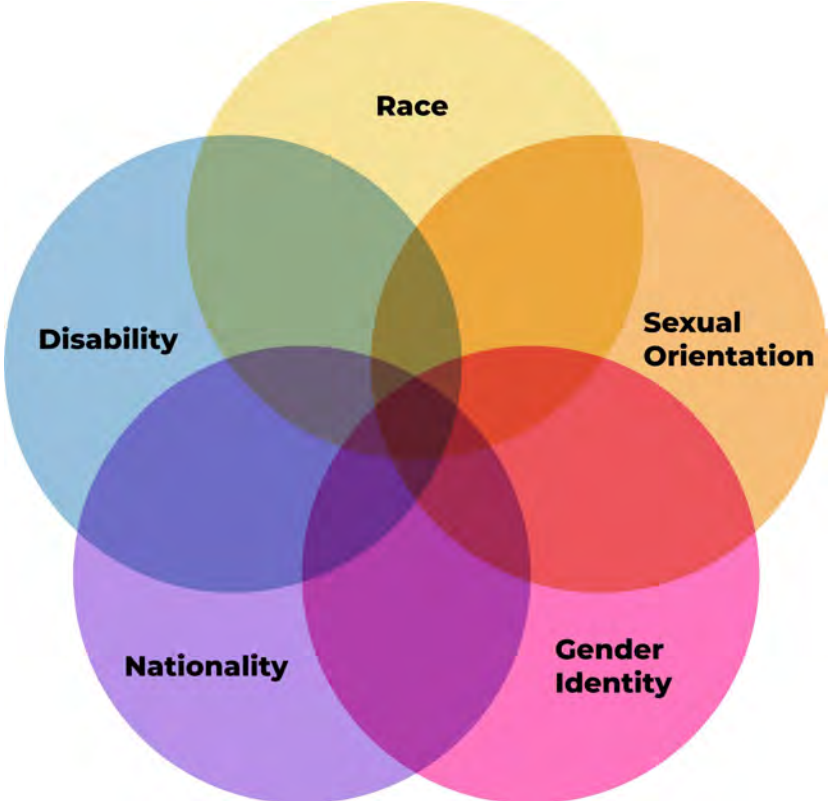
Experience of Event

An individual's experience of the event determines whether or not it is traumatic

Effects

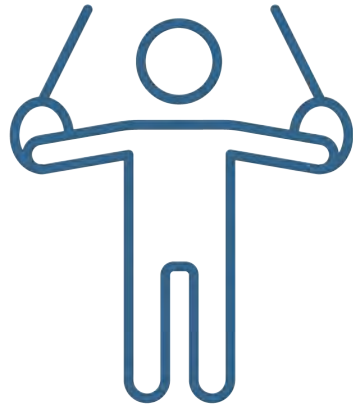
Can include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences.

Intersection of Identity and Trauma



A Focus on Trauma and Abuse in Youth Sports

This can include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or emotional/psychological abuse by a coach or other adult as well harassment or abuse by peers.²





75%

of young athletes in organized sports experienced psychological/emotional abuse at some point in their careers.³

14-29%

of children in sports experience sexual violence. This can range from sexual harassment to sexual assault.^{4 5}

Key Terms

Sexual Harassment

Defined by the International Olympic Committee as “any unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical.”⁶

Sexual Abuse

Defined by the International Olympic Committee as any conduct of a sexual nature, whether non-contact, contact or penetrative, where consent is coerced/manipulated or is not or cannot be given.”⁶

Why Might Athletes be at Higher Risk? ⁷⁻⁹



Social bubble where abusive behavior can be normalized



Parental trust of coaches as "experts"



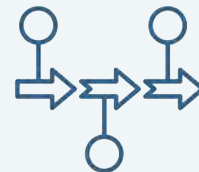
Generally accepted physical contact initiated by coach as a part of training



Extensive time spent with coach and athletes



Team "sacredness" and loyalty



Longitudinal and developmental aspect of sports training sessions

High Risk Areas for Abuse¹⁰

Teammates or peer athletes are often the perpetrators at lower levels of competition while coaches are more frequently perpetrators at higher levels of competition.⁵



**Social
Situations**



Locker Rooms



Cars



**Residential
Sports Trips**

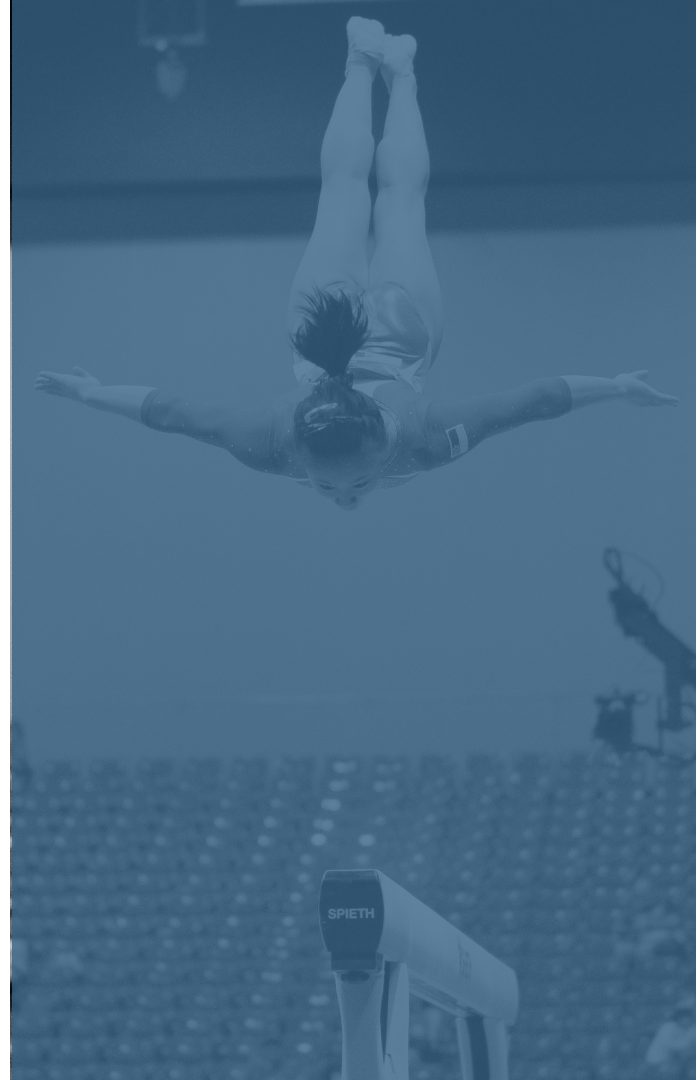
While some characteristics of youth sports may make children more vulnerable to abuse, we can also leverage elements of these spaces to create a culture of prevention and healing!

Recognize*

The signs and symptoms of trauma in youth, families, and staff

Indicators of Possible Abuse in Sports

- Missing/ avoiding practices
- Frequent illness
- Loss of interest
- Withdrawal
- Performing significantly below his/her abilities
- Wanting to drop out



Grooming Behavior ¹¹

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a young person or their family so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.

- 1 Targeting the Victim
- 2 Building Trust
- 3 Developing Isolation
- 4 Initiation of sexual abuse and securing secrecy

Recognizing that...

The same effects may be present after trauma in adults and children,

BUT

children display symptoms differently

Examples:

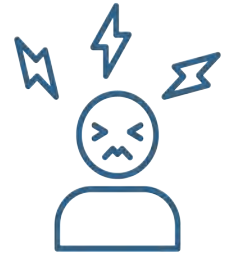
Depression ~ agitation

Anxiety ~ lack of desire to engage
in things enjoyed prior out of fear

Youth Can React To Trauma In Many Ways¹²

1

Physical



2

Emotional



3

Cognitive



Recognizing that...

“Parenting a traumatized child may require a shift from seeing a ‘bad kid’ to seeing a kid who had bad things happen.”

Trauma Reactions Vary By Age¹²

1

Young Children (Ages 0-5)

Irritability “fussiness”, frequent tantrums, clinginess, activity levels differing from peers, repeating traumatic events in play or conversation, delayed milestones

2

School-Age Children (Ages 6-12)

Difficulty in school (concentration, attention), withdrawing, frequently tearful, somatization (stomach- or head- aches), talking often of scary feelings (bedtime), difficulty transitioning tasks, fighting or trouble at school or practice

3

Teens (Ages 13-18)

Communication extremes (talking about trauma constantly or denying it entirely), defiance against rules or talking back, feeling tired all the time or sleeping more or less than peers, nightmares, risky behaviors (hypersexuality, substance use), fighting, change in desire to spend time with peers/friends, running away or trouble with the law

Respond

*By fully integrating knowledge about trauma into procedures
and daily practices*

The most important things you can do

- Create an environment where these situations can be shared without judgment
- Don't be afraid to ask questions if you notice any red flags
- Have conversations about boundaries with your child
- Reassure them that no matter what happened, it is not their fault

People Can Respond to Trauma Differently



Expressed Response Pattern

Fear, anger, anxiety expressed through crying, sobbing, restlessness, and tension



Controlled Response Pattern

Feelings are masked or hidden, and a calm, composed, or subdued affect is seen

Disclosure

“

I [thought] I can handle this myself. I'm a strong person. This is not a problem. ¹³

”

“

[I felt] guilt! I was complicit. ¹⁴

”

“

Silence assists abusers. It's the one thing they require. They need silence. ¹⁴

”

Responding to Disclosures of Trauma

1

Listen

Allow child to lead conversation, avoid non-essential questions, let the survivor know you are glad that they told you, silence is okay

2

Believe

Affirm strength and courage of the child, remind the child it is not their fault, clearly communicate that you believe them

3

Support

Remind the survivor you do not see them differently, ask "how can I be helpful?"

Responding to Disclosures of Trauma

4

Refer and Connect

- Do not jump right to problem solving mode
- Be transparent about what you are going to do with this information
 - If you suspect child abuse, it is your responsibility to report this information for the safety of the child and others
 - Give as much autonomy to the child as you can

Paths for Recovery



Resist

*Repeat victimization and retraumatization to create a culture
of safety and healing*

The first step to creating an environment of safety is to seek help when you observe red flags and report abuse when you suspect it

The process of reporting can be scary¹¹ ...but barriers are easily overcome

- ① Lack of procedures for reporting abuse
→ **knowledge of resources**
- ② Abuse viewed as an individual problem, not an institutional issue
- ③ Closed nature of institutions
→ at **"outside", unbiased institutions**
- ④ Belief system surrounding institutions
- ⑤ Internal feelings: shame, self-blame, fears of retaliation, fears of not being believed
→ **supportive to all parties**

Report: If unsure, seek professional guidance!

**National Sexual Assault
Hotline. Free.
Confidential. 24/7.**

 Call 800.656.HOPE

 Chat Now

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence

organization
<https://www.rainn.org/>

Report!


If unsure, seek professional guidance!


<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>




bottom of the page:
"how to report child abuse or neglect"



 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

 Administration for Children & Families

 Children's Bureau

Includes reporting practices by state, but you can always ask your local healthcare provider for help!



USA Gymnastics Make A Report

In case of emergency, call 911.

- If child abuse is occurring, call 911 immediately.
- If you suspect or know of child abuse, call local police and child services.

TO REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR CHILD ABUSE:

If you suspect or have knowledge of sexual misconduct, contact the **U.S. Center for SafeSport** immediately.
The U.S. Center for SafeSport reporting page may be accessed "[HERE](#)".

What is Retraumatization?

A reactivation of traumatic responses whenever individuals are exposed to their traumatic histories or triggers without sufficient tools or support to manage emotional, behavioral, and physical reactions

Resist... Fear

The MOST important protective factor for any child who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or will experience trauma is a supportive relationship!

How you can avoid retraumatization for your children

- Create an environment free from judgement and blame
- Try to give them choices if possible, recognizing that their safety comes first
- Listen first, speak second
- Be as transparent and consistent as possible
- Allow them to make decisions that they think will best support their wellbeing in the aftermath
- Offer and normalize professional help and support
- Avoid physical punishment, use partnership in solutions



**In order to
take good
care of your
child, you
must take
good care of
yourself¹¹**

- Realize, recognize, respond, resist re-traumatization in yourself
 - **Secondary trauma:** "the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another"
- We can only support and give to others from a resilient, full well

Reflect

On our own personal feelings and biases, to create a community of prevention.

Check in with Yourself

- We are the products of our own experiences and traumas
- Being aware of this and how this might influence our reactions to things is critical



Be Aware of Your Biases

- When you think about sexual abuse in sports...what are the first things that come to your head?
- Abuse can occur in any sport and crosses socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural lines
- When people think "not my club" or "not in my neighborhood" they contribute to a culture of denial where predators are protected.

Building a Resilient Community ¹

Safety

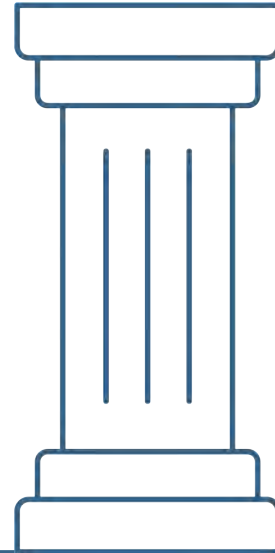
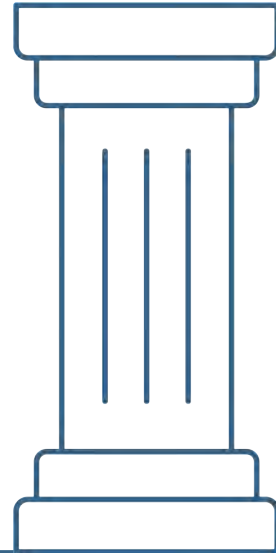
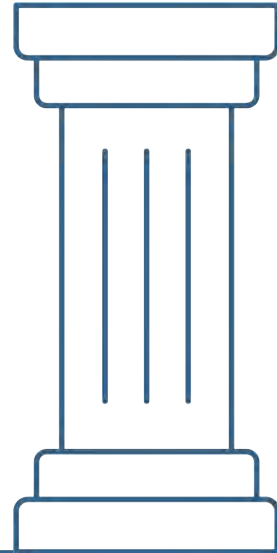
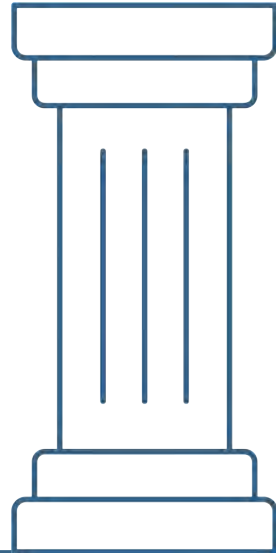
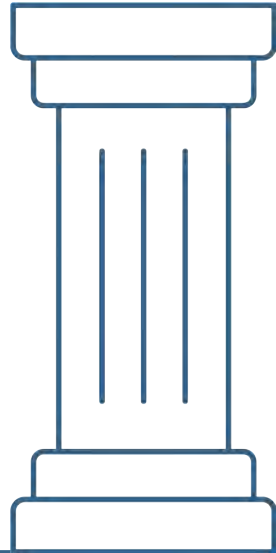
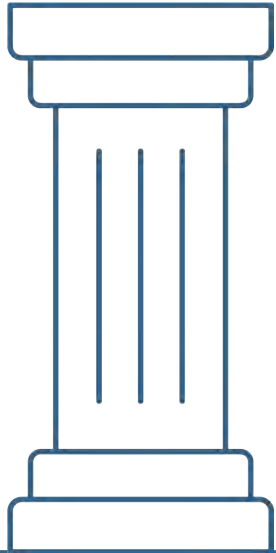
Trustworthiness

Empowerment

Collaboration

Peer Support

**History, gender,
and culture**



Resources

If you have specific abuse concerns, reach out to any of the following resources.

National Organizations



U.S. CENTER FOR
SAFESPORT
CHAMPION RESPECT. END ABUSE.



1-855-4A PARENT
(1-855-427-2736)

Asking for Help is a
Sign of Strength®

www.nationalparenthelpline.org

Operated by Parents Anonymous® Inc.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



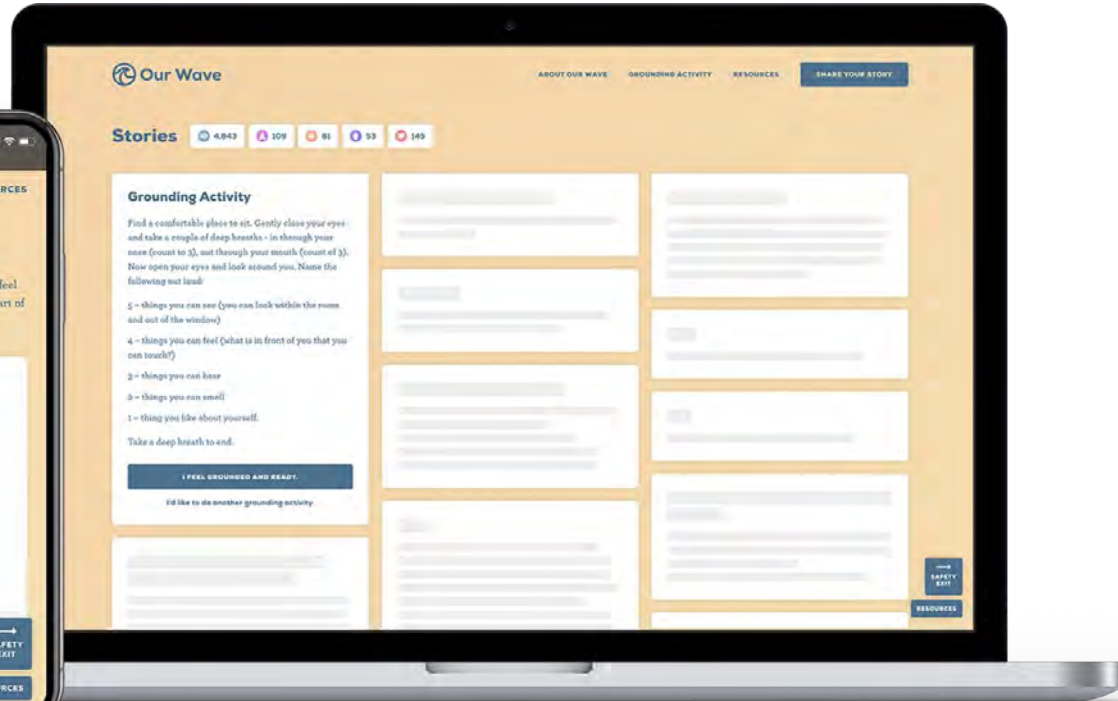
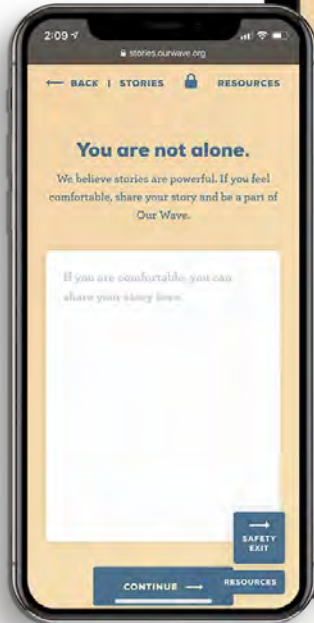
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

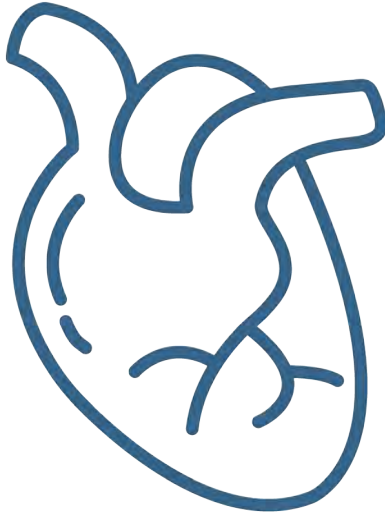
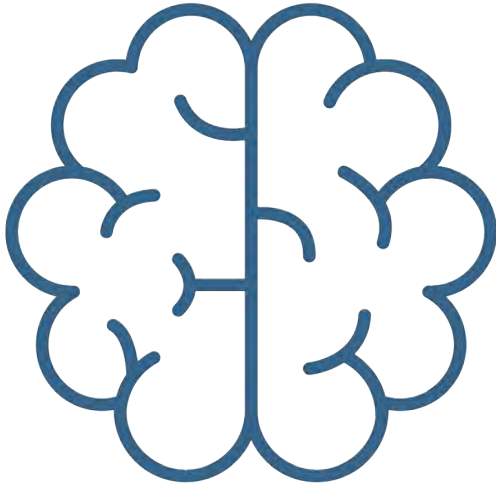


**RAINN | National
Sexual Assault
Telephone Hotline**

Our Wave



Reflections



Questions?



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For more information

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