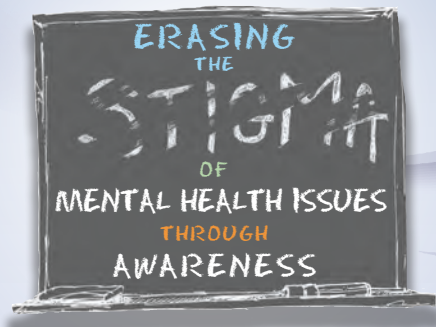
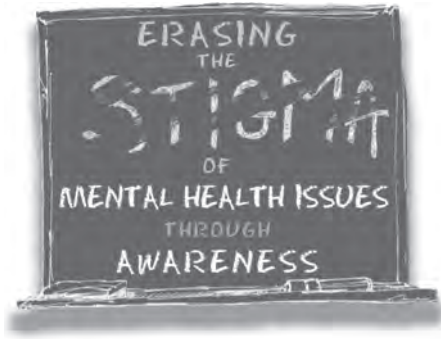


# Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens

**A TOOLBOX of REPRODUCIBLE  
ASSESSMENTS and ACTIVITIES  
for FACILITATORS**

Ester R. A. Leutenberg  
and John J. Liptak, EdD





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101 W. 2nd St., Suite 203  
Duluth, MN 55802

800-247-6789

books@wholeperson.com  
www.wholeperson.com

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for Facilitators.

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Editorial Director: Carlene Sippola  
Art Director: Joy Morgan Dey  
Assistant Art Director: Mathew Pawlak

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# Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens

When people think about and talk about the experience of trauma, there is a tendency to associate the condition with adults, however, trauma is also experienced by children and teens. For many children who experience trauma, reactions and problems do not manifest themselves until adolescence or adulthood.

For teens, the symptoms related to a traumatic event are much the same as those for adults. Effects and reactions to trauma are significant and stressful. Teens who go through a personal event involving trauma, or who are exposed to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, will continue to emotionally and physically re-experience the event and suffer from it repeatedly, possibly for a long time.

Trauma can be life-changing. The activities in the *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* can be a tremendous benefit to any teenager who has experienced stress from a traumatic episode.

People perceive many types of events as stressful and feel that stress as a result of having experienced them; however they are too numerous and too individualized to describe.

## See below for some of the causes of trauma:

- Abandonment
- Abuse
- Almost drowning
- Attack by animals
- Attack by a person
- Attempted or witnessed suicide
- Blackmail
- Bombing
- Bystander of bullying
- Car or plane crash
- Changes within the family
- Child/teen abuse
- Chronic disease or illness
- Criminal assault
- Cult activities
- Dangerous weather conditions
- Explosion
- Falling
- Fire
- Harassment by peers or adults
- Illegal issues
- Incest
- Injury
- Kidnapping
- Loss of a body part
- Loss of the use of a body part
- Mugging
- Natural disaster
- Neglect
- Observing abuse
- Physical proximity to a tragedy
- Rape
- Riots
- Robbery
- Seeing the death of someone
- Sexual abuse
- Sudden life-threatening illness
- Terrorist attack
- Threat to safety
- Threatened with a weapon
- Torture
- School shootings
- Suicidal pacts
- Victim of bullying
- Violence
- Witness to a crime
- Witnessed anything terrible
- Others

# How Does Trauma Manifest Itself?

All teens experience some type of stress, but not all teens suffer the severe disruptive stress reactions associated with traumatic events. The difference between the experience of traumatic events and regular, ordinary stressful events depends on an individual's perception of the events and the person's individualized reactions. Each person's experience is valid and treatable. For some teens, the symptoms of trauma dissipate after several months, yet some symptoms can continue to recur for years, or forever.

Because there are so many ways stress from a traumatic event can manifest itself, symptoms can be very difficult to identify and manage. It is critical to be aware of, and to understand, how symptoms are commonly experienced. Although most or all symptoms do not have to be present, those that are present will typically cause significant distress and/or impairment in a person's daily functioning.

### **Some symptoms that interfere with the daily functioning of teens:**

- Experiencing upsetting memories of the event that interfere with daily functioning
- Avoiding people and places that are reminders of the event
- Becoming angry at negative feedback
- Changing personality abruptly
- Diminishing relationships with peers
- Engaging in impulsive and risky behavior
- Engaging in out-of-place sexual behavior
- Exhibiting outbursts of anger
- Experiencing an abrupt change in personality
- Experiencing appetite changes
- Experiencing concentration, focus and memory problems
- Experiencing high levels of anxiety
- Experiencing nightmares related to the event
- Failing grades and other academic problems
- Failing to develop positive relationships with peers and adults
- Failing to fall or stay asleep
- Feeling detached from others
- Feeling emotionally numb, or avoiding thoughts and feelings that are reminders
- Feeling fatigued a lot of the time
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling jumpy and easily startled
- Feeling pain/distress when remembering the event
- Having an attitude: "I hate you" or "You can't make me"
- Having flashbacks and feelings that the event is happening again
- Lacking motivation
- Losing interest in activities that at one time were pleasurable
- Losing interest in life
- Making unlikely decisions
- Manipulating
- Not controlling reactions
- Remembering, or not, important aspects of the trauma
- Sensing that a future once imagined is no longer attainable
- Skipping school – truancy
- Starting to abuse unhealthy substances
- Unusually poor relationship with teachers
- Zoning out for long periods of time

**Losing interest in life and in activities that were once pleasurable, plus some of the above and additional symptoms, may relate to traumatic events and/or other mental health issues.**

## INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

### When Using the Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens

**Our main goal for this workbook is NOT to diagnose a mental illness,** or expect the facilitator to make that diagnosis from this workbook's content. Our goal is to touch on some of the symptoms and possibilities, create realizations, and provide coping methods which will help people to go forward and perhaps consider the possibility of the need for consideration of medications and therapy.

**Our secondary goal is also to help teens recognize that other people have the same issues,** that no shame is connected to them, and that mental health issues of any degree are not to be stigmatized nor should anyone need to feel like a victim of stereotyping. In this workbook, we use the phrase mental health issues in order to include ALL types of trauma symptoms and problems, from just losing one's temper to indicators of a serious mental illness.

### Seek Professional Help!

Teens who experience severe bouts of trauma-related symptoms may need to seek professional help from a medical or psychological professional. Some of the questions you can evaluate to determine if professional assistance is needed:

- Has the teen been experiencing these symptoms for a longer time than usual, lasting perhaps for weeks or even months?
- Are these trauma symptoms causing bigger problems at school, at a salaried or a volunteer job, at home, or in the teen's community?
- Have the person's efforts to manage the symptoms of trauma failed?
- Does the person feel hopeless and helpless in trying to change problematic symptoms after experiencing a trauma?

**Teens need to do much more than complete the assessments, activities and exercises contained in this workbook if they have serious mental issues. All trauma-related symptoms and problems need to be thoroughly evaluated by a medical professional and then treated with an appropriate combination of medication and group and/or individual therapy.**

### CONFIDENTIALITY

**Instruct teens to use NAME CODES when writing or speaking about anyone.** Teens completing the activities in this workbook might be asked to respond to assessment items and journal about relationships. Before you begin using the materials in this workbook explain to teens that confidentiality is a term for any action that preserves the privacy of other people. Maintaining confidentiality is extremely important, for it shows respect for others and allows – even encourages – teens to explore their feelings without hurting anyone's feelings or fearing gossip, harm or retribution.

In order to maintain this confidentiality, ask teens to assign a NAME CODE for each person they write about as they complete the various activities in the workbook. For example, **a friend named Pat who Loves To Sing** might have the code name of **LTS** for a particular exercise. In order to protect their friends' identities, they will not use people's actual names or initials, just NAME CODES.

### Some Teen Reactions to a Trauma

- Constant talk about the traumatic event.
- Demonstrate increased impulsive and/or rebellious behaviors.
- Display self-absorption.
- Experiences difficulties with short-term memory, focusing, concentration and problem solving.
- Feels emotions such as depression, sadness, anger, anxiety, hopelessness, and/or guilt.
- Give up responsibilities.
- Harbors feelings of hopelessness.
- Has a pessimistic outlook on life.
- Have disturbed sleeping patterns.
- Isolate from people and events.
- Lash out with excessive aggression, and violence.
- Lose interest in school, friends, and life.
- Need independence.
- Overreact to minor irritations.
- React by out-of-the-ordinary sexual behavior.
- Refusal to talk about the traumatic event. Keeping it all inside.
- Repetitively think about the traumatic event.
- Self-harm in attempts to experience and express feelings.
- Show protective behavior of family and friends.
- Turn to substances as a means of escape.
- Withdraw from family and friends.

### Helping Teens Cope with Reactions to a Trauma

**Teens who have survived trauma display complex sets of symptoms that need to be addressed if they are to heal. Following are some of the ways that facilitators can assist their clients to process traumatic events, learn to manage the symptoms of trauma, and begin the transition to a more satisfied life.**

- Help participants learn as much as possible about reactions to trauma.
- Help participants explore their traumatic event in a structured, safe way. Consult a mental health professional to decide if the process will be therapeutic for an individual.
- Help participants accept their traumatic events and the impact these events have on their lives while focusing on the importance of taking actions to cope with their reactions to traumatic stress.
- Help participants see the importance of being proactive in coping with the stress associated with their traumatic events.
- Help participants understand that recovery from traumatic events will not happen immediately, but will happen a little at a time.
- Help participants accept that the purpose may not necessarily be to forget their traumatic events, but rather to accept what happened and learn to cope with the issues they are experiencing.
- Help participants understand and develop a plan for recognizing and coping with both the physical, emotional, psychological and interpersonal symptoms that they are experiencing.
- Help participants learn to identify the triggers that bring on reactions to their traumatic stress, and learn to cope with these triggers.
- Help participants learn skills for making the transition to a more manageable and satisfying life.



## How the *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* Can Help

Teens who have experienced a traumatic event are likely to develop a variety of symptoms associated with that event. The assessments and activities in this workbook are designed to provide facilitators with a wide variety of tools to use in helping teens manage their lives more effectively. Many choices for self-exploration are provided for facilitators to determine which tools best suit the unique needs of their clients.

The purpose of this workbook is to provide a user-friendly guide to short-term assessments and activities to help teens manage their issues related to trauma and to experience a greater sense of well-being. In addition, this workbook is designed to provide facilitators and participants with tools and information needed to overcome the stigma attached to the reactions of trauma issues.

In order to help participants successfully deal with reactions to traumatic events, facilitators need to have a variety of assessments and activities to help their participants open-up and begin to manage the symptoms of traumatic issues. The *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* provides assessments and self-guided activities to help participants understand the intensity of their issues and how they can establish ways to lead a more effective life.

### When to Worry?

The symptoms related to traumatic events can be very complex and difficult to cope with. The good news is that teens can develop symptom management skills and progress toward more satisfying lives. The symptoms that accompany traumatic event issues that teens deal with daily can be very frightening. Teens who experience this over time are at risk of having serious mental issues. Participants who have serious mental issues need to do much more than complete the assessments, activities and exercises contained in this workbook. They need to be taken seriously. Facilitators can take an active role in their finding help immediately. All disturbances of thoughts, feelings and actions need to be thoroughly evaluated by a medical professional, and then treated with an appropriate combination of medication and group and/or individual therapy.

### Suicide Warning!

Many trauma survivors have suicidal thoughts and make plans to die by suicide. Sometimes they think that the only way to escape the physical, psychological, and emotional pain is to attempt suicide. Remember to take any talk about suicide or suicidal acts very seriously.

#### Some Signs of Suicidal Thoughts:

- Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities of interest in the past
- Increasing use of harmful substances
- Giving away possessions
- Expressing severe hopelessness about the future
- Making a plan for dying by suicide
- Calling or visiting people to say goodbye
- Getting affairs in order
- Engaging in reckless actions
- Talking about killing or harming self
- Expressing feelings of being trapped with no way out
- Purchasing a weapon



# Format of the *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens*

The *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an established mental health issue program. You may administer any of the assessments and the guided self-exploration activities to an individual or a group with whom you are working, and you may administer any of the assessments and activities over one or more days. Feel free to pick and choose those that best fit the outcomes you desire. The purpose of this workbook is to provide facilitators who work with individuals and groups who may be experiencing issues related to traumatic events with a series of user-friendly reproducible activities to supplement their work with participants. Because these activity pages are reproducible, they can be photocopied as is, or you may adapt them by whiting out and writing in your own changes to suit the need of each group, using that page as your master to be photocopied for each participant.

### Assessments

Assessments establish a behavioral baseline from which facilitators and participants can gauge progress toward identified goals. This workbook will supplement the facilitator's work by providing assessments designed to measure behavioral baselines for evaluating client change. In order to do so, assessments with scoring directions and interpretation materials begin each module. The authors recommend that you begin presenting each topic by asking participants to complete the assessment. Facilitators can choose one or more, or all of the activities relevant to their participants' specific needs and concerns.

### **Each of the awareness modules contained in this book begin with an assessment for these purposes:**

- Help facilitators to develop a numerical baseline of behavior, attitude and personality characteristics before they begin their plan of treatment.
- Help facilitators gather valuable information about their participants.
- Help facilitators in the measurement of change over time.
- Use as pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in behavior, attitude, and personality.
- Help facilitators identify patterns that are negatively affecting a participant.
- Prompt insight and behavioral change.
- Assist participants to feel a part of the treatment-planning process.
- Provide participants with a starting point to begin to learn more about themselves and their strengths and limitations.

### **Assessments are a great aid in developing plans for effective change. Be aware of the following when administering, scoring, and interpreting the assessments in this workbook:**

- The purpose of these assessments is not to pigeonhole teens, but to allow them to explore various elements of themselves and their situations.
- This book contains self-assessments and not tests. Traditional tests measure knowledge or right or wrong responses. For the assessments provided in this workbook, remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes.
- The assessments in this workbook have face value, but have not been formally normed for validity and reliability.
- The assessments in this workbook are based on self-reported data. In other words, the accuracy and usefulness of the information is dependent on the information that participants honestly provide about themselves. Assure them that they do not need to share their information with anyone. They can be honest!
- Remind participants that the assessments are exploratory exercises and not a judgment of who they are as human beings.
- The assessments are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, refer them to an appropriate medical professional.

*(Format continued on the next page)*

### Format of the *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* (Continued)

## Assessment Script

When administering the assessments contained in this workbook, please remember that the assessments can be administered, scored, and interpreted by the client. If working in a group, facilitators should circulate among participants as they complete assessments to ensure that there are no questions. If working with an individual client, facilitators can use the instruction collaboratively.

**Please note that as your participants begin the assessments in this workbook, the participants' instructions italicized below are meant to be a guide, so please do not feel you must read or say them word for word.**

Tell your participants: *“You will be completing a quick assessment related to the topics we are discussing. Please remember that assessments are powerful tools if you are honest with yourself. Take your time and be truthful in your responses so that your results are an honest reflection of you. Your level of commitment in completing the assessments honestly will determine how much you learn about yourself.”*

Allow participants to turn to the first page of their assessment and read the instructions silently to themselves. Then tell them: *“All of the assessments have similar formats, but they have different scales, responses, scoring instructions and methods for interpretation. If you do not understand how to complete the assessment, ask me before you turn the page to begin.”*

Then tell them: *“Because there is no time limit for completing the assessments, take your time and work at your own pace. Do not answer the assessments as you think others would like you to answer them or how you think others see you. These assessments are for you to reflect on your life and explore some of the barriers that are keeping you from living a more satisfying life. Before completing each assessment, be sure to read the instructions.”*

Make sure that nobody has a question, then explain, *“Learning about yourself can be a positive and motivating experience. Don't stress about taking the assessments or discovering your results. Just respond honestly and learn as much about yourself as you can.”*

Tell participants to turn the page and begin answering with Question 1. Allow sufficient time for all participants to complete the assessment. Answer any questions people have. As people begin to finish, read through the instructions for scoring the assessment. Have participants begin to score their own assessment and transfer their scores for interpretation. Make sure that nobody has a question about how to do the scoring.

Review the purpose of the interpretation table included after each assessment. Tell the participants: *“Remember, this assessment was not designed to label you. Rather, it was designed to develop a baseline of your behaviors. Regardless of how you score on an assessment, consider it a starting point upon which you can develop healthier habits. Take your time, reflect on your results, and note how they compare to what you already know about yourself.”*

After participants have completed, scored, and interpreted the assessment, facilitators can use the self-exploration activities included in each module to supplement their traditional tools and techniques to help participants function more effectively.

*(Continued on the next page)*

## Format of the *Managing Trauma Workbook for Teens* (Continued)

### Self-Exploration Activities

This workbook will provide self-exploration activities that can be used to help manage trauma issues. These activities, included after each of the assessments, will prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. They use a variety of formats to accommodate all learning styles, foster introspection, and promote pro-social behaviors, life skills and coping skills. The activities in each module correlate to the assessments to enable you to identify and select activities quickly and easily.

Self-exploration activities assist participants in self-reflection, enhance self-knowledge, identify potential ineffective behaviors, and teach more effective ways of coping with irrational behaviors. They are designed to help participants make a series of discoveries that lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help participants grow personally and to learn important life skills. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools are designed to promote insight and self-growth.

Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided for you to pick and choose the activities that are most needed by your participants and the ones that will be most appealing to them. The unique features of the exploration activities make them user-friendly and appropriate for a variety of individual sessions and group sessions.

#### **In these activities, participants will have a variety of opportunities:**

- To explore how they could make changes in their lives to feel better. These activities are designed to help participants reflect on their current life situations, discover new ways of living more effectively, and implement changes in their lives to accommodate these changes.
- To journal as a way of enhancing their self-awareness. Through journaling prompts, participants will be able to write about the thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that have contributed to, or are currently contributing to, their current life situation. Through journaling, participants are able to safely address their concerns, hopes and dreams for the future.
- To explore their reactions to trauma by examining their past for negative patterns and learning new ways of dealing more effectively in the future. These activities are designed to help participants reflect on their lives in ways that will allow them to develop healthier lifestyles.

## The Stigma Awareness Approach

It is important that facilitators keep an open mind about mental health issues and the stigma attached to people experiencing these issues. Rather than thinking of people as having a mental disorder, or being mentally ill, the *Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues through Awareness* series is designed to help facilitators to diminish the stigma that surrounds people who are experiencing reactions to traumatic events. Stigmas occur when people are unduly labeled, which sets the stage for discrimination and humiliation. Facilitators are able to help to erase the stigma of mental illness through enhanced awareness of the factors that activate the issues, accentuate the depth of the issues, and accelerate awareness and understanding.

To assist you, a section titled *Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues* is included to provide activities for helping to erase the stigma associated with reactions to trauma issues.

## The Awareness Modules

The reproducible awareness modules contained in this workbook will help you identify and select assessments and activities easily and quickly:

### **Module I: My Trauma Story**

This module will help teens share all aspects of their story in a safe way and put it into a positive perspective.

### **Module II: My Escape-ism**

This module will help teens explore the various ways that they avoid and numb themselves to forget their traumatic experience, and provides tools for coping with these symptoms.

### **Module III: My Transition**

This module will help teens explore ways that they can effectively manage trauma and move on from their traumatic experience.

### **Module IV: Tools for Coping**

This module will help teens explore the various ways that they re-experience their trauma and provides tools for coping with these symptoms.

### **Module V: Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues**

This module will help teens explore the stigma of having experienced a traumatic event in their lives and the impact that the stigma has on them.

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**Our thanks to these professionals who make us look good  
and who personify people who are dedicated  
to erasing the stigma of mental health issues.**

Art Director – Joy Dey

Assistant Art Director – Mathew Pawlak

Editorial Director – Carlene Sippola

Editor: Eileen Regen, M.ED., CJE – Lifelong Teacher

Reviewer: Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C – Skills Expert

Reviewer: Nadine Hartig, Ph.D., LPC, LCSW – Trauma Counselor

Reviewer: Beth Jennings, CTEC – School Counselor

Reviewer: Niki Tilicki, MAED – School Teacher and Counselor

Reviewer: Jay Leutenberg, CASA – Proofreader Extraordinaire

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# **My Trauma Story**

Telling one’s story is healing! Many people who experience trauma feel guilty, ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone their story. A great way to tell your story safely is by writing it out.

**In the space that follows, write about the trauma that you experienced in as much detail as possible. Use the back of this page if you need additional space. Use Name Codes.**

## Thoughts About My Trauma - PAGE 1

Think about the trauma you experienced.

Journaling about that experience can help make meaning of the event and reduce distress.

**Below, journal about your trauma. Use Name Codes.**

When did the event happen? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was happening before the event? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How were you feeling on the day of the trauma? (*happy, sad, normal, jittery, jumpy, worried, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_

Explain your feelings. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Continued on the next page)*