

OBSERVABLE SIGNS OF TRAUMA THAT MAY INDICATE FAMILY VIOLENCE

Table 1: Signs of trauma in adult victims

Form	Signs of trauma that may indicate family violence is occurring for adult victims	
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... bruising ... fractures ... chronic pain (neck, back) ... fresh scars or minor cuts ... terminations of pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... complications during pregnancy ... gastrointestinal disorders ... sexually transmitted diseases ... strangulation
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... depression ... anxiety ... self-harming behaviour ... eating disorders ... phobias ... somatic disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... sleep problems ... impaired concentration ... harmful alcohol use ... licit and illicit drug use ... physical exhaustion ... suicide attempts
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... fear ... shame ... anger ... no support networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness ... feeling disassociated and emotionally numb
Social/financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... homelessness ... unemployment ... financial debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... no friends or family support ... isolation ... parenting difficulties
Demeanour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... unconvincing explanations of any injuries ... describe a partner as controlling or prone to anger ... be accompanied by their partner, who does most of the talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... anxiety in the presence of a partner ... recent separation or divorce ... needing to be back home by a certain time and becoming stressed about this ... reluctance to follow advice

Table 2: General signs of trauma in a child or young person

General observable signs of trauma for a child or young person that may indicate family violence is occurring

Signs of trauma can manifest as either physical, emotional or behavioural and can include:

- ... Being very passive and compliant
- ... Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- ... Demonstrating fear of particular people and places
- ... Poor sleep patterns and emotional dis-regulation
- ... Becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- ... Developmental regression (i.e. reverting to bed-wetting)
- ... Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- ... Fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to have occurred accidentally
- ... Poisoning
- ... Internal injuries
- ... Wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days in an attempt to hide bruising or other injury
- ... Being excessively friendly to strangers
- ... Being excessively clingy to certain adults
- ... A strong desire to please or receive validation from certain adults
- ... Excessive washing or bathing
- ... Unclear boundaries and understanding of relationships between adults and children
- ... Excessive sexualised behaviour/advanced sexual knowledge
- ... Violence or sexualised behaviour to other children.

Table 3: Signs of trauma for a child (unborn to young child)

Observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence for:

an unborn child	a baby (under 18 months)	a toddler
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Poor growth and neural development caused by rushes of maternal adrenalin and cortisol ... Injuries sustained via injury to mother or by the perpetrator targeting the unborn child directly (such as inflicting blows to mother's abdominal area). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Excessive crying ... Excessive passivity ... Underweight for age ... Significant sleep and/or feeding difficulties ... Reactions to loud voices or noises ... Extreme wariness of new people ... No verbal 'play' (such as imitating sounds) ... Frequent illness ... Anxiety, overly clingy to primary caregiver 	<p>As for baby (under 18 months), and also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Excessive irritability ... Excessive compliance ... Poor language development ... Delayed mobility ... Blood in nappy, underwear

Table 4: Age-related signs of trauma that may indicate family violence in a child or young person

Many indicators may be expressions of trauma that may be observed through the presentation, behaviour or circumstances of a child or young person. Some indicators are related to trauma from specific forms of family violence, including sexual abuse (indicated by #) or emotional abuse (indicated by *), or indicate signs of neglect.

Observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence for:

a pre-schooler	a primary school-aged child	an adolescent
... Extreme clinginess	... Rebelliousness, defiant behaviour	... As for primary school aged children, and also:
... Significant sleep# and/or eating difficulties	... Limited tolerance and poor impulse control	... School refusal/avoidance (absenteeism/disengagement)
... Poor concentration in play	... Temper tantrums or irritability, being aggressive or demanding*	... Criminal or antisocial behaviours, including using violence against others
... Inability to empathise with other people	... Physical abuse or cruelty of others, including pets	... Eating disorders
... Frequent illness	... Avoidance of conflict	... Substance abuse
... Poor language development and/or significant use of 'baby talk'	... Showing low self-esteem*	... Depression
... Displaying maladaptive behaviour such as frequent rocking, sucking and biting#	... Extremely compliant behaviour, being passive, tearful or withdrawn*	... Suicidal ideation
... Aggression towards others	... Excessively oppositional or argumentative behaviour	... Risk-taking behaviours
... Adjustment problems (for example, significant difficulties moving from kindergarten to school)	... Risk-taking behaviours that have severe or life-threatening consequences	... Anxiety
... Anti-social play or lack of interest in engaging with others	... Lack of interest in social activities	... Pregnancy
	... Delayed or poor language skills*	... Controlling or manipulative behaviour
	... Experiencing problems with schoolwork#	... Obsessive behaviour
	... Poor social competence (few or no friends, not getting on well with peers, difficulties relating to adults)*#	... Homelessness or frequent changes in housing arrangements
	... Acting like a much younger child*	
	... Poor school performance	
	... Poor coping skills	
	... Sleep issues#	
	... Bed wetting#	
	... Excessive washing	
	... Frequent illness	
	... Complaining of headaches or stomach pains#	
	... Self-harm	
	... Displaying maladaptive behaviour#	
	... Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge unusual for the child's age#	
	... Telling someone sexual abuse has occurred#	
	... Complaining of pain going to the toilet	
	... Enacting sexual behaviour with other children	
	... Excessive masturbation	

Table 5: Signs and indicators of neglect

Observable signs and indicators of neglect of a child or young person

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| ... Being frequently hungry | ... Being abandoned by their parents |
| ... Being poorly nourished | ... Stealing food |
| ... Having poor hygiene | ... Staying at school outside school hours |
| ... Wearing inappropriate clothing, for example, wearing summer clothes in winter | ... Often being tired and/or falling asleep in class |
| ... Being unsupervised for long periods | ... Abusing alcohol or drugs |
| ... Not having their medical needs attended to | ... Displaying aggressive behaviour |
| | ... Not getting on well with peers. |
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