Recognising & responding to trauma

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Energy Charter Resilience Community of Practice
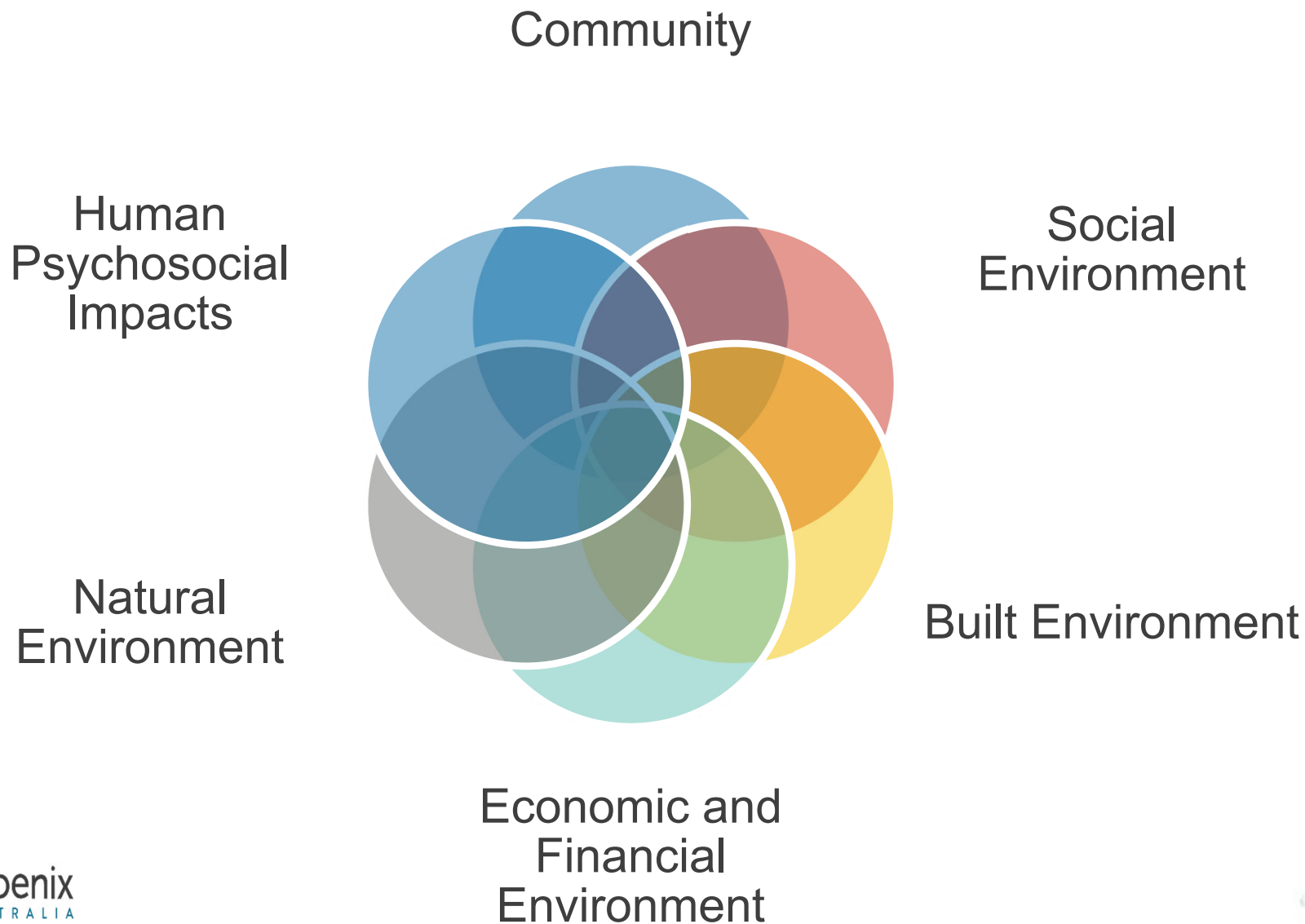
About Phoenix Australia

Understanding trauma. Renewing lives.

- Australian and international leader in mental health following trauma and adversity

- Affiliated with Department of Psychiatry, University of Melbourne

- Working to improve outcomes for individuals, organisations, government and communities impacted by trauma and adversity

- Through
  - Policy and service development advice and translation
  - Training and workforce development
  - Research and evaluation
  - Clinical services

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Multi-faceted impacts of disaster

Community

Human Psychosocial Impacts

Social Environment

Natural Environment

Built Environment

Economic and Financial Environment

Consider your role – first point of contact

- Call centre operators taking calls from disaster impacted individuals.

- Field crews responsible for disconnecting and reconnecting essential services after a disaster event.

- Community liaison staff attending evacuation or recovery centres.

- Incident response team leaders or management responsible for coordinating incident response and recovery activities.

What implications does this have when using a trauma lens?

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Why is understanding trauma impacts useful?

- Lack the training and feel unprepared can have negative impacts for mental health and wellbeing of both parties
- Helps clarify boundaries of role so not left trying to 'do it all'
- Acknowledges the dual role for many – impacted and helper

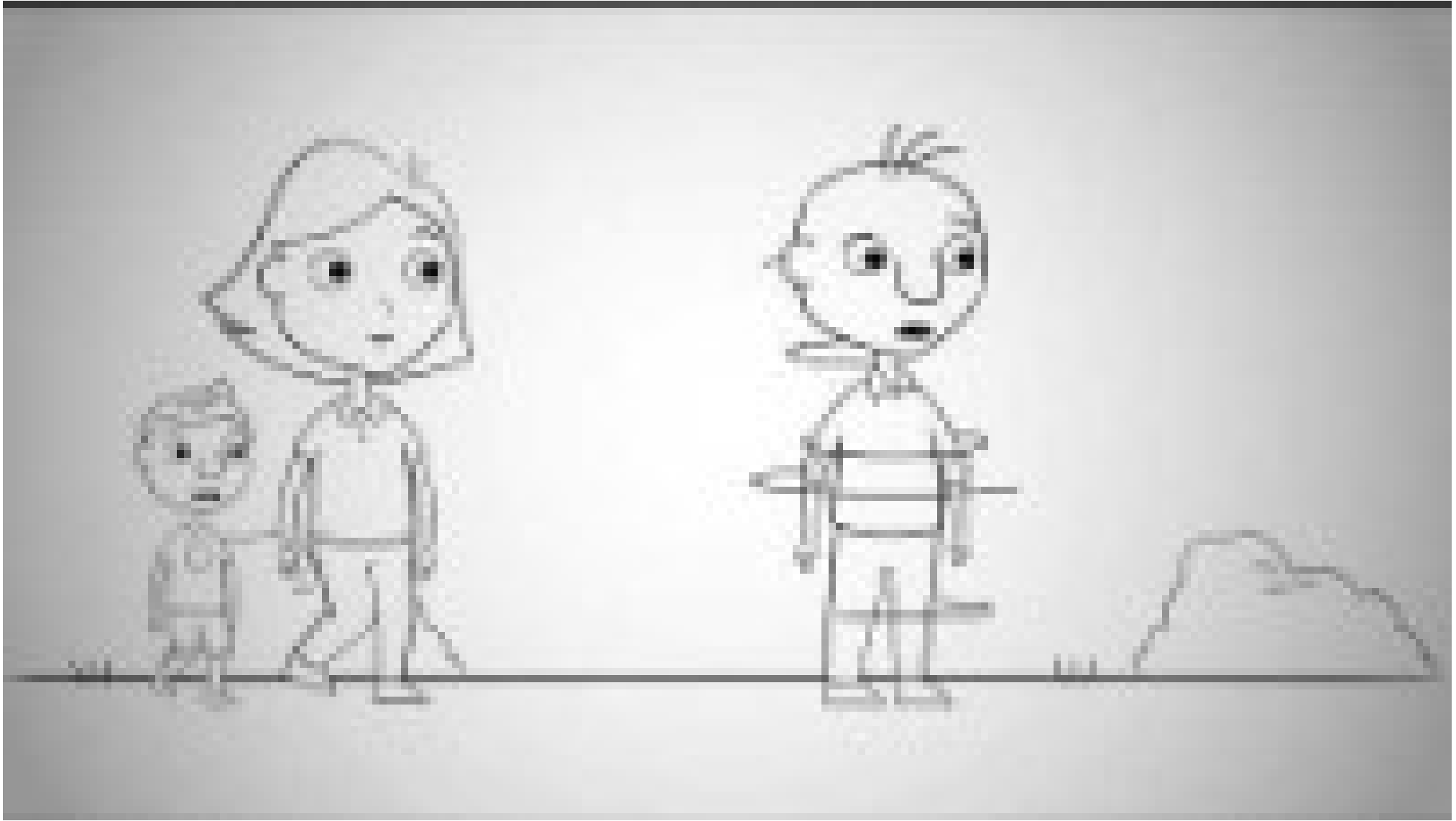*This is **not** about making you a counsellor*

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5

Common reactions to trauma

Changes in mental or cognitive capacity

Physiological or bodily changes
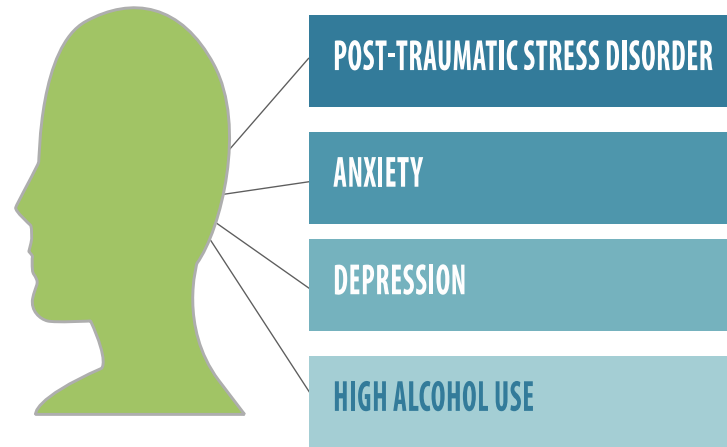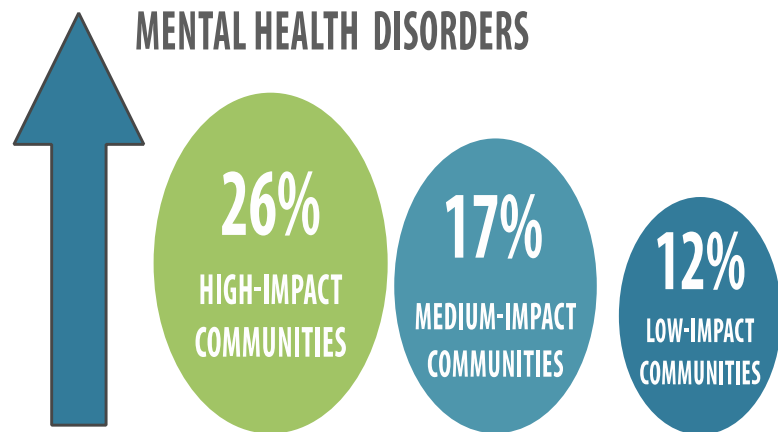
Changes in behaviour; and

Emotional changes.

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Common reactions

Mental or cognitive changes	Physical changes	Behavioural changes	Emotional changes
Reduced concentration and memory	Feeling keyed up or on edge	Avoiding reminders of trauma: people, places, situations	Frustration, anger, anxiety, fear, sadness, helplessness or hopelessness
Poor planning and problem-solving	Having aches, pains and headaches	Becoming withdrawn	Guilt and shame
Difficulty making decisions	Feeling jumpy	Increased conflict with others	Numbness or detachment
Thinking the world is unsafe, people can't be trusted, the self is unworthy or incompetent	Difficulty sleeping	Increased substance use e.g., alcohol and other drugs	Feeling out of control or as if going crazy
Intrusive images or nightmares		Engaging in risk-taking behaviour	

What might these look like to you?

- Challenging behaviour such as:
    - Aggression and irritability
    - Extreme emotions
    - Distressed people acting out
    - Physical threats to self or others
    - Difficulty explaining their situation
    - Difficulty following instructions (especially verbal)
    - Disorganisation and forgetfulness

- While some behaviours should not be tolerated, viewing them through a trauma lens can be helpful for the worker and the trauma-impacted person

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MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

26%
HIGH-IMPACT
COMMUNITIES

17%
MEDIUM-IMPACT
COMMUNITIES

12%
LOW-IMPACT
COMMUNITIES

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

ANXIETY

DEPRESSION

HIGH ALCOHOL USE

10 YEARS

BeyondBushfires
community | resilience | recovery

Best practice approach to psychosocial support after disaster

WHO international guidance

IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings

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Clinical services (eg, clinical mental health care*)

Focused psychosocial supports (eg, basic emotional and practical support to selected individuals or families)

Strengthening community and family supports (eg, activating social networks and supportive child-friendly spaces)

Social considerations in basic services and security (eg, advocacy for good humanitarian practice: basic services that are safe, socially appropriate, and that protect dignity)

Psychological First Aid

International best practice approach for providing advice and support after trauma

It's practical and flexible, can be used by anyone with the appropriate training

Aims to:

- Reduce distress and foster coping
- Ensure safety, provide emotional comfort and support
- Offer practical advice and assistance

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What are the principles of PFA?

What are the key actions of PFA?

Prepare
- Learn about trauma and its impacts
- Engage in self-care and maintain health and wellbeing
- Learn about the event

Look
- Identify immediate safety concerns
- Observe basic physical needs
- Look for distress reactions

Listen
- Listen actively
- Gather information about needs or concerns
- Help calm

Link
- Help people to solve problems
- Connect with social supports and other services

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Resources

https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/disaster-hub/

ONLINE

Psychological First Aid

Develop skills in Psychological First Aid and gain the confidence to support people who experience stress, trauma and adversity.

Find out more →

ONLINE

Trauma-informed Care

Ensure that people (who have experienced trauma) have safe and positive experiences of service delivery, and the care you provide creates opportunities for healing and growth.

Find out more →

ONLINE

Vicarious Trauma

Develop individual and organisational strategies to strengthen resilience and mitigate the risks of developing Vicarious Trauma in the workplace

Find out more →

ONLINE

Specialist Training for Mental Health Professionals

Training on topics such as assessment, formulation, and modalities such as Trauma-focussed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Find out more →

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https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/education-training

Peer support resources

Peer Support Guidelines

WHO IS THIS FOR? ⑦

📄 Find out more →

Multi-Agency Peer Support Report

WHO IS THIS FOR? ⑦

📄 Download →

Peer Support Program Self-Evaluation Tool

The purpose of the tool is to aid organisations to assess their peer support program against the refined best practice guidelines. It presents the core requirements needed to meet best practice, across 11 program elements. The first 10 of these are common to most peer support programs. The final element is specific to organisations that are considering a multi-agency approach to peer support.

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Helping you to be trauma-aware

Benchmarking against international standards

Organisations have a responsibility to ensure that they employ best practice approaches to recognising psychological hazards in the workplace, minimising the risk of staff exposure and managing potential impacts on staff.

Implementing policy and best practices

Early intervention and evidence-based care achieve the best outcomes for people affected by trauma. Help your team to perform at their peak by ensuring that your mental health policies and practices are up to date.

Supporting employee health support

Access to a range of high quality mental health services for your team contributes to an attractive employee proposition, helping to reduce absenteeism and boost productivity.

Undertaking Research

Phoenix Australia provides academic consulting services to help you understand mental health, in the context of your workplace or organisation.

Read more ⌄

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