

# A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO SOCIO-CULTURAL TRAUMA IN CHILDREN & THEIR FAMILIES

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## ISSUE IMPORTANCE

*Socio-cultural trauma is a form of trauma that is not often talked about yet experienced daily by marginalized and oppressed people. The impact of toxic stress on people living with unresolved trauma has been observed to trigger a trauma response of either fight, flight, or freeze. In people of color (BIPOC), these responses have often been mislabeled as defiant rather than protective, oppositional rather than guarded, disinterested but more accurately assessed as emotionally numb. Among mental health providers, awareness of socio-cultural trauma is vital, and treatments must be based on a comprehensive, culturally responsive, trauma-informed approach for individuals, families, and children.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sociocultural trauma refers to trauma faced by members of a marginalized group. Sociocultural trauma can have cumulative effects on physical, health, mental health, and health behaviors.
- A trauma response can be inherited from one's parents or from everyday societal factors & events.
- Individuals' responses to trauma can be further precipitated by biased treatment that one's parents, community, or ethnic group have experienced throughout history.
- Culture influences how traumatic events are understood, beliefs regarding personal responsibility, and the acceptance of symptoms and help-seeking.



## TYPES OF TRAUMA

### SOCIOCULTURAL TRAUMA

caused by physical, social or psychological assaults to an individual or group based on their racial or ethnic identity, socio-economic status, gender identity, abilities, religious belief or lifestyle. Socio-cultural based assaults can be implicit, making them unpredictable and unavoidable.

### HISTORICAL TRAUMA

results from prolonged events or experiences that have an impact across generations within a group or community, including major losses and assaults on culture and well-being such as slavery, displacement, massacres, genocides, and cultural and racial oppression. The trauma response can be seen among individuals generations after the initial event.

### RACIAL TRAUMA

experienced as a result of witnessing or experiencing racism, discrimination, or structural prejudice. Racial trauma is experienced collectively, not just individually. The racism that motivates the trauma doesn't end with a single event or point in life.; rather it spreads across multiple generations.



# WHAT IS CULTURAL HUMILITY?

## Tenet 1: Critical Self-Reflection

- Awareness of Biases
  - Who are you surrounded by?
  - What are your values & culture?
- Recognition
  - What is your perspective on diverse groups?
  - How was it shaped?
  - How does your perspective impact interactions?
- Your Role
  - How does who you are show up in your role?
  - What do you need to learn?

Cultural Humility is a **lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique** whereby the individual not only learns about *another's culture*, but starts with an *examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities*.

**Tenet 2: Recognition & Mitigation of Power Imbalances**

**Tenet 3: Developing Mutually Beneficial Partnerships with Communities**







## Steps for Working with Families Impacted by Racial Trauma

- Step 1:** Work with the family in a culturally inclusive & humble way.
- Step 2:** Include family & community elders (as identified by the family) to coach and model how to talk to children about race-based trauma.
- Step 3:** Affirm and acknowledge racism, its history, and its impact. It is real!
- Step 4:** Acknowledge your own power and privilege in society
- Step 5:** Take an active anti-racist stance in your work.

## INTERVENTIONS

- Clinical Evidence-Based Interventions
  - Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Cognitive Processing Therapy
  - Exposure Therapy
  - Narrative Therapy
  - Parent-Child or Family Therapy
- Cultural Adaptations:
  - Racial socialization approaches
  - Spirituality
- Collective Healing
- Integrate social, historical, and cultural factors within the developmental process for youth

## STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT TOOLS ON RACIAL TRAUMA

-  [UConn Racial/Stress & Trauma Survey \(UnRESTS\)](#)
-  [Everyday Discrimination Scale \(EDS\)](#)
-  [Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale \(TSDS\)](#)
-  [Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale \(RBTSSS\)](#)



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