

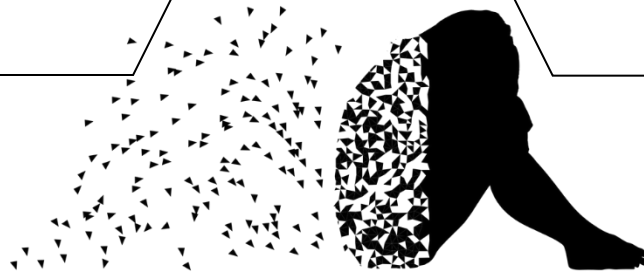
Avoidance & Negative Thoughts

Why does it happen?

Children may have feelings, thoughts, expectations and beliefs that can result from the bad things they have lived through.

Some common negative feelings include anger, shame, fear, or guilt about what happened; feeling cut off from people or not being able to feel happy, calm or loved; lasting worries and lack of interest in participating in things that used to be fun

“Avoidance” means staying away from things that make you think of the bad event. It is a defense mechanism to avoid internal reminders (negative thoughts) or external reminders, such as sounds, smells, physical touch or places.



What can I do?

Help your child look at their story from a new perspective. Listen to them tell their story. Validate the emotions attached to their story. Provide information, when age-appropriate, to help him or her stop blaming themselves. You don't need to have all the answers. Listen, validate and re-assure.

Slowly try to unpack and disprove your child's negative beliefs. Fill them with positive beliefs such as “you are safe”, “you are capable” and “you are loved”.

Even though the child is acting out with you, their behaviors may not be about you. Remind yourself that children who have experienced trauma learned how to survive in a bad situation. This shows that they are resilient, not broken. They now need to learn how to act in positive environments where adults will meet their needs.

SAFETY

Symptoms like these may be worrisome if coupled with other symptoms such interfering with your child's development or relationships. If you are concerned about self-harm or harm to others or if the negative thought/mood persists over a long time, be sure to call 911, mobile crisis (1-877-382-1609) or take the child to the emergency department.