



CORE CONCEPT 2: LIFE EXPERIENCE

NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

CORE CURRICULUM
ON CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Every child's experience of trauma is unique. A child's characteristics, past experiences, relationships, and environment can influence how they perceive a traumatic event and how they recover afterward. Looking at the whole context of a child's life helps us recognize strengths, reduce risks, and support their healing journeys.

FAMILIAL ENVIRONMENT

Family relationships, caregiver support, and home life



EXTRINSIC FACTORS

Factors in a child's environment that shape their experience & recovery

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Beliefs, traditions, and values that shape identity and experience



INTRINSIC FACTORS

Factors within a child that influence their experience & recovery from trauma

- Genetic factors
- Temperament
- Prior exposure to trauma
- Existing emotional/behavioral challenges



COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhood safety, school environment, peer relationships & community resources



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Poverty, housing stability, access to healthcare, food security & other life circumstances

LOOK AT THE WHOLE CHILD

WHO THEY ARE

Consider each child's unique characteristics, strengths, and individual needs.

WHAT THEY'VE EXPERIENCED

Recognize how past experiences, including trauma and loss, may influence their response.

WHO SUPPORTS THEM

Understand the role of caregivers, family, peers, and other trusted relationships in their lives.

WHERE THEY LIVE

Consider how their home, school, neighborhood, and access to resources affect them.

THEIR CULTURE & COMMUNITY

Respect the beliefs, traditions, values, and communities that shape identity and experience.