

Firstly

Many different things happen around us every day, and our lives are affected by these events. Some events may make us feel positive because they are fun and inspiring, whereas other events may lead us to getting hurt and stressed. The following examples describe such events.

I experienced a disastrous earthquake when I was small. Ever then, I am scared every time when an earthquake happens.

I was in a traffic accident. Since then, I'm afraid of riding bicycles.

My father was strict and scolded me when I was a child. I have been scared of talking with men ever since.

I got bullied when I was small. Ever then, it is difficult for me to trust other people.

My teacher made a harsh comment at a seminar about my presentation. Since then, I have been scared of making presentations in front of others.

We can consider the events described above from the perspective of trauma.

This leaflet introduces how traumatic experiences may influence you mentally and physically, and coping methods to consider.



Would you like to talk a bit?

Do not keep your emotional scars
and worries to yourself, please consult

On-campus consultations

Center for Counseling and Disability Services



Counseling Office

TEL 022-795-7833

Disability Services Office

TEL 022-795-7696

<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/>

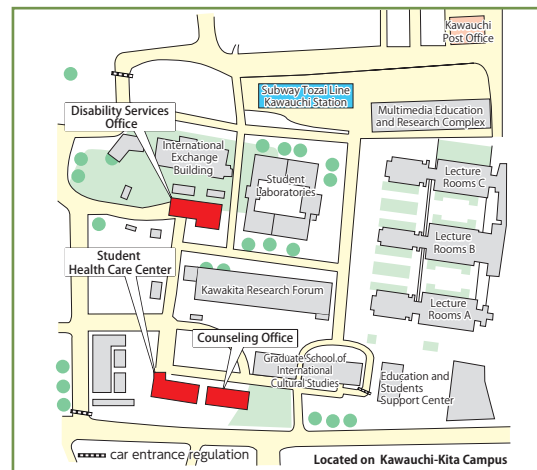
Student Health Care Center



Mental Health

TEL 022-795-7829

<https://www.health.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/>



EMPOWERMENT Series ⑬

Growth from Hurtful Experiences

from the perspective of "trauma"

Center for Counseling and Disability Services
Tohoku University

Traumatic experiences and their effects

Trauma is a “mental scar” or a “mental injury.” Mental and/or physical unwellness caused by traumatic experiences that strongly affects a person’s life or existence are called traumatic responses.

Traumatic responses commonly appear among people who have faced extreme dangers. Naturally, people experiencing unexpected dangers cannot maintain a normal state of mind. In many cases, the response is transient and one may naturally overcome from the traumatic experience. We are equipped with the power to recover from trauma.

However, when the effect of a traumatic experience is enormous, people may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

It is often thought that traumatic responses and PTSD are caused by one big event exposed to fatal dangers such as disasters or accidents. However, long-term experiences of bullying and harassment in daily interpersonal relationships and long-term abuse may also lead to traumatic responses or complex PTSD. Characteristics of complex PTSD include getting mentally hurt easily by simple things, tending to think “I’m worthless” or “I’m wrong,” and not being able to trust or be able to be close to others.



Recovery and growth from traumatic experiences

◇ Growth from traumatic experiences

Although traumatic experiences may cause PTSD, it is also said that by coping and overcoming hardships, it may lead to one’s individual growth. This is known as Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) with the following characteristics.

- being able to manage difficulties by finding reliable people and asking for their help
- being able to think that one may overcome future difficulties
- being able to support and care for people going through difficult times

◇ Reflecting on the causes and triggers of your unwellness

Hurtful experiences in the past may be causing your unwell conditions. It is natural for people to become unwell after experiencing difficulties. You may be able to organize your thoughts and feel calmer when you recognize the causes or triggers.

◇ Reflecting on your coping methods after your sufferings and recognizing your resilience

You may be able to identify your ways of solutions by reflecting on your coping strategies after difficult experiences. Moreover, you may become aware of your recovery and growth such as your ability to ask for help from others, support people in difficult situations, or become less depressed than before. We have “resilience,” the capacity to recover and restore, to recover from traumatic experiences.

◇ Talk to someone

It is sometimes difficult to identify the causes or triggers of your unwellness by yourself. However, you may be able to recognize them by talking to someone. By talking to someone, you may be able to organize your thoughts.

Please talk about your condition to someone reliable. When needed, please consult a counselor.
