

# CHILDREN'S TRAUMA HEALING



## Why Do Children Need Trauma Healing?



When traumatic events fracture a community, children often suffer most. Without a voice—unable to articulate their pain—the heart wounds of children are left untreated. In order to flourish and thrive, children have basic needs: safety, protection, comfort, adults they can trust, and personal autonomy. Trauma robs children of these necessary blessings and fills their formative years with violence, abandonment, chaos, cruelty, danger, and abuse.

Children believe adults are good, and they often feel responsible for the bad things that happen in their lives. Young children struggle to express their emotions, especially deep inner turmoil, through language. When adults cannot understand a traumatized child's cries for help, they often respond in frustration—increasing the child's feelings of isolation and despair.

## What Does Children's Trauma Healing Look Like?

Children participate in a week-long camp—or sometimes weekly meetings—where trained facilitators help them give voice to their pain through storytelling, drawing, playing games, crafting, writing, singing, and other self-expressive activities. As children learn to put their pain into words and pictures, they are encouraged to bring their suffering to Jesus. In Jesus they find a companion in their pain, someone who understands and can guide them in grace, and—ultimately—the loving God who brings them healing and hope that cannot be shattered.

**Children who are given opportunities to express their traumatic experiences become stronger and more resilient. They make healthier recoveries from the devastation of abuse and war.**

## What is covered?

The curriculum includes a facilitator's book and a child's story and activity book. There are ten lessons, each featuring a story from the Bible and a story based on real-life situations:



- I am important to God
- Why do bad things happen?
- Saying how we feel
- Feeling lonely
- Building our life well
- Loss and grief
- Saying 'no' to bad touch
- Taking our pain to the cross
- Forgiveness
- Rebuilding lives



## How Are Children Healed?

Here are two testimonies from Trauma Healing facilitators:

“When our workshop began, I was caught off guard by the emotionless faces of the children. At first, my smiles seemed to bring them no joy. I was prepared to deal with poverty, but I was not prepared to deal with the way some parents had treated their children. Many children had no parents at all—no adults they could trust with their brokenness or the secrets of their heart. By God’s grace, at the end of the workshop, all the children in my group were smiling ear to ear.”

“The children in my group—four boys and four girls—began their workshop unsure how to voice their grief. I watched them discover creative and expressive ways to talk through the pain they never had an opportunity to talk about. They found outlets in writing, singing, drawing pictures and simple life maps, talking openly with me and each other, and asking questions about suffering, sin, and loss. The message ‘Jesus is always with you and will always help you’ was so important for these children.”



## How Does a Community Help Their Traumatized Children?

The Trauma Healing program follows a four-stage process:

- ❑ **CONVENING:** We gather together the decision-makers of organizations and churches to explain the Trauma Healing program. They decide if they want to integrate Trauma Healing into their ministry. Those interested identify facilitators to be equipped, who can then train others.
- ❑ **EQUIPPING:** Facilitators are equipped at a three or four-day orientation, followed by a five-day Trauma Healing camp with traumatized children. Here, they get first-hand experience using our materials on the journey of healing. On the final day, the children’s caregivers are invited for an orientation to trauma care and the closing ceremony. Facilitators use what they have learned in their community and return for an advanced equipping session to complete their training. After completing the advanced, some participants are certified as Children’s Trauma Healing trainers.
- ❑ **CHILDREN’S GROUPS:** Caregivers use what they learned working with traumatized children in their communities. In the process, others may learn to be facilitators through the apprentice model.
- ❑ **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:** Facilitators and program administrators gather regularly for encouragement, learning and sharing new skills, problem-solving, and prayer.

The training of the *Healing Children’s Wounds of Trauma* facilitators can be done in conjunction with the training of the facilitators for adult trauma. This allows people of all ages to experience healing of their trauma and provides a healthy environment where children can thrive.

## How Do We Start?

Write to us at [traumahealing@americanbible.org](mailto:traumahealing@americanbible.org)  
or contact your local Bible Society.

 AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

© 2017 American Bible Society  
2017.07