

How does the past have anything to do with now?

What does that mean for you and how does history impact the present?



Some experiences that you have may sometimes impact on you and your bub:

- Tough times like trauma, loss & grief leave scars, and if we don't deal with the hurt it can hang around. Unresolved traumas of the past can affect us now.
- Past and present issues like losing loved ones, abuse and violence may affect your family now and may impact on how you are doing now. For example, sometimes when we have our own kids it can remind us of some of the really tough times we went through as kids. And when you get stressed, then it can be really hard going.
- So, issues like past abuse can affect you now, but can affect how you are as a parent too.

What's this I hear about transgenerational trauma?

Most people go through some really tough times and some issues or events can affect you or your family, in the same ways as things such as racism and abuse have probably had an impact on your parents and their parents. This idea is generally referred to as the 'transgenerational transmission of trauma' (trauma, grief and loss that gets passed across or down generations).

One traumatic event, or a series of events, like colonisation and the Stolen Generations, can really have an impact on culture, sense of belonging and family. Sometimes, issues like racism can affect how we think of ourselves, and these issues may have had an impact on your parents and their parents before them. For example, we can sometimes take on the negative things we've heard about Aboriginal people from that racism, and we might start to take some of it on in how we think of ourselves.

Some of the tough times we have had can increase our everyday stress. Stress can have a pretty big effect on you. Sometimes people use alcohol and drugs to dull their stress and other emotions. Even the way your parents dealt with their stress can impact on you. Maybe they used alcohol or drugs or showed their stress by being angry. This might mean that you do the same things to deal with your stress. Be ready to listen to any questions or concerns.

If you've had bad experiences or are sad and depressed, or angry, sometimes you want to escape that feeling. Sometimes people do this by using alcohol or drugs and over the long-term this may lead to addiction, reliance on 'escaping' from reality, and can lead to people getting into trouble when they are high, drunk or angry.

Things like alcohol use and abuse, and other drug use, abuse and addiction, can interrupt healing from the trauma, grief and loss we feel. As an example, if we're dulling the pain and escaping into a bottle, we aren't paying attention to our surrounds, or paying attention

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to our family (we probably aren't paying the right attention to our bub) or job or study. What's more, we aren't taking the time and energy to heal from the hurt we're feeling. The idea with transgenerational transmission of trauma is that the things that affect us, like neglect, trauma, abuse and grief and loss, can have an impact on our future generations (just like they may have had an impact on us and how we turned out).

Healing can counter these effects of the past

Some of the effects of trauma that haven't been dealt with, acknowledged and healed are things like violence and aggression, risky behaviours, incarceration, abuse. There's also a link with the likelihood of getting lifestyle diseases like some cancers, stroke and heart attacks. We also know that there's a link between being a victim of abuse and an increased risk of going on to abuse others.

What can we do?

You have a chance to change the way that trauma is dealt with in your family and that can really help your children have a more positive future.

Some patterns of behaviour or thinking we have aren't really good for us, or good for our family, or our bubs, or community. We need to break the cycle of some of the things in our lives that are not working, or that aren't healthy.

Sometimes these types of things can affect us as parents – in that we find it difficult to cope, or we find it difficult to bond with our bub (attachment). Sometimes it's important to seek help if we need to. Part of this might be to honestly ask yourself 'What role models did I have for being a good parent?' and 'My parents were loving but how can I be a more effective parent?' Another great question to ask is 'What support do I need as a parent and who can I ask to help with that?' Sometimes

we get lost in the pressures and expectations of life, and sometimes it would be good to have a guidebook or a helping hand with that. The important thing is that you talk to someone about it, and that you know that you can ask for help.

If I need help, where can I go?

Some suggestions for help:

- Services like Lifeline on 13 11 14, or Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.
- Your local AMS (Aboriginal Medical Service), and/or your family doctor (your doctor can refer you to a psychologist if you want, and it will be covered on Medicare).
- The school counsellor, or the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at your kid's school.
- The local community health centre.
- Trusted family and Elders, or good friends, so you can get the support you need as well.
- Link-Up (in most States and Territories), and the
- Healing Foundation (<http://healingfoundation.org.au/>).

For more information:

Trauma & Grief Network: Supporting Families

www.tgn.anu.edu.au

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