

# GROUP TRAUMA SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS

## *Understanding, Supporting & Growing Together*

---

### IMPORTANT NOTE FOR FACILITATORS

This worksheet contains age-appropriate scenarios for 8th grade students to discuss in a safe, structured environment. The scenarios are designed to help students recognize trauma responses, develop empathy, and practice supportive communication. Always:

- Create a safe space before beginning
  - Remind students of confidentiality
  - Have support resources available
  - Allow students to opt out of discussions that feel too personal
  - Be prepared to provide additional support if needed
- 

## **PART 1: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA RESPONSES**

### WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is an emotional response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms our ability to cope. Everyone responds to difficult situations differently.

### COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES:

#### Physical Responses:

- Racing heart
- Feeling "frozen" or unable to move

- Upset stomach
- Headaches
- Feeling tired all the time

### **Emotional Responses:**

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Anger or irritability
- Sadness or depression
- Anxiety or fear
- Numbness or disconnection

### **Behavioral Responses:**

- Avoiding certain places or people
  - Changes in sleep patterns
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Withdrawing from friends or activities
  - Acting out or taking risks
- 

## **MEMBER PART 2: GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

### **OUR GROUP AGREEMENTS:**

Before discussing scenarios, let's agree on how we'll talk about sensitive topics:

- Listen without judgment
  - Respect everyone's experiences
  - Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements
  - Take breaks if needed
  - It's okay to pass on sharing
  - What's shared here stays here (with safety exceptions)
  - Focus on support, not fixing
- 

## **MEMBER PART 3: SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS**

### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Read each scenario as a group
2. Discuss the questions that follow

3. Take turns sharing thoughts
  4. Remember there are no "wrong" answers - we're learning together
- 

### **SCENARIO 1: THE NEW STUDENT**

Jamal is a new student who moved to your school after his family's home was destroyed in a natural disaster. He's usually quiet in class and jumps whenever there are loud noises. During a fire drill, you notice he's sitting against the wall with his head down, breathing quickly, and seems unable to follow directions.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What trauma responses might Jamal be experiencing?
  2. How might Jamal be feeling in this moment?
  3. What could be helpful for classmates to do? What would NOT be helpful?
  4. What would you do if you were nearby when this happened?
  5. Who in the school could provide support for Jamal?
- 

### **SCENARIO 2: THE GROUP PROJECT**

Your friend Taylor has been acting differently lately. Their parents are going through a difficult divorce, and there's a lot of arguing at home. During a group project, another student criticizes Taylor's work. Taylor suddenly gets very angry, yells at everyone, throws their notebook, and leaves the classroom.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How might stress at home be affecting Taylor's behavior at school?
2. What trauma responses do you notice in this scenario?
3. How might the criticism have triggered Taylor's reaction?

4. How could the group handle this situation with empathy?
  5. What could friends do to support Taylor after this incident?
- 

### **SCENARIO 3: THE SOCIAL MEDIA POST**

Casey used to be outgoing and active in school activities. Six months ago, embarrassing photos of Casey were shared online without permission. Now Casey rarely participates in class, has stopped hanging out with friends, and often complains of stomachaches to avoid school.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What trauma responses is Casey showing?
  2. How might online humiliation affect someone's sense of safety?
  3. Why might Casey be experiencing physical symptoms like stomachaches?
  4. What could classmates do to help Casey feel safe again?
  5. How could friends support Casey without making things worse?
- 

### **SCENARIO 4: THE FAMILY CHANGES**

Alex's parent has been deployed with the military for the past year. Recently, Alex has been having trouble concentrating in class, seems tired all the time, and gets irritated easily. When asked about weekend plans, Alex often says "I don't care" or "whatever" and changes the subject.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What stressors might Alex be experiencing?
2. How might uncertainty and worry affect someone's daily life?

3. Why might Alex avoid talking about certain topics?
  4. What are supportive ways to check in with someone who's going through family changes?
  5. What strengths might Alex be developing through this difficult time?
- 

## **NOEUPH** PART 4: CREATING SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES

### HELPFUL VS. UNHELPFUL RESPONSES

HELPFUL RESPONSES	UNHELPFUL RESPONSES
"I'm here for you"	"Just get over it"
"Would you like to talk about it?"	"It could be worse"
"What would help right now?"	"You should just..."
"That sounds really difficult"	"Why are you still upset?"
"It makes sense you feel that way"	"Everyone has problems"

### PRACTICE: REWRITING RESPONSES

For each unhelpful response, write a more supportive alternative:

1. "You need to stop overreacting." Better response:
  2. "Why can't you just focus on the positive?" Better response:
  3. "Everyone goes through tough times, it's not a big deal." Better response:
  4. "You'll be fine, just forget about it." Better response:
- 

## **NOEUPH** PART 5: RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS & RESILIENCE

## RESILIENCE BUILDERS:

Resilience is our ability to bounce back from difficult situations. People build resilience in different ways:

- Connecting with supportive people
- Developing coping skills
- Finding meaning in difficult experiences
- Taking care of physical health
- Expressing feelings in healthy ways
- Helping others
- Setting realistic goals
- Practicing self-compassion

## GROUP ACTIVITY: STRENGTH SPOTTING

In the scenarios we discussed, what strengths or resilience factors did you notice or imagine the people might have?

**Scenario 1 (Jamal):**

**Scenario 2 (Taylor):**

**Scenario 3 (Casey):**

**Scenario 4 (Alex):**

---

## **RECAP** PART 6: PERSONAL REFLECTION

### MY INSIGHTS:

1. One thing I learned about trauma responses:
  2. Something I can do to support others going through difficult times:
  3. A healthy way I can take care of myself during stressful times:
- 

### **RECAP** REMEMBER:

- Everyone responds to difficult situations differently

- Small acts of kindness and understanding make a big difference
  - Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness
  - You don't need to fix someone's problems to be supportive
- 

### **SUPPORT RESOURCES:**

- School Counselor: [Add contact info]
  - Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
  - Local Resources: [Add local resources]
- 

© *Aspire Impact Network - Youth Development Series*