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WHAT WE CARRY TOOLKIT SERIES

Trauma Response Checklist



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WHAT WE CARRY TOOLKIT SERIES: **Trauma Response**

Girl Security is grateful for the support of Allison Bean, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Trauma Specialist for her contributions to this toolkit. Allison has worked with Girl Security for over five years to develop trauma-informed practices and frameworks to guide the organization's programs and services.

If you have experienced trauma, and if you are feeling worried, confused, or concerned about how you are feeling, and require professional assistance, please contact the following relevant hotline for assistance, provided by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, or reach out to a trusted person to ask for help:

- **Child Sexual Abuse.** Stop It Now! Phone: 1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368)
- **Crime Victims.** National Center for Victims of Crime. Phone: 1-855-4VICTIM (1-855-484-2846)
- **Dating Abuse.** Love is Respect. Phone: 1-866-331-9474, TTY: 1-866-331-8453, or Text LOVEIS TO 22522
- **Domestic Violence.** National Domestic Violence Hotline. Phone: 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233), TTY: 1-800-787-3224
- **Missing and Abducted Children.** Child Find of America, Inc. Phone: 1-800-I-AM-LOST (1-800-426-5678), or National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Phone: 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)
- **Rape and Sexual Abuse.** Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. Phone: 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673)
- **Runaway and Homeless Youth.** National Runaway Safeline. Phone: 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929), or Text: 66008
- **Suicide Prevention.** National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), TTY: 1-800-799 4889

Trigger Warning:

The following toolkit is designed to highlight common reactions to trauma as well as identify coping mechanisms.

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WHAT WE CARRY TOOLKIT SERIES: Trauma Response



Foreword

At Girl Security, our approach to exploring national security considers multiple layers. Small “n” - national security - explores how girls and gender minority youth experience security challenges that originate in the homeland and national security domains but impact their understanding of personal security, such as physical violence and digital harms. Big “N” - National Security - explores the threats themselves and how they shape the United States and a global community. These challenges include war and conflict, threats arising from new technologies such as artificial intelligence, climate impacts, and biosecurity, for example.

In our work with girls and young women, and through surveys, participants identify a number of threats to their personal security (small “n” national security) including physical violence, cyberbullying, and school shootings. Participants often explain that they make themselves feel secure through several means, including their phones, some self-defense mechanism, and/or surrounding themselves with friends, family, and/or loved ones.

This guide is intended to provide frameworks for how girls consider their sense of personal safety and security and to strengthen their understanding of their inherent strengths and skills.

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WHAT WE CARRY TOOLKIT SERIES: **Trauma Response**

SECTION A:

What Do We Mean by Trauma?

Trauma can mean different things to different people. People experience *trauma* differently and may express different reactions. At Girl Security, we refer to the American Psychological Association definition of *trauma*: an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.



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SECTION II:

Common Reactions to Trauma



Reactions to trauma can be **emotional** and include:

- Shock, or disbelief at what happened
- Isolation
- A feeling that things are unreal
- Fear for one's safety
- Anxiety
- Shame, or feeling as though you did not react as you were taught or thought you might
- Anger, or a feeling you "allowed" something to happen
- Irritability
- Sadness and Depressions



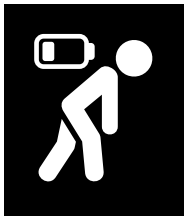
Reactions to trauma can also be **cognitive** (thinking) and include:

- Difficult making decisions
- Poor concentration
- Suspiciousness
- Memory Problems



Reactions to trauma can also be **behavioral** and include:

- Withdrawal
- Self Harm
- Antisocial
- Changes in Speech Pattern
- Inability to Rest



Reactions to trauma can also be **physical** and include:

- A change in sleep patterns, restlessness or disturbed sleep, and nightmares
- Loss of appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain
- Fatigue, agitation, nausea, digestive problems, or other physical symptoms
- Anxiety, resulting in panic attacks, breathing problems, and sensitivity to sounds



Reactions to trauma can also be **spiritual** and include:

- Emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Cynicism or Apathy
- Mistrust
- Crisis of faith
- Doubt

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SECTION B:

Steps You Can Take

Girl Security's What We Carry campaign is intended to acknowledge the many ways in which girls and women experience certain harms, including physical or sexual violence or online harms, including deepfakes, stalking, cyberbullying and more.

These harms may cause trauma. Coping with trauma requires one:

1. Recognize you have experienced a highly stressful event
2. Understand the range of reactions to trauma
3. Seek support from trusted people in your life
4. Recognize that seeking support is not a sign of weakness
5. Access online resources to support you

These steps are especially important if you are experiencing thoughts about harming yourself, a sense of isolation or a sense that you have no family or friend support, or if you have any concerns about how you are coping.

A Note on Flashbacks:

Flashbacks are common and normal. A flashback is a memory of the event. Often, a flashback can make one feel that they have "gone back" and are experiencing the trauma again. It is important to tell yourself that it is a flashback and that you are present. Grounding oneself by expressing something tangible, such as rooting one's feet to the ground or taking deep breaths with hands on knees can be helpful.

In addition, in the aftermath of trauma, consider the following actions:

- Rest
- Meals that make your body feel good
- Be intentional about taking time to relax
- Work toward accepting the reactions you may be experiencing
- Time to oneself is important, so long as you do not isolate
- Find a support group in your school or community
- Talk with people about your experiences