

## Traumatic experience

Liandra\* (\*real name withheld) came to Germany in 2009, at the age of 11, together with her parents, because as Roma people they were not accepted in Serbia. Here too, she still didn't sleep well and hardly dared to leave the house. Her parents were worried and, upon advice of NTFN, made an appointment with a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

"At first I was a little afraid, but the woman is very kind. She often asks me what we want to do."

"Now I am much better than before! The problems are nearly gone."

As with Liandra, it is with many refugees in Germany War and violence complicate peoples' lives. Poverty makes them resign. For this and other reasons, they often embark upon a dangerous journey for refuge. These experiences are hard to work through, and, especially in children and adolescents, can lead to serious problems.

### What does this situation make (with me)?



I feel very sad and desperate over and over again.



I often feel terrified and therefore restricted.




I easily get angry, often for no particular reason.






I often do not feel like doing things I usually liked to do.





I simply want to be left alone.


 I am tired but unable to fall asleep, and often I wake up at night.

  I often have nightmares or see pictures of the past flash back to me during the day

 I still wet my bed at night.

 I can't concentrate for long periods and forget a lot of things.

 I don't believe that I will amount to anything, I have no future.

 I often have a headache or stomach pain, even the doctor doesn't know what's wrong.

Do one or more items apply to you?

Or do you (as an adult) know any children or adolescents having these problems in a significant way? Do they appear to learn more slowly or be less competent than other children of their age?

There are people who are able and willing to help! You are not alone!

**What e. g. does a child and adolescent psychiatrist do?**

1. Talk with the person affected and her/his relatives
2. Detect problems and find out how they have developed.
3. If needed, carry out physical tests and ask for personal details. You can't do anything wrong here!

4. Decide on whether medicaments are useful and which therapy/treatment is best suited: e. g. conversation, relaxation training, and, for children, playing, painting and making music. This can be done either in individual therapy or in a group, and can be carried out by different kinds of specialists.

**Target:**

The past loses part of its influence upon life so that it will be possible to live free of fear and bad feelings.

**Important information**

- You can attend a child and adolescent psychiatrist up to the age of 21.
- Don't worry about "not being normal"! So what is "normal" supposed to be? It is impossible for anyone to manage all her/his problems alone, especially so when having witnessed bad things.
- Everything discussed or done in the therapy remains a secret between you as a patient and the therapist, except if you both agree that it is good to share it with a third person.
- If people having applied for asylum and/or tolerated residence status do not yet have a health insurance card but want to see a psychiatrist, they need a health insurance voucher by the social welfare office and, as a rule, a confirmed referral by a general practitioner/family doctor.

## Possible psychic problems

### **Post-traumatic stress disorder:**

Resulting from a psychic trauma. This can be e. g. experience of violence, war, torture, (natural) catastrophes or accidents. The feeling of helplessness, fear and lack of control plays an important role.

### **Depression:**

Often resembling the moods which are typical for childhood and adolescence. If, however, these moods don't change over a long period time, it is possible that the child or adolescent suffers from a depression. Here, too, reasons can be traumatic experiences, the loss of an important person, excessive demands or lack of friends.

## Contact

If you are not sure whether you need help, please contact your family doctor, an institution for child guidance and family therapy, a child and adolescent psychotherapist, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, or get in touch with us, we will be pleased to give you assistance.

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