

The Impact of Complex Trauma on Youth Ministry

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Our Time Together

- What is Complex Trauma?
- How do youth behave with CT?
- How does it impact youth ministry?
- How can I personally be impacted?
- What are the best practices when I encounter youth with complex trauma?

Story from “Life Hurts Love Heals”

Meet Tony

Small Group Discussion

1. What do you know about Tony's Life?
2. What are some reasons Tony maybe stressed out even before Raymond is shot?
3. What do you think complex trauma is?
4. Think of one youth's story that keeps you awake at night.

Feedback



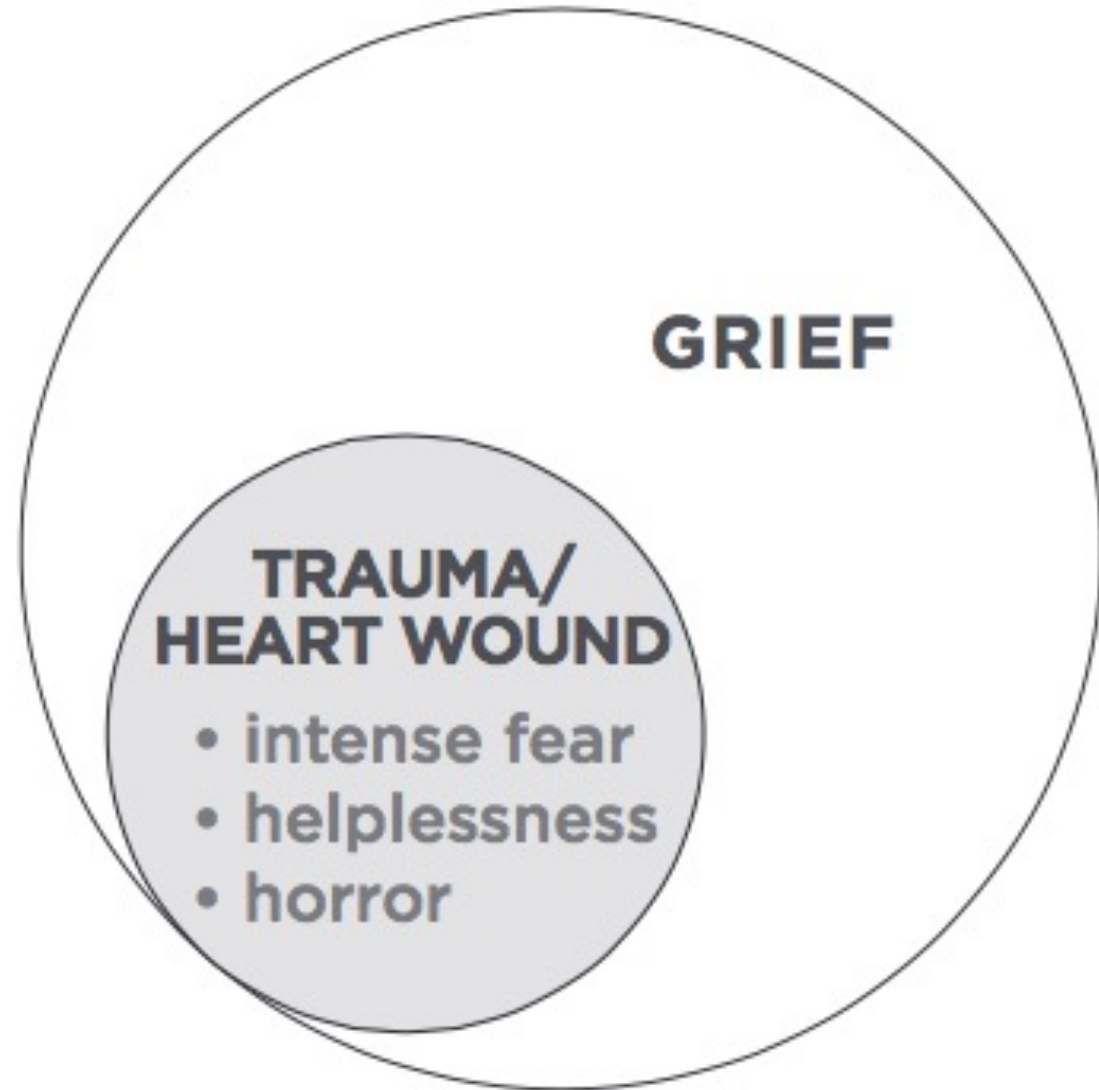
What causes trauma?

Anything that exceeds one's capacity to cope



What is trauma?

- Defined as experiencing:
 1. Intense fear
 2. Helplessness
 3. Horror
- It is **NOT** defined by type of experience
- Referred to as “heart wound”



Complex Trauma

- Exposure to multiple traumatic events—often of an invasive, interpersonal nature (Caregivers)
- Long Term Exposure
- The **events** are severe and pervasive, such as abuse or profound neglect. - **LAYERS**
- Started early in life and can disrupt many aspects of the child's development – **HASN'T STOPPED**
- Interfere in the formation of a sense of self.
- Interfere with the child's ability to form a secure attachment.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Types of Traumatic Exposures

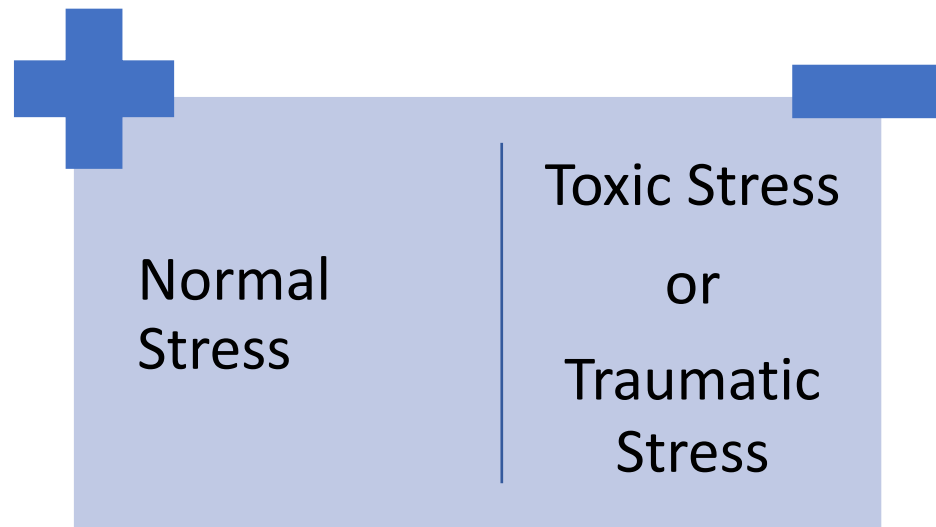
- Bullying
- Community Violence
- Medical Trauma
- Physical, Mental, or Emotional Abuse
- Refugee Trauma
- Sexual Abuse
- Sex Trafficking
- Mass Shootings & Terrorism
- Traumatic Grief & Loss
- Intimate Partner Violence
IPV/ DV

How Do Youth Behave with Complex Trauma?

How Do Youth Behave with Complex Trauma?

1. **Reliving** (like having a nightmare while awake or nightmares while sleeping – night terrors)
2. **Avoiding** (places, people, emotions – going numb, using drugs & alcohol)
3. **Being always on alert** (panic, fear, angry outburst; leads to physical illnesses and problems).

Toxic and traumatic stress



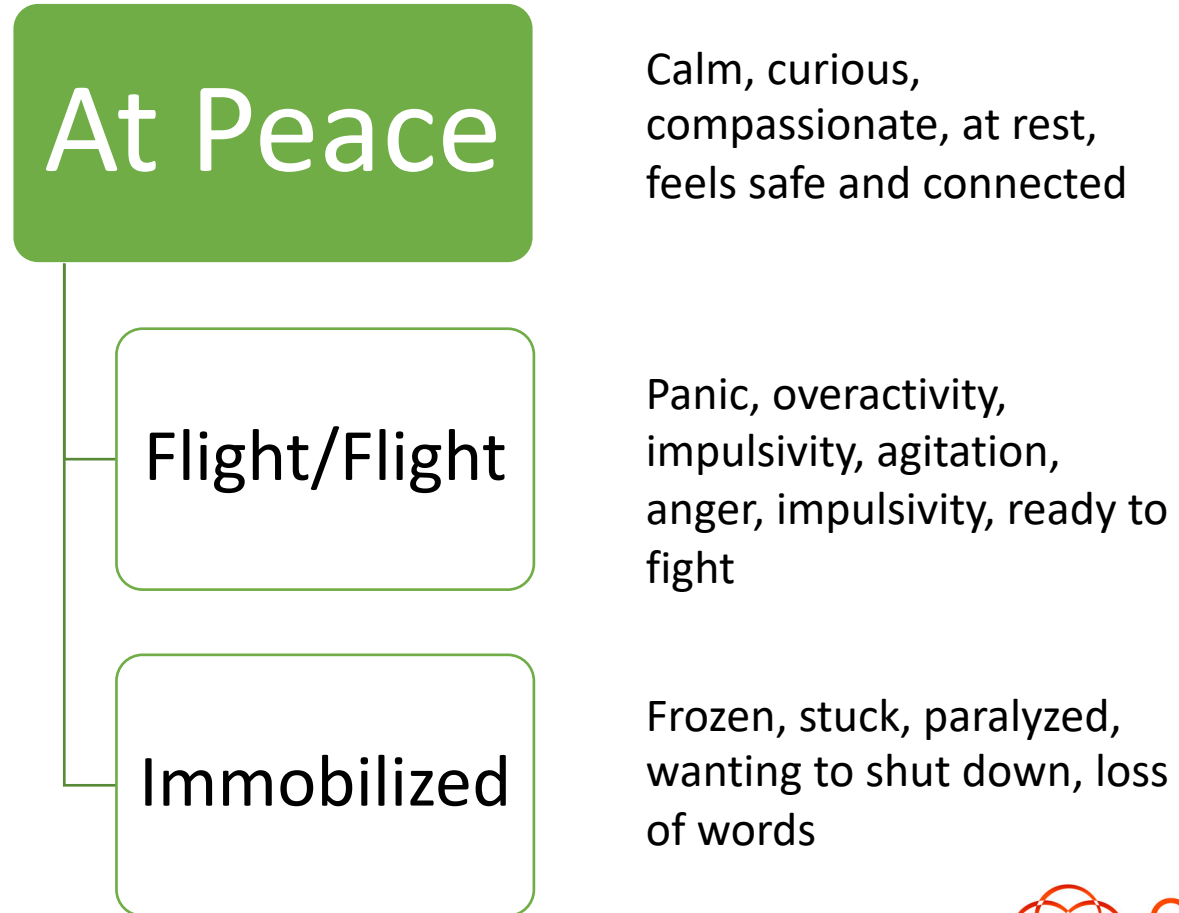
Normal stress response

- adrenaline and cortisol
- Fight/flight; reduced words
- Returns to normal after event

Traumatic stress

- Same as above
- Does not return to normal
- Disrupts brain development, especially language

Polyvagal ladder



The trauma cascade

Event

Intense fear, horror

Experience

Loss of voice, control, meaning

Result – RELATIONAL VIOLATION

Relational pain, loss of trust, contempt for self



Running from the past, afraid of the future

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How does Complex Trauma impact youth ministry?

Impact on youth ministry

Trauma Reactions can:

- Create Chaos in the Ministry
- Be Emotionally and Mentally Draining for Kids and Adult Volunteers
- Trigger others
- Step into Your Own Wound
- Cause Leaders to Sin & Fall

We are called like Jesus to the hurting – Mark 5

Witness God

- Using the ministry to break the stronghold and tool of healing
- God's Power and Witness to Miracles

How can we ministry in Complex Trauma?

1. Ground Yourself in Truth – “You are God and I am not You”
2. Establish a Safe Environment (relational violation key)
3. Have and Set Clear Boundaries with all youth
4. Set proper expectations of Caregivers (can be your greatest enemy)
5. Know your traumas and reactions
6. Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder – Compassion Fatigue
7. Join a Healing Group and work through your trauma

Three Listening Questions

1. **What happened?**

(establishes facts & timeline)

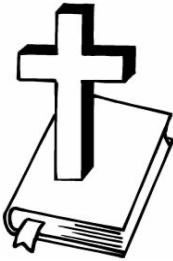
2. **How did you feel?**

(Healing takes place at the level of emotions. Naming the emotions puts boundaries on vague feelings.)

3. **What was the hardest?**

(Each person is different. We need to know the answer to this from them.)

Trauma Healing Experience ARC

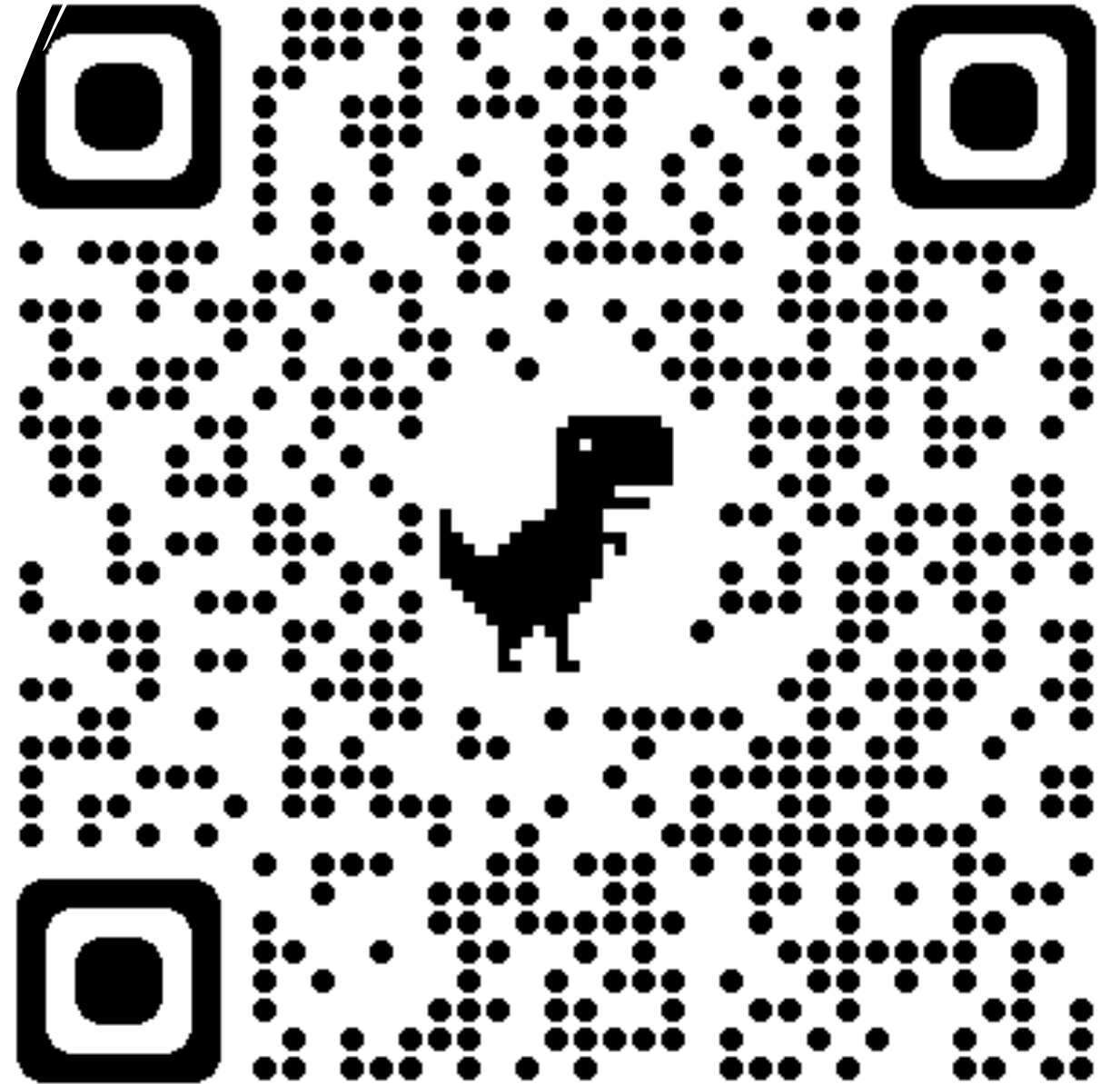


Bring pain to the cross

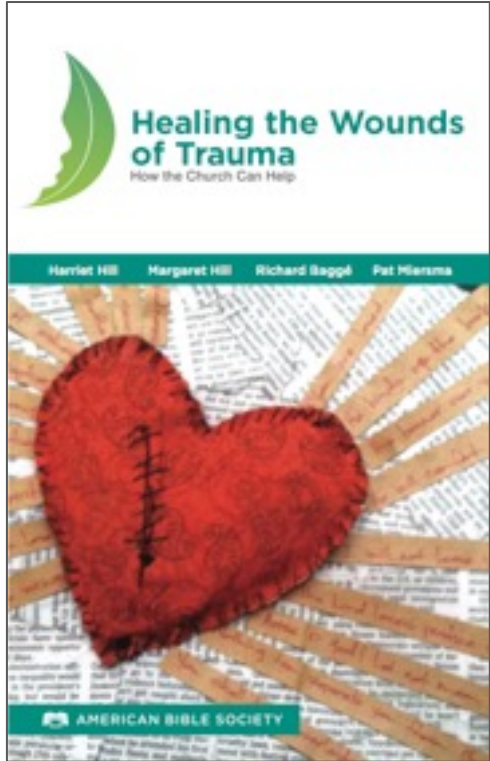


Follow Up
Form

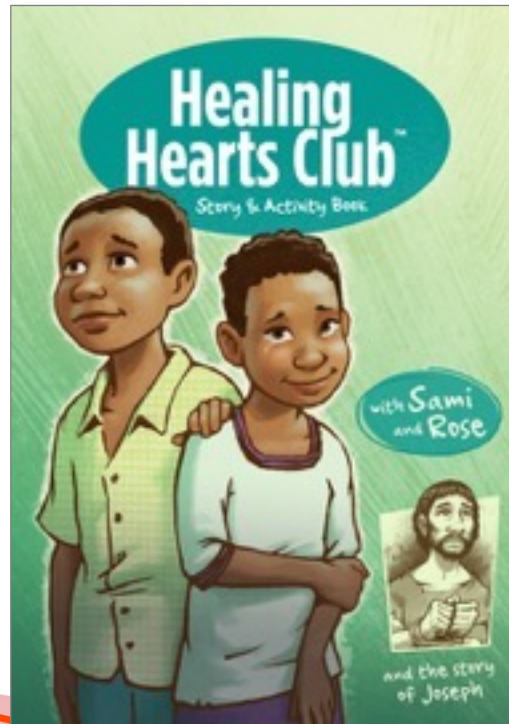
Connect with
us!



Classic



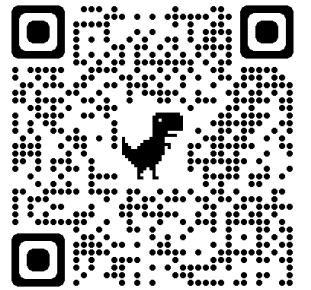
Children



Teen

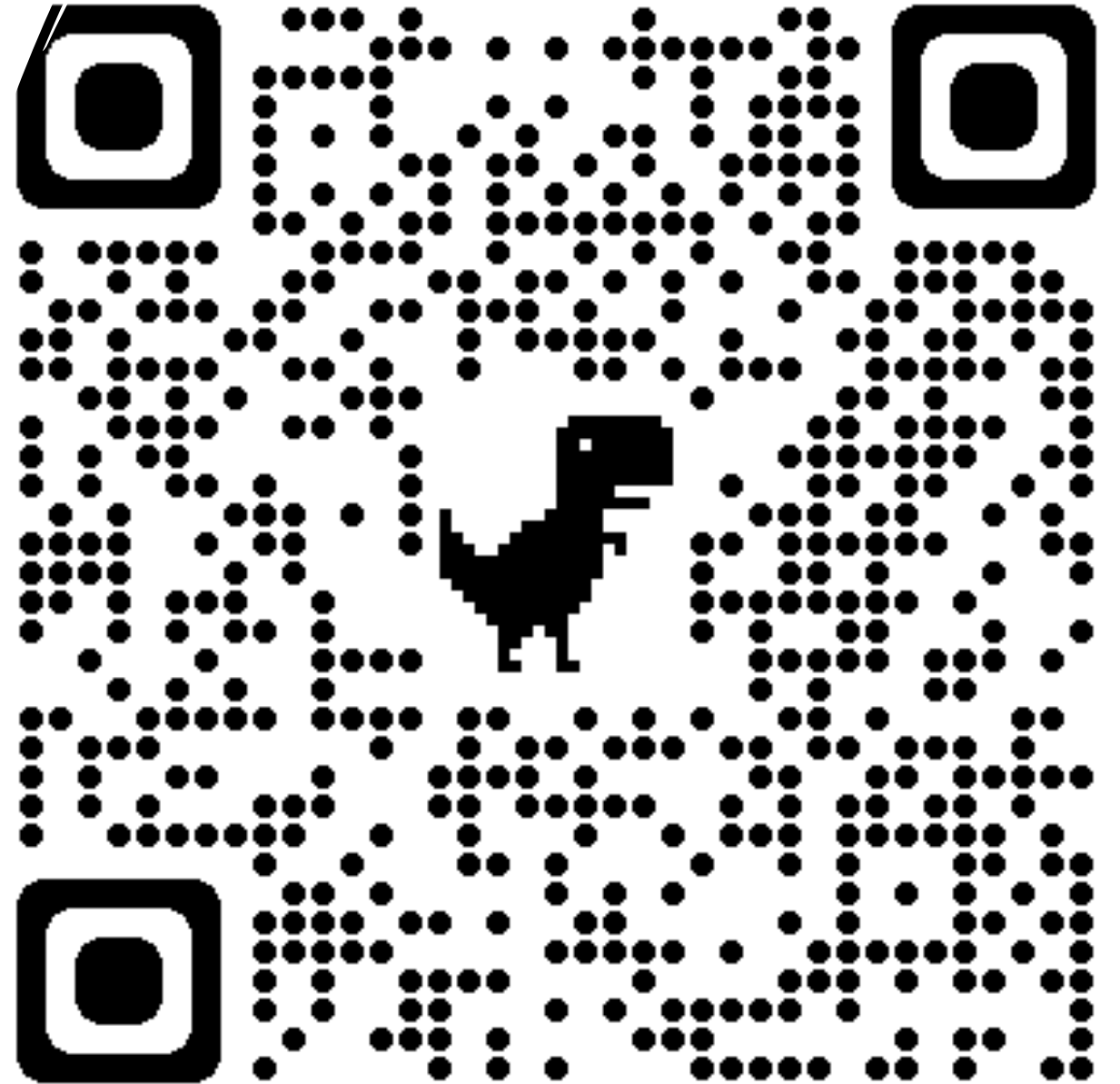
Quest Upcoming Dates

- **May 8 to 12** – 6:30 to 8:30 - Adult Trauma Healing Group (pre-requisite for teen facilitator) – ONLINE
- **May 15** – 6:30p to 8:30p – Care for the Care Givers for Youth ministry leaders
- **May 22 to 26** – 5:30pm – 9:00pm – In person S. Philly
- **June 26 to 30** – Kensington at Urban Worship Center



Quest Trauma
Healing Center

questthc.org





Traumahealingbasics.org

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Healing from trauma is hard.
These free resources can help.

[Explore resources](#)



