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RESEARCH UPDATE REVIEW

## Childhood Reactions to Terrorism-Induced Trauma: A Review of the Past 10 Years

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### ABSTRACT

#### Objective

To summarize the literature about the clinical presentation and treatment interventions of childhood reactions to terrorism-induced trauma.

#### Method

The literature on children's responses to terrorist activities was reviewed.

#### Results

Over the past 10 years, more research has emerged on the subject of terrorism in children. Many of the effects of terrorism-induced trauma are similar to the effects of natural and man-made trauma. Children's responses include acute stress disorder,

posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, regressive behaviors, separation problems, sleep difficulties, and behavioral problems. However, several aspects of terrorist attacks result in unique stressors and reactions and pose specific challenges for treatment. The unpredictable, indefinite threat of terrorist events, the profound effect on adults and communities, and the effect of extensive terrorist-related media coverage exacerbates underlying anxieties and contributes to a continuous state of stress and anxiety. Intervention strategies include early community-based interventions, screening of children at risk, triage and referral, and trauma-lossâ€“focused treatment programs.

## Conclusions

Advances have been made in the research of childhood reactions to terrorism-induced trauma. Further research is needed to identify children at risk and to determine the long-term impact on children's development. Although the preliminary results of interventions developed to help children are promising, outcome data have not been examined, and further research is needed to evaluate their effectiveness.



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## Key Words

children; terrorism; trauma; acute stress disorder; posttraumatic stress disorder

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