

The spread of trauma: When RAD siblings develop PTSD

RAD = Reactive attachment disorder
PTSD = Post-traumatic stress disorder

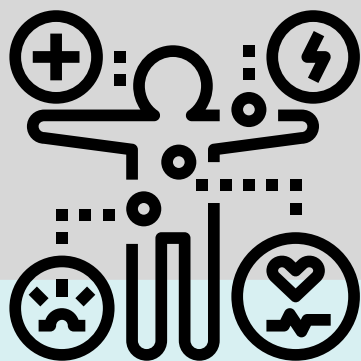


How RAD symptoms lead to PTSD in others

Reactive attachment disorder (RAD) occurs when early childhood trauma negatively impacts brain growth, leaving a person in a persistent state of fight, flight, or freeze and an intense fear of attachment.

Children with RAD often:

- Have an extreme need for control of their environments to feel internally safe. For example, they often cause disruption at home that results in sudden and frequent changes in the family routine.
- Physical or verbal assaults of family members to push away relationships and to feel in control



As a result of RAD behaviors, other children in the home often:

- Are less engaged in extracurricular activities and other community engagements due to missed practices, embarrassment in public, etc.
- Feel the need to protect their parent(s) from physical assault by the child with RAD
- Feel on edge most of the time due to fear of emotional or physical harm by the child with RAD
- Hide their feelings with the intent to protect their parents from extra “burden” in the midst of RAD chaos at home
- Attempt to meet all of their own needs given the parents limited available time and resources due to RAD behaviors

Signs and symptoms of PTSD in siblings of children with RAD

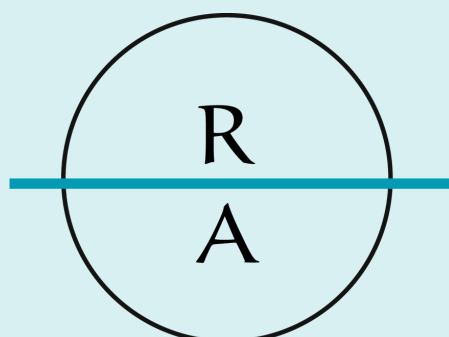
- Avoidance of thoughts and feelings associated with the trauma, including activities, individuals, and places
- Denial of harmful events that have occurred and/or feeling numb
- Loss of interest in things once enjoyed and significant events
- Trouble concentrating
- Feelings of irritability and frustration over trivial events that did not bother them in the past
- Possible heightened alertness or easily startled
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Detaching from loved ones
- Intense distress when certain cues or “triggers” set off memories of the traumatic events

What to do



If you suspect you or your child may have post-traumatic stress disorder, contact a medical professional. Do your best to find a clinician who has experience working with parents and siblings of children with RAD.

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