



## Arizona Trauma Institute Complex Trauma Checklist

- Neglected physically as a child.
- Neglected Emotionally as a child.
- Prolonged (over time and multiple incidents) of physical abuse.
- Child relationship with primary care givers were frightening, unpredictable and overwhelming.
- Prolonged exposure (over time and multiple incidents) of sexual abuse
- Prolonged exposure (over time and multiple incidents) of emotional abuse.
- Prolonged exposure (over time and multiple incidents) of High stress and life-threatening environments.
- Parents or adult caregivers were unstable (emotionally, socially, mentally) throughout childhood.
- Experience repeated failure to attach to primary care givers.
- Primary care givers were the source of repeated and frequent stress.
- Relational betrayal in primary relationships.
- Constant sense of fear or lack of physical, emotional, or psychological safety.
- High levels of continual demand for performance in an unpredictable environment
- Learned to see relationships as desirable and a potential threat.
- Strong feelings of Shame.
- Strong feelings of worthlessness.
- Strong feelings of helplessness.
- Fear of judgement and criticism.
- Social situations feel threatening and unsafe.
- Repeated relationship difficulties
- Lack of long-term intimate friendships
- Secretive and private to the point that most people really know truly little about you.
- Exposure as witness or victim of domestic violence.
- Vulnerable in an environment of aggressive and punitive authority figures.
- Difficulties focusing even when the individual desires to focus.
- A distorted self-concept that leads to feelings such as (imposter syndrome, perfectionism, victim orientation, despair and discouragement).
- Difficulty trusting
- Suicidal thoughts
- Frequent flights of fantasy.
- Episodes of feeling detached from reality.
- Disconnected from body awareness, and difficulty recognizing what the body is experiencing.
- Self-Isolating
- Socially distant caused by feeling unsafe.
- Feeling like you are not like others, and don't fit in.
- Preoccupied with repetitive negative thoughts and emotions.
- Addictions and other compulsive behaviors.
- Been repeatedly bullied (within family relationships and without).
- Lack hope or a belief that actions taken can generate positive outcomes.
- Uncomfortable body sensations (e.g., Popping one's neck repeatedly during the day)
- Frequent constipation, irritable bowels and other digestive system issues.
- Disoriented when stressed.



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- Always watchful, sitting where you can see the environment. Uncomfortable in environments that can not easily be observed for threat.
- Shutting out or pushing away uncomfortable or distressing sensations, memories, thoughts, or emotions.
- Push away or withdraw in relationships by using blaming, criticizing, judging.
- Feel lonely yet resist attempts by others to relationally connect.
- Always looking for or reading negative meanings into facial expressions, tonal quality or posture of others.
- Actively pretend you are happier than you are.
- Embellish behaviors to look more attractive to others.
- Difficulty in regulating emotions.
- Persistent beliefs about oneself as diminished, defeated, worthless, and unlovable regardless of what one has accomplished or what other people say regarding them.
- Significant disturbances in family relationships.
- Frequent difficulty educationally
- Tend to avoid all intense emotion (positive or negative).
- Encouragement and validation resistant.
- Persistent work-related stress characterized by (poor boundaries, over-working, taking on too many things at once, high levels of unrelenting productivity demands).
- Overly quick to accept blame and experience guilt in interpersonal situations.
- Persistent difficulties in sustaining close relationships.
- Feel lonely even surrounded by groups of people.
- Significant disturbances in marital relationships
- Challenged to function with integrity to a value system.
- Often fierce self-protective defenses that make it difficult to reach out for social, mental health or medical support)
- Often can not remember a time when things were not overwhelming. This is different than the single incident, where a knowledge of more optimal living existed prior to the trauma.
- Frequent breaches in care, concern and focus of attention in intimate relationships.

**There is no specific number of the above items needed to arrive at the diagnosis of complex trauma.**

**These are common things that many people experience that have had developmental and any other form of repetitive or prolonged overwhelm.**

**This tool can be used to discover possible talking points, as most of these items arise out of adaptive or mitigating patterns of response that have become habituated or automatic thinking, emoting, and behaving.**