

**JERRON JONES**  
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATE



## Kids suffering from trauma often have “a hard time developing relationships” and “an inability to regulate emotions”

As a behavioral therapist, Jerron Jones spends much of his time trying to help families and children suffering from trauma resulting from exposure to violence.

The symptoms of trauma in children vary based on age and the individual child but a “huge sign” is an inability to develop a relationship with an adult and show respect for

**“Early exposure to extremely fearful events affects the developing brain, particularly in those areas involved in emotions and learning.....For young children who perceive the world as a threatening place, a wide range of conditions can trigger anxious behaviors that then impair their ability to learn and to interact socially with others.”**

the teacher, Jones said. Children in those situations, he said, often lack a consistent, nurturing adult in their lives.

A lot of kids lack confidence and self-esteem and don’t hear encouraging words or praise for what they do well and the strengths they have, he said, and “that leaves them without a skill set to build on.”

Jones advises adults in their lives to celebrate them with compliments and praise for their efforts.

Children should also be comforted by adults who remain calm and patient even though the circumstances can be difficult, he said. Listening to them and showing an interest in what they like to do, he said, as well as working with them and sharing new ideas can help them build self-esteem.

*Source: National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children’s Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9*  
<http://www.developingchild.net>

Parents and teachers should be aware of signs of trauma, and seek help when needed, he said, but often parents don’t feel comfortable revealing upsetting circumstances that may be a root cause of a child’s trauma. Building trust and showing integrity, he said, goes a long way in addressing a traumatized child’s needs.

Jones cites the following age-related symptoms children may have in response to a traumatic event or series of events including exposure to gun violence:

**Five and under:** May be irritable, fussy or difficult to get calmed down. They may be easily started or show behaviors common in younger children such as thumb sucking. Clingy behavior and frequent tantrums may also be present, and they may talk or act out a traumatic event.

**Ages 6-12** may have trouble paying attention or be withdrawn. Their performance may decline in school. They may be in trouble at school or home, fearful, sad or want to be left alone.

**Teenagers** may refuse to follow rules, talk back more often, talk about the event or deny it happened, withdraw, engage in risky behaviors, change sleeping or eating patterns, have nightmares and may turn to drugs or alcohol.

Professional help should be considered, he said, if symptoms persist, get worse or the child's symptom are extreme and unresponsive to attempts to help.