

FACT SHEET

ISSUES IMPACTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

#3

UNEMPLOYMENT

South Africa is one of the most **unequal societies** in the world. Approximately half of the children (51%) in South Africa live in homes that are considered to be below the poverty line.



Poverty levels are still higher in Black and Coloured communities than in White communities. Many children and young people live in households where adults have been unemployed for a long time.

This situation leads to high levels of **financial pressure at home**. Families are faced with other stressful challenges such as exposure to **crime, community violence and domestic violence** - all things that have gotten worse because of COVID-19.

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA



Young people face numerous challenges. It is not only the young people who experience these challenges, but their parents, grandparents and caregivers have faced similar challenges generation after generation as a result of South Africa's violent past.

Historical trauma means that the generations who have come before have been impacted negatively by the experiences that they went through. Intergenerational trauma means that the way the older generation processes trauma, impacts on the generations that come after. For example, adults with unprocessed trauma are less able to offer emotional support to the children in their care, especially if the parents or caregivers face high levels of stress in their everyday lives. Parents and caregivers who struggle to talk about their feelings find it hard to support their children to express themselves and share what they are going through emotionally. This often means that young people don't have spaces where they can get support for the things they are going through.

IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON WELLBEING

After a traumatic experience, counselling may be helpful to get support to work through what happened.

After losing someone, it is important to talk about how you feel. If you do not like talking, then you can also try writing about how you feel.

When someone passes away, saying goodbye can help with healing.



STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

While trauma can be passed on intergenerationally, so can **strength, ability and resilience**. Our families may have struggled, but they have also **developed** ways of responding to these challenges that are **creative, strengthening and life-giving**. There are many different practices in each of our families and communities that we can **draw on for healing** after a difficult experience.

