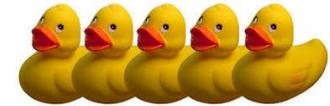


## Small t vs. Big T trauma

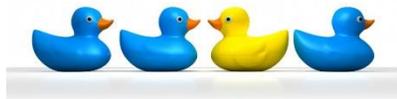
**Trauma** can be defined as the negative impacts of any event in our life that overwhelms our ability to cope and/or that we experience as unbearable and intolerable. These are painful moments that affect how we see the world and that can be reactivated by the smallest hint of perceived danger or the tiniest reminders of the event. Our reactions to these tiny reminders often feel overwhelming and incomprehensible after the fact.



*Example – Five cars are involved in a serious car accident on the highway. Two of the cars catch on fire, which sends everyone in a panic to get out of the vehicles before emergency vehicles arrive. Several people are seriously injured and a couple are killed.*

Big T traumas are significant events that happen in our life in which we are seriously harmed or are scared that we or someone else will be seriously harmed or killed. These events are universally accepted as traumatic and are described as traumatic in the DSM.

Small t traumas are unique to each individual person. They are moments that might profoundly affect one person, but affect another in no way at all. These are moments that the DSM may not recognize as trauma by definition, but that can affect us traumatically nonetheless.



*Example – Two 5 year olds get lost in a grocery store. For one five year-old, it is the best day of their life – they eat fistfuls of bulk candy and enjoy a moment of independence. For the other 5-year old, they are terrified. It reinforces a core belief that is developing that they are all alone.*

