

DISSOCIATION

IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Children who experience severe forms of trauma may develop dissociative symptoms or disorders. These children cope by disconnecting themselves from the reality of their experiences.



Advice from **Dr. Joyanna Silberg**, clinical child psychologist and expert on childhood trauma and dissociative disorders.

What Are Common Signs of Dissociation?

- Frequent looking away, not listening or “spacing out”
- Interacting with imaginary friends
- Dramatic **shifts in behavior** or relationships with peers, teachers, and parents
- **Loss of memory of previous events or behavior** when they shift into a different state of feeling (e.g., After calming down, a child not remembering being angry and breaking a plate)



When to Seek Support From a Professional

- Your child’s **imaginary friends are bossy** and make your child do things they don’t like. **Your child doesn’t like their imaginary friends and believes they are real.**
- Your child **doesn’t remember why they did something.** Memory loss of a child’s own behavior is a warning sign for parents.
- Your child’s **dissociative episodes** (looking away, not listening or “spacing out”) last **10-15 minutes or more.**
- Your child is **fainting** in situations of anxiety and fear.



How Can You Help as a Parent?

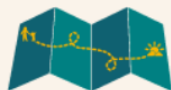
Help your child use descriptive language that is feelings-oriented around their experience of themselves. Ask or describe why they might be feeling or acting a certain way. For example, describe their imaginary friend as their feelings talking to them.



Join and Describe



Criticize or Correct



Roadmap to Resilience:
Supporting Children Experiencing Stress and Trauma

Listen to the episode “Understanding Dissociation” to learn more.