

What is a Trauma Adaptation?

A trauma adaptation is similar to a psychological defense mechanism in which someone unconsciously “defends” against discomfort to protect him or herself. With a trauma adaptation however, the defense mechanism is specifically rooted in the context of the trauma (i.e., someone who has a defense mechanism of aggressiveness as a way to protect themselves from danger because they were abused growing up).

The Analogy of the Tree and Trauma Adaptations

- Think of a tree and all its roots as an analogy for traumatic adaptations: The roots represent the core traumas, ACEs, and other experiences the youth have had.
- The trunk represents the process of the adaptations forming over time (i.e., for the psychological and sometimes physical survival of the youth).
- The branches and leaves represent what we see as adults, the disruptive behavior, class clown, etc.

