

## Intergenerational Trauma

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**Recent research “has not only chronicled the existence of intergenerational trauma but has demonstrated some of the epigenetic, molecular, and biochemical mechanisms responsible for such transmission” (Levine, 2015: 161)**

- Trauma can be transferred from the generation who directly experienced or witnessed the trauma to the next. This is intergenerational trauma.
- Trauma can also be transferred not only to the next generation but to subsequent generations (Atkinson et al. 2010). When trauma is transmitted across a number of generations, it is known as transgenerational trauma (Atkinson, 2002).
- Transgenerational trauma is broader than the context of the family and impaired interpersonal and caregiving relationships.

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- For example, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, transgenerational trauma extends well beyond the micro contexts of the individual and the familial.
- The historical and ongoing effects of colonialism, dispossession, racism and the Stolen Generation comprise the basis of intergenerational transmission of trauma for Australia's indigenous peoples.
- The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, as children, were forcibly taken away from their families and communities as the result of past government policies to be raised in institutions, fostered out or adopted by white families.
- Colonial policy for over two centuries has initiated and perpetuated a dangerous and insecure physical, emotional, economic, social and spiritual environment for Indigenous Australians (Dudgeon et al., 2014)
- Whole groups of people (e.g. holocaust survivors, refugees and asylum seekers) also disproportionately experience **collective** and **transgenerational** trauma. Collective trauma is trauma which happens to large groups and which can cross generations and communities.