Traumatic events

- War, combat and destruction
- Terroristic acts
- Long-term imprisonment (e.g. concentration camps)
- Criminal violence (e.g. rape, robbery, hijacking)
- Disasters (natural, man-made and technological)
- Accidents (e.g. traffic accidents)
- Child abuse (incest)
- Sudden and traumatic loss of a loved one
Psychotrauma: definition

- It involves the confrontation with war, violence, disasters, sudden loss, serious illness, etc.

- The event (or events) is characterized by:
  1. extreme sense of powerlessness
  2. disruption of beliefs and expectations
  3. confrontation with death
Characteristic reactions after extreme life events

- Recurrent thoughts about the event
- Sleeping problems (including nightmares)
- Anxieties
- Anger and irritations
- Self-blame and feelings of guilt
- Sadness
- Feeling of alienation and isolation
- Hypervigilance

Universiteit Utrecht
Criteria of PTSD (DSM-5, 2013)

A. The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence

B. Symptoms of persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event

C. Persistent effortful avoidance of distressing trauma-related stimuli after the event

D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood

E. Persistent symptoms of increased "arousal"

F. Length of the symptoms (criterion B, C, D and E) is more than a month

G. The disturbance causes significant distress or functional impairment socially, at work and in other areas
Indication of PTSD among young Dutch East Indian war victims (Mooren & Kleber, 1996, 2013)

1. Sample from Dutch population (born 1930–1945): 6%
2. Sample from population born in Dutch East Indies: 23.5%
3. War pension applicants (born in Dutch East Indies): 58.8%
4. Patients (born in Dutch East Indies) in therapy at Centrum '45: 69.8%
Resilience
Parenting characteristics of the post-war generation (according to clinical studies)

1. Disturbed interactions between child and parent
2. Role of the war in the family
3. Difficulty with emotions
1. Disturbed interaction between child and parent

- Overprotection
- Striving for autonomy by the child is not easily accepted. Process of letting go is hampered
- Disturbed development of separation-individuation
- Loyalty conflicts
- Parentification
2. Role of the war in the family

- Are the war experiences and memories discussed?
- Family secrets (conspiracy of silence)
- Feelings of isolation and social insecurity
3. Difficulty with emotions

- Very emotionally charged, both positive and negative emotions, and above all feelings related to aggression
- Due to memories of violence during the war, aggression in the family can be a difficult emotion for survivors to deal with
- Aggressive behaviour by children can make parents very upset because it reminds them of their persecutors
Later problems

- Problems in relationship with parents (including feelings of guilt)
- Problems in relationship with partner and others (excessive involvement, fear of losing the person)
- Feeling worried, depression
- Identity issues (not feeling at home anywhere, what is my place in society?)