

Goldsmith, R. E., Chesney, S. A., Heath, N. M., & Barlow, M. R. (2013). Emotion regulation difficulties mediate associations between betrayal trauma and symptoms of posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26(3), 376-384.

DOI: 10.1002/jts.21819

Study type: Quantitative analysis of an online survey

Study size: 593

Demographics: “58.3% female; mean age= 21.9 years, SD= 5.7, range= 17–52. The ethnic distribution of the final sample was 84.2% Caucasian, 4.5% biracial/multiracial, 2.5% Asian, 1.7% Black/African American, 1.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 6% other ethnicity or declined to respond” (p. 377).

Key findings and quotes:

- Study aimed to discover whether betrayal trauma was related to emotion regulating difficulties and psychological symptoms.
- “*Betrayal trauma*, or trauma perpetrated by someone to whom the victim was close (Freyd, 1996), is more strongly related to anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress than is trauma perpetrated by someone to whom the victim was not close” (p. 376).
- Betrayal trauma may occur within a system (i.e. school, family, military), or between specific individuals (i.e. parent/child relationships, or spouses).
- “Contextual aspects of trauma exposure may also explain why traumas that are not perpetrated by someone to whom the victim is close involve fewer psychological symptoms and emotion regulation difficulties. These traumas may be easier for survivors to compartmentalize as separate from daily life, whereas traumas perpetrated by someone close may involve continued contact or other environmental constants that trigger trauma-related symptoms and associated emotion regulation difficulties” (p. 377).
- LB= low betrayal trauma, while HB= high betrayal trauma.
- Four measures of psychological distress were taken into consideration: Intrusions, depression, anxiety, and avoidance.
- Results show “older age was associated with fewer emotion regulation difficulties and fewer avoidance symptoms, but was related to higher levels of HB trauma exposure, and LB trauma exposure” (p.379).
- Additionally, “women reported significantly more HB trauma and less LB trauma than did men, and also scored significantly higher than men on all symptom outcome measures as well as difficulties with emotion regulation” (p. 379).
- “HB trauma indirectly predicted symptoms of posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety via emotion regulation difficulties (an effect consistent with mediation)” (p. 381).