

New book offers insight to parents who have children with PTSD

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cscofiel@tulane.edu



“They’ll Never Be the Same: A Parent’s Guide to PTSD in Youth” by Michael Scheeringa, MD, explores what children and teenagers go through in the aftermath of traumatic events like natural disasters or acts of violence. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

A Tulane University psychiatrist and pioneering researcher in the field of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has authored a new book for parents whose children have experienced trauma. *They’ll Never Be the Same: A Parent’s Guide to PTSD in Youth* by Michael Scheeringa, MD, hits bookshelves this month. The book explores what children and teenagers go through in the aftermath of traumatic events like natural disasters or acts of violence.

Scheeringa says PTSD in children often goes undiagnosed by clinicians. Avoidance is a symptom of PTSD, so many times patients don't want to talk about what they're experiencing. The disorder doesn't go away on its own, though, and children with PTSD can suffer from nightmares, difficulty concentrating and trouble sleeping.

It's important for parents to recognize the symptoms of PTSD and talk to their child's doctors about it. *They'll Never Be the Same* is an A-to-Z guide covering what PTSD is, how to make a good diagnosis and where to seek treatment.

"We have treatments that work," Scheeringa says. "We have evidence-based psychotherapies that work for most people and part of the book documents that the diagnosis is missed and, even when it's recognized, it can take years before individuals seek treatment."

The book cites a case of one patient Scheeringa treated seven years after Hurricane Katrina. The child had been experiencing nightmares and distress since the storm.

"Every child who goes through PTSD, their life is the 'new normal,'" Scheeringa says. "It's how to adjust to having your life changed because of this and how you interact with people, how you concentrate and function daily."

Publisher's Weekly says in its review of Scheeringa's new book, "The text offers parents valuable guidance on finding help promptly and wisely. The FAQ chapter should be particularly useful for parents, as should an appendix that addresses talking with children who have experienced trauma."

Scheeringa is the Venancio Antonio Wander Garcia IV, MD Chair in Psychiatry at Tulane University School of Medicine. He has more than 20 years of experience studying PTSD in children as young as three.

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