



Intergenerational trauma – also called transgenerational trauma – is the transmission of traumatic experiences from one generation to the next.

It occurs when the **psychological wounds** of one generation affect the well-being, behaviours, and emotional patterns of their children and grandchildren, even if those descendants have not directly experienced the original trauma.

Traumatic events
echo through families,
communities, and even
nations, shaping how
people think, feel, and
relate to the world.

This form of trauma is especially common in the aftermath of war, repression, forced displacement, political persecution, or systemic violence – all of which were tragically common under totalitarian regimes across Europe in the 20th century.

These experiences, once considered part of the past, are painfully relevant today in the context of ongoing wars and humanitarian crises that continue to displace and traumatise individuals and communities across generations.



HOW Trauma Is Passed On

Trauma doesn't always stop with the individual who experiences it. Trauma can be passed across generations through a combination of emotional, social, and even biological mechanisms. It might appear in:



Family stories and silences.

When traumatic events are never discussed, they still shape relationships and family atmosphere.

Overprotection or emotional distance.

Parents who carry trauma may become either overly cautious or emotionally unavailable to their children.

Inherited fear or distrust.

Especially toward authority, strangers, or a social system.

Unspoken grief or shame.

Passed down like a shadow over daily life.

Epigenetic changes.

Studies suggest trauma can leave molecular traces that affect how stress is processed in future generations.

These patterns may seem unrelated to historical events at first glance – but they are often their silent legacy.





From Memory to Meaning: TURNING PAIN INTO PURPOSE

Though intergenerational trauma carries pain, it can also contribute to:



Greater empathy

for those who suffer in silence today.

Stronger civic responsibility

a deep-seated desire to stand up against injustice. **Cultural resilience**

trauma has inspired powerful artistic, literary, and educational responses.

A clearer sense of history

and the need to protect democratic values.

Pain can be transformed. Memory can become action. And silence can give way to dialogue.

Remembering is HEALING

Healing from intergenerational trauma is not about forgetting – it's about **reclaiming your story** and rewriting its meaning. While trauma may echo through generations, it is not a life sentence. There are ways to break the cycle and foster recovery:

Education and remembrance
Learn about the past. Visit memory sites. Share what you learn.

Creative expression

Write, paint, sing.
Art can give form
to what words
struggle to
express.

Open dialogue

Ask questions and listen across generations.
Silence feeds trauma.

Psychological support

Seek traumainformed therapy or community support groups.

Healing begins with awareness

and with the courage to confront what was once unspoken. Healing is a long journey – but no one has to walk it alone.







Ask an elder in your family about their memories.

Be patient and gentle.

Share
your own story
– even fragments
can be powerful.

that preserve historical truth and human dignity.

Take part in memorial days like 23 August to stand in solidarity.



Want to Learn More?

Explore resources, personal stories, and tools for educators and families at: Remember. August 23 | ENRS

Because memory lives in us all and every story remembered is a step towards healing.



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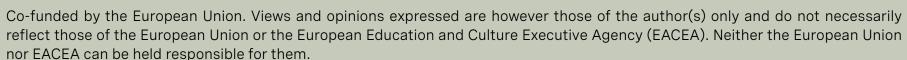














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