

## **TRAUMA TREATMENT METAPHORS**

Metaphors may be helpful for staff and clinicians to use with children and families as they explain the importance of participating in mental health treatment.

### **The Scraped Knee:**

Children who have experienced traumatic events may be reluctant to start therapy. It is helpful to explain that healing through therapy is similar to healing a scraped knee. When you fall down and scrape your knee, it is often scary and it hurts. In order for the knee to heal well you need to clean out the wound and apply medication, which may hurt a little bit. However, it is only uncomfortable for a little while and then the clean, medicated scrape on your knee can heal without getting infected. If you don't clean and put medication on your knee, it can get infected which can cause more pain and take longer to heal. Therapy is similar -- something bad may have happened that was scary and may have hurt and it might be uncomfortable to talk about it at first but with new skills and support you will begin to feel much better -- just like your knee.

### **The Beach Ball:**

Children and adults who have experienced trauma may spend a significant amount of energy trying to stop thoughts and avoid memories about their traumatic experiences, and sometimes it may interfere in their ability to enjoy life. It's like trying to constantly hold an enormous inflatable beach ball under the water, but the ball keeps trying to pop up. The longer we try to hold the beach ball under water the more exhausting it becomes. Therapy can help us develop effective strategies to slowly let the thoughts and memories come up without causing problems and eventually we don't have to spend so much time and energy trying to avoid them.