Betrayal trauma theory posits that interpersonal traumas in which there is a higher level of familiarity between perpetrator and victim results in significant interpersonal, psychosocial and adjustment outcomes. Specifically, the theory predicts survivors of trauma are more likely to make detrimental trust decisions within an interpersonal context, affecting intimacy within the relationship and an increased risk for subsequent victimization. Within romantic contexts, previous research has found that more exposure to betrayal trauma is related to worse psychological well-being than individuals who have not experienced these traumas. Further, greater trauma exposure has been linked with a higher likelihood of developing symptoms of depression, dissociation, and PTSD, especially when the individual perceives trust to have been violated in the relationship. Past research has yet to explain the relationships between trauma, perceptions of betrayal, and interpersonal functioning within a platonic friendship context. The present study explored how trauma influences interpersonal functioning and how individual perceptions of betrayal influence interpersonal functioning. Specifically, we examined how these traumatic and betrayal experiences affected individual psychological well-being and symptomatology, loneliness, perceived and actual intimacy within the relationship, and coping styles in response to conflict. With survey data of 229 participants, we sought to extend findings on trauma and betrayal to interpersonal contexts by positing that a positive relationship between individual perception of betrayal and psychological symptoms exists (hypothesis 1), in addition to trauma symptoms mediating the relationship between individual differences in trauma histories and depression symptoms, state trait anxiety symptoms, levels of interpersonal betrayal, and perceived and actual intimacy (hypothesis 2). Our results provide partial support our hypotheses.

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