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**Part 1 -
Understanding
Trauma Informed
Practices &
Building
Relationships**



**PLAN FOR
TODAY**

- **Defining Trauma**
- **Impact of Trauma**
- **The Importance of Relationships**

Defining Trauma

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (Samsha 2014)

Trauma is defined by its effect on a particular individual's nervous system, not on the intensity of the circumstance itself. A complete loss of control and a sense of utter powerlessness.

Regaining control is an important aspect of coping with traumatic stress and helping the child return to a situation that is predictable and safe is essential.

Types of Trauma

- **Acute trauma** is a single traumatic event that is limited in time.
- **During an acute event, children go through a variety of feelings, thoughts, and physical reactions that are frightening:**

Types of Trauma

- **Chronic trauma** refers to the experience of multiple traumatic events.
- These may be multiple and varied events, such as:
 - *the child's being exposed to domestic violence, involved in a serious car accident, and then becoming a victim of community violence, or*
 - *longstanding trauma such as physical abuse, neglect, or war*
- **The effects of chronic trauma are often cumulative.**

Types of Trauma

- **Historical trauma** is a personal or historical event or prolonged experience that continues to have an impact over several generations. Examples include:
 - Slavery
 - Removal from homelands
 - Relocation
 - Massacres, genocides, or ethnocides
 - Cultural, racial, and immigrant oppression
 - Forced placement in boarding schools

Types of Trauma

Complex Trauma

- Describes both exposure to chronic trauma—usually caused by adults entrusted with the child's care—and the impact of such exposure on the child.
- Children who have experienced complex trauma have endured multiple interpersonal traumatic events from a very young age.
- Complex trauma has profound effects on nearly every aspect of a child's development and functioning

Types of Trauma

Neglect


- Failure to provide for a child's basic needs
- Perceived as trauma by an infant or young child who is completely dependent on adults for care
- Opens the door to other traumatic events
- May interfere with a child's ability to recover from trauma

2. Impact of Trauma

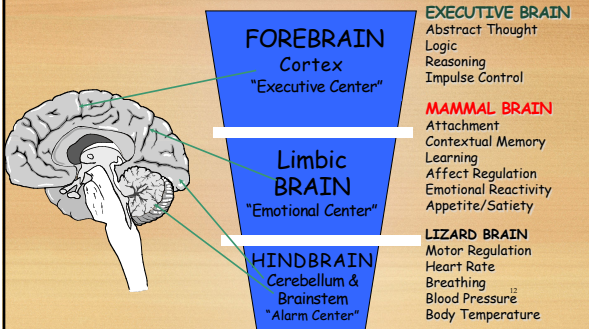
- ✓ Activation of survival responses:
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
 - Faint
- ✓ Shutting down and limited skills to respond in a healthy way to daily functioning and relationships
- ✓ Rational thought is less possible at this time
- ✓ Increased reactivity and decreased responsiveness

(Hopper, 2009)

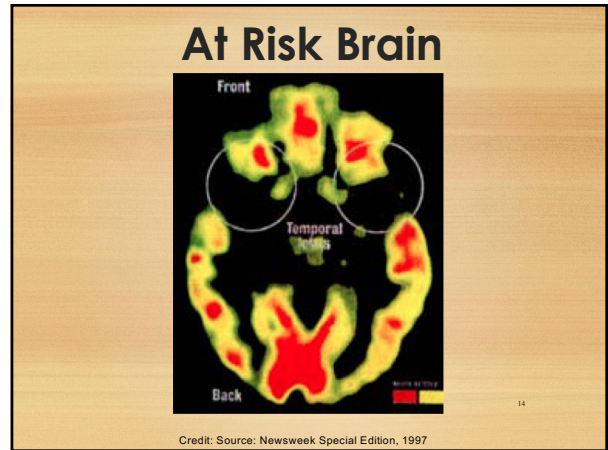
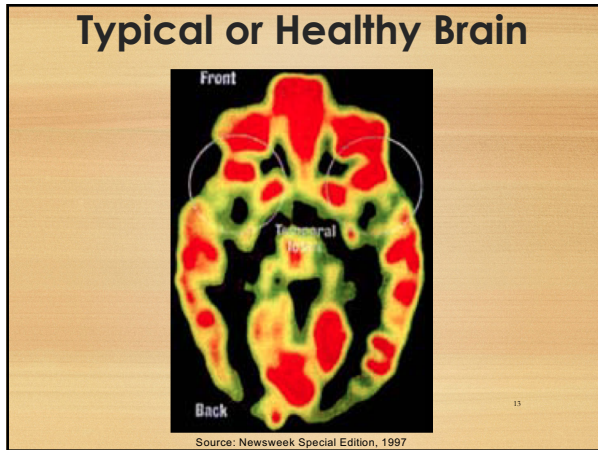
When the primitive parts of the brain perceive danger, they automatically mobilize a strong physiological response.



Hierarchy of Brain Development



FOREBRAIN Cortex "Executive Center"	EXECUTIVE BRAIN Abstract Thought Logic Reasoning Impulse Control
Limbic BRAIN "Emotional Center"	MAMMAL BRAIN Attachment Contextual Memory Learning Affect Regulation Emotional Reactivity Appetite/Satiety
HINDBRAIN Cerebellum & Brainstem "Alarm Center"	LIZARD BRAIN Motor Regulation Heart Rate Breathing Blood Pressure Body Temperature




Toxic Stress Video

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

3 Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD
Center on the Developing Child | HARVARD UNIVERSITY



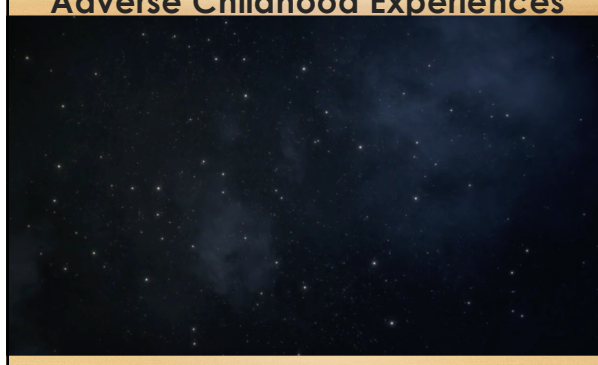

One Million New Neural Connections are Being Built Every Second in a Child

What does this mean our job is with children?

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>

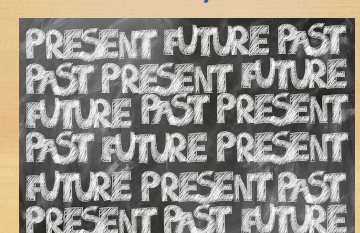
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Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris on Adverse Childhood Experiences

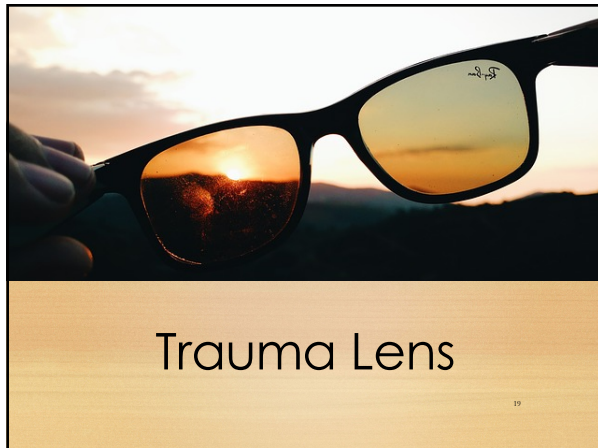


Adverse Childhood Experiences

- What is ACES?
- Research Facts/Handouts




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Some Common Characteristics/Behaviors for Infants and Toddlers Exposed to Trauma

- Difficult to soothe, inconsolable crying
- Resistant to touch
- Difficulty sleeping, night terrors
- Feeding challenges
- Listless and subdued emotional state, unresponsive to stimulation
- Low frustration tolerance, agitated, restlessness
- Lack of play



Some Common Characteristics/Behaviors for Toddlers Exposed to Trauma

Additionally, toddlers may have...

- Delays in language development
- Behavior that alternates from one extreme to another
- Frequent and intense tantrums
- Withdrawal
- Play that appears disorganized and erratic
- Difficulty with separation

Common Characteristics/Behaviors for Older Children Exposed to Trauma

- Parentified (*Takes on adult role*)
- Indiscriminate attachment (*not secure attachment*)
- Controlling in interactions with others
- Upset by moments of emotional closeness and quiet
- Hoarding or collecting food, toys or other materials
- Difficulty with transitions or changes to routines
- Impaired short-term memory
- Hypervigilance: extreme sensitivity to noise, movement or changes in environment
- Misattribution with facial expressions and body language
- Difficulty playing (*especially imaginary or symbolic play*) and/or persistently engaged in traumatic play

Many Children who Cannot Play are Children who have had to Attend to their own Survival Needs

- They feel that they can't take their attention away from the here-and -now
- Internal working models of the world where their very survival depends upon maintaining a vigilant state.
- Trauma enters into children's play in several ways. Many children are quite restricted in their range of play activities.

Lesley Koplow (Ed.), Unsmiling Faces: How Preschools can Heal (2nd Ed)

Trauma Triggers that Affect Arousal States

Sorrels (2015), p. 39


A new child or adult	Quick movements	Disorganized materials
A stranger entering the space	Unexpected touch	Unpredictable schedule
Noise level	Harsh touch	The absence of caregiver
A smell	Another child crying	A particular texture
An unexpected noise	Someone taking something away	Taking the child's shoes off while they are lying down
Change in lighting	New room arrangement	Someone approaching while the child is lying on a cot
Change in schedule	New piece of equipment	
Too many transitions	Nap time	Tickling a child
Harsh words or tone of voice	Someone approaching the child too quickly	
Angry or fearful facial expression	An adult towering over a child	

Common Behaviors of Children in FIGHT Mode	
Sorrels (2015), p. 39	
Child yells or screams	Child is argumentative
Child curses	Child throws self on the floor
Child kicks, spits, bites, or head-butts other children and adults	Child destroys property
Child makes violent threats	Child uses objects to jab or hit other objects in the room

Common Behaviors of Children in FLIGHT Mode	
Sorrels (2015), p. 39	
Child covers face with hands, buries face in arms, pulls jacket over head, pulls hat down over face, wears sunglasses	Child hides someplace in the room out of sight of caregiver or teacher
Child runs out of building or room	Child hides under blanket
Child sits in the corner of the room and just watches	Child sits under table
Child appears to be daydreaming	Child falls asleep when things are chaotic, noisy, or overstimulating
Child becomes absorbed with things and seems unaware to people	

Common Behaviors of Children in FREEZE Mode	
Sorrels (2015), p. 39	
Child appears lethargic and spaced out, not paying attention	Child engages in repetitive movements or perseverating on something like picking at skin over and over
Child is unresponsive to name being called	Child is socially withdrawn
Child is unresponsive to commands, requests or questions	Child is not able to vocalize
Child appears to daydream a lot	

It's Easier To Build The Brain Of A Young Child, Than Repair The Brain Of An Adult But...



3. Strategies

- **3a. Relationships**

(TO BE DISCUSSED in Trauma 102)

- **3b. Environment**
- **3c. Building Sensory and Body Awareness and Strengthening Emotional Literacy and Self-Regulation**

"Children who have been harmed in the context of a relationship can only be healed in a relationship. You will never truly change a child's heart without first establishing a relationship of trust and unconditional acceptance."

(Sorrel, 2015, p. 48)

3a. Relationships Are Key

4 S's of Attunement

- Seen** – Caregiver senses the child's internal mental state
- Soothed** – Child has distress and caregiver tunes in and helps state to calm state (reactive to receptive)
- Safe** – Caregiver protects child from danger and will not be a source of danger
- Secure** – Develops a coherent sense of self. Learn implicitly that when things don't go so well they will get worked out.



ATTUNEMENT AND CONNECTION

“For a child or an adult, it's extremely powerful to hear someone say, ‘I get you. I understand. I see why you feel this way.’ This kind of empathy disarms us. It relaxes our rigidity. It soothes our chaos”

(Siegel & Bryson, 2012)

Children's Coping

Attunement plays a central role in how children cope with stress and trauma.

- Secure relationships buffer children from high stress and are critical for the development of emotion regulation.
- Children with disorganized attachments have no organized way of coping with stress and separation.



First: Connect to the Child – Second: Guide Toward Solution

Connect First:

- Validating emotions*
 - Reassuring: tone of voice, listening*
 - Non verbal: touch, facial expressions (humming, rocking)*
 - Attunement: feeling felt*

Redirect Second:

- Explain*
- Plan*
- Negotiate*
- Reason*



Adapted Dr. Daniel Siegel, "Whole Brain Child"

Name It to Tame It

Dr. Daniel Siegel, "Whole Brain Child"



- Help children tell their stories to calm big emotions:
- Research shows that merely assigning a name or label to what we feel calms down the activity of the emotional circuitry in the right hemisphere
- Don't be afraid to repeat the story: if we try to move on too fast, the memory of the pain gets stored without the associated memory of how the child recovered

Engage, Don't Enrage

Dr. Daniel Siegel, "Whole Brain Child"

Vertical Integration:

- Connect then redirect, name it to tame it
- Connect, communicate, compromise
- Time for reinforcement of rules and expectations



For children who are panicking, having flashbacks, or in a preoccupied or disassociated state, it is useful if the adult can help children to differentiate her past experiences from the circumstances of the here and now.

Source: Lesley Koplow (Ed.), *Unsmiling Faces: How Preschools can Heal* (2nd Ed).

Helping a Child with a Trauma Trigger in the Moment

"Maybe you remember a time when going to sleep was scary for you. Now you are here with Ms. Marcy and I am taking care of you. You are safe at preschool. I will stay with you until you fall asleep. When you wake up, I will be here and your friends will be here. After nap, we will have snack together. You are safe. My job is to keep you safe at preschool."

"When you were a baby, the sirens came when your uncle was shot and that was sad and scary. Right now you are here with me at preschool. I am taking care of you and nothing bad is going to happen. You are safe. Those sirens are not coming here. They are going to help someone else. You are safe. I am taking care of you."

ELMO'S SAFE PLACE

SESAME STREET

Resources on Trauma

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
<http://www.nctsn.org/> (search for early childhood resources)
- ACES
<http://www.centerforyouthwellness.org/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/>
- ACES TOO HIGH
<https://acesoohigh.com>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acesstudy/index.html>

Resources Continued

Books

- Dr. Daniel Siegel: *Whole Brain Child* and *Parenting from the Inside Out*
- Leslie Koplow: *Unsmiling Faces: How Preschools can Heal*
- Dr. Peter Levine and Maggie Kline: *Trauma Through a Child's Eyes*
- Dr. Jane Nelsen: *Positive Discipline*
- Barbara Sorrels (2015). *Reaching and teaching children exposed to trauma*. Gryphon House, Inc.

Websites:

- <http://www.ahaparenting.com>
- www.ace-network.com/cfspotlight.htm
- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>

With Appreciation and Thank you!

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