

Helping Children from Hard Places – Part I
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Presented at ALSCA Workshop – September 8, 2017

Understanding Trauma

TRAUMA IS ...

An event or condition in which an individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed or he/she experiences a threat to life, bodily integrity or sanity.

TYPES OF TRAUMA

Events

- Natural Disasters
- Sudden Life Changes
- Physical or Sexual Assault
- Loss of Caregiver
- Accidents
- Medical Procedures

Conditions

- Neglect
- Bullying
- Abuse
- Community Violence
- Deprivation
- Illness

NOTES

The Brain and Trauma

When our brains perceive danger, our logical processes are suspended and we enter survival mode: fight, flight or freeze. With enough intensity or frequency – or without proper recovery -- our brains are more easily triggered to enter this state regardless of any actual danger being present.

NEUROLOGICAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON CHILDREN

1. Enhanced Threat Perception System: The brain can't discriminate between situations that are dangerous and ones that are manageable.
2. Impaired Relevance Filter: The brain can't tell what is relevant and can be overlooked and what must be tended to. This leads to stimulation overload.
3. Damaged Self-Sensing System: Unpleasant emotions lead to coping mechanisms where the child seeks comfort and detachment. This leads to difficulty knowing one's own sensations – emotionally and physically.

BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS OF NEUROLOGICAL IMPACT

1. Difficulty Filtering makes paying attention extremely difficult.
2. Difficulty regulating affect leads to difficulty regulating behavior.
3. Inability to distinguish dangerous situations from benign situations leads to fear and mistrust, making secure relationship difficult or impossible.

NOTES

Understanding Attachment

Attachment refers to the enduring bond that connects one person to another across time and space.

Attachment style refers to how we manage close relationships with others in order to feel secure.

Secure Attachment gives children a secure “home base” from which they venture to explore the world and to which they return when needed.

Securely attached adults balance **intimacy and independence**.

TYPES OF ATTACHMENT

	<i>Avoidance</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
<i>Secure</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Dismissing/Avoidant</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Preoccupied/Ambivalent</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Fearful/Disorganized</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>high</i>

Keys to Healthy Attachment

Attunement

Balance

Context

NOTES

Common Challenges

Symptoms can be **externalized** (physical or verbal aggression, violence, tantrums, poor boundaries) or

Internalized (self-harm, difficulty giving and receiving care, social withdrawal, dissociation, somatization, pain agnosia, age regression) or

Common **diagnoses** include Anxiety, Depression, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, PTSD, Sensory Processing Disorder, ADHD/ADD, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Disinhibited Attachment disorder.

Caregivers often struggle with **secondary traumatization** and **compassion fatigue** which can lead to being too harsh and rejecting or too soft and enabling as well as low commitment.

NOTES

PowerPoint and Handouts Available at
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General Solutions

First, we must provide safety

Actual Safety: Food, Shelter, Freedom from Danger

Felt Safety: Capable Caregiver, Kind Voices, Clear Rules/Follow-Through, Compassion, Patience, Teaching mindset. NO corporal punishment, real or perceived abandonment, or shame.

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Specific Solutions

KARYN PURVIS/TBRI

Immediate

Direct

Efficient

Action-Based

Leveled at Behavior

NOTES

EMPATHY

Perspective-Taking

Avoid Judgment

Recognize Emotions

Communicate Understanding

INTERVENTIONS

Redo

Compromise

“I need attention”

Drama

Lying

Controlling

Emotional Vocabulary

Play, humor

Attunement

Receiving Care

Boundaries

NOTES

MAKING REPAIR

We're not OK, but I want to be

I'm sorry for _____

Let me help you say you're sorry too

It's done!

WHEN REFERRING FOR THERAPY, CONSIDER ...

Attachment Work

EMDR

CBT/Trauma-informed CBT

Systems Approach

Play Therapy

MUST-HAVE RESOURCES

Parenting from the Inside Out by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell

Siblings Without Rivalry by Adele Faber

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel Van der Kolk

The Connected Child by Karyn Purvis and David Cross

The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

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