



2021 LANL FOUNDATION
EDUCATION TRAINING SERIES II

“Understanding the Role of Trauma in Child Development”

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Review of Trauma from Previous Training

“Fire can warm or consume, water can quench or drown, wind can caress or cut. And so it is with human relationships; we can both create and destroy, nurture and terrorize, traumatize and heal each other.”

-Bruce D. Perry

Early Experiences Matter for a Lifetime

Experiences
Build Brain
Architecture

Relationships
Shape Brain
Circuitry

Toxic Stress
Derails Healthy
Development



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TRAUMA

“Traumatic experiences can profoundly affect memory, language development, and writing. This can interfere with a child’s ability to master the basic subject matter that is the core of every school’s curriculum, and all aspects of the learning process...”

-Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Vol. 2 (2013)

Definition of Trauma

The National Institute of Mental Health defines childhood trauma as: *“The experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects.”*



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Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development



The Three E's of Trauma

Events

Experiences

Effects



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Impact of Trauma on the Developing Brain

- Attachment
- Physical Health
- Emotional Regulation
- Cognitive Ability
- Self- Concept
- Behavioral Control
- Dissociation

Impact of Trauma on Learning, Behavior, and Relationships in School

- Academic Performance
 - Classroom Behavior
 - Relationships

Expressions of Trauma in Educational Settings

A child who has survived trauma may experience delays and challenging behaviors

Language and Communication

Social and Emotional Regulation

Building Relationships

Healthy Play and Interactions

Aggression or Withdrawal (Fight or Flight)*

What Is Trauma?

Activates the survival instinct

Overwhelms the ability to cope

Generally, causes intense feelings of helplessness and vulnerability

May generate a range of negative feelings: fear, rage, betrayal, shame, guilt and submission



Resilience

Particularly with the right supports and resources, children have **a remarkable ability to thrive**, even when they have experienced multiple difficulties in their lives.

There are many factors that can support resilience:

- A safe home
- Supportive lasting relationships
- The ability to manage hard feelings
- Feelings positive about yourself



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Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Children may:

Feel helpless
and uncertain

Fear being
separated
from caregiver

Cry or scream
often

Eat
poorly/lose
weight

Return to
bedwetting

Return to
using baby
talk

Recreate
trauma
through play

Develop new
fears

or have
nightmares

Extreme
changes in
behavior



Triggers

Children may be triggered by:

Stress

Raised voices

Someone who is quiet

Unexpected change

Feelings of vulnerability or fear

Feeling threatened or attacked

Too much stimulation from environment

YouTube Video

<https://youtu.be/QINBPPrjIE8>

- Take a deep breath
- Connection before Correction
- Name it to tame it
- Smelling and cooling the soup

Breakout Rooms: Debrief Video

What are your life savers?

In your group, share on or more things you have found most valuable in getting through a hard day?

A circle of diverse hands holding each other, symbolizing support and care. The hands are of various skin tones and are arranged in a circle, with fingers interlaced, creating a sense of unity and mutual support. The background is plain white.

Trauma- Informed Care

Trauma Informed Care

“Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.” (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010)

- Focus on Connection before Correction
- Starts with individuals, families to communities and systems



What Can I Do To Help?

**Ask “What happened?”
not “What’s wrong?”**

- Dr. Bruce Perry -

Children Who Experience Trauma Need:



SAFETY



SECURITY



NURTURING

Understand Trauma Informed Care

Understand your
child/children
(temperaments, etc)

Talk about feelings in
a healthy way

Be a role model for
expressing strong
feelings in healthy
ways

Give positive
feedback and
encouragement

Teach coping skills

What Else Can Be Done?

Help	Help children identify and name what they are feeling
Give	Give children lots of opportunities to identify feelings in themselves and others
Encourage	Encourage them to talk about their feelings
Be	Be a role model by talking about your own feelings
Accept	Accept children's feelings, whatever they are
Teach	Teach children that emotions are not good or bad, they just are
Help	Help them learn its ok to feel whatever they feel
Help	Help children think about how to respond to feelings, conflicts and problems in healthy and respectful ways. Ask them: What can you do? Who can you talk to? How do you calm yourself when upset?

Let's Talk Behavior



Remember – Behavior is Communication!

A behavior is the way a person acts in response to a particular situation

WHY IS BEHAVIOR IMPORTANT?

Keeping themselves safe becomes the primary motivator of behavior

Safety trumps all else!
Children may appear manipulative or controlling; when in reality, they are just trying to keep themselves safe.

Behavior is like an iceberg; we only see the small portion above the surface

Misbehavior we see is often a child's attempt to make sense of a situation

Even minor stressors can act as triggers that fill a child with emotion, leading to misbehavior

Misbehavior can put children at risk for maltreatment

Focus on understanding the child not the behavior

Behavior Makes Sense

- Most children who have experiences trauma have many behaviors that can push the buttons of those around them.
- These behaviors can feel confusing.
- Often, we react to these behaviors without understanding what drives them.
- The more we understand where behaviors come from, the more effective our response will be.
- The two primary functions of behavior are:
 - Safety
 - Getting needs met



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SURVIVAL TRUMPS EVERYTHING ELSE

Building a Healthy Relationship

Ingredients of a good relationship:

Reciprocity

Respect

Joy

Trust

Curiosity

Acceptance

Repair

Steps to Building a Healthy Relationship

Ease into the relationship

Build the relationship

Meet the child's pace

Expect the good

Keep the expectations realistic

Be curious about the whole child (interests, fears, talents, wants, needs)

Honor history

Ride the roller coaster

Address the disconnects

Engage with joy

Remember!

Supportive relationships buffer/protect young children from the effects of trauma/toxic stress

**IT IS OFTEN
IN THE
DARKEST SKIES
THAT WE SEE
THE BRIGHTEST
STARS★**

RICHARD EVANS

www.TheSilverPen.com

Questions/Ideas

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