“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
“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...”

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."
Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children’s Learning and Development
The Three E’s of Trauma

Events
Experiences
Effects
Impact of Trauma on the Developing Brain

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

*When stress responses are triggered, stress hormones (cortisol and adrenaline) are released
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
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
Breakout Rooms:
Debrief Video

What are your life savers?

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help</th>
<th>Help children identify and name what they are feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give</td>
<td>Give children lots of opportunities to identify feelings in themselves and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage</td>
<td>Encourage them to talk about their feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>Be a role model by talking about your own feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Accept children’s feelings, whatever they are</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>Teach children that emotions are not good or bad, they just are</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Help them learn it's ok to feel whatever they feel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>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?</td>
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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

SURVIVAL TRUMPS EVERYTHING ELSE
Ingredients of a good relationship:

- Reciprocity
- Respect
- Joy
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Acceptance
- Repair
Steps to Building a Healthy Relationship

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

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Questions/Ideas

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