CHILDHOOD TRAUMA
Finding a Way Through

Presented by:
Tammy Schamuhn, M.Sc., R. Psychologist., R.Play Therapist Supervisor
Co-Founders of the Institute of Child Psychology
Our foundation is one of respect for all with a commitment to listen fully and learn from the diverse viewpoints of our team and those we service in our community.

At the heart of our work is the importance we place on insight, compassion, trust and warmth. We want to foster lasting change in the lives of families and transform our community. We believe that everyone should have access to affordable mental health resources.

We believe strongly in dismantling the stigma around mental health and in empowering caregivers and professionals to help children to reach their full potential. We continually identify important questions, seek out the answers, and evaluate and document what we learn.
WHAT IS Trauma:

- Experience that may be perceived and traumatic for one individual may not be interpreted in the same way for another
- Not what happens to you but what happens inside you
- Conflicting messages from others:
  - i.e., Sexual assault: “I believe you” vs. “are you sure”
- Trauma overwhelms our capacity to control how we are responding to our environment
- Our brain keeps us alive at all costs
- Experience of trauma: moves us out of knowing what we are doing to reacting to what is happening
- Results in “disconnection from self”
- Supporting someone who has experienced trauma requires that we accept that a person may be both living in a secure and predictable present, while also experiencing an overwhelming, ever-present, past
ACES

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse, neglect, household challenges and later-life health and well-being.

The original ACE Study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997 with two waves of data collection. Over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members from Southern California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors.

(https://www.cdc.gov/)

MECHANISM BY WHICH ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html
The Three Types of Aces Include

**Abuse**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**Neglect**
- Physical
- Emotional

**Household Dysfunction**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother Treated Violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce

- **Sexual abuse** - the wording, “adult or person at least five years old…”, failed to account for some abuse scenarios.
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Physical neglect**
- **Emotional neglect**
  - Exposure to **domestic violence** - the wording, “your mother or stepmother…”, failed to account for violence against **male parents** or other family members.
- **Household substance abuse**
- **Household mental illness**
- **Parental separation** or **divorce**
- **Incarcerated** household member
Trauma AND THE Brain

Triune Brain:

Brain Stem (Lizard):
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Limbic System (Mammalian):
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Cortical (Human):
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

NEOCORTEX: Rational or Thinking Brain

LIMBIC BRAIN: Emotional or Feeling Brain

REPTILIAN BRAIN: Instinctual or Dinosaur Brain
UNDERSTANDING Sensory INPUT

FIGHT - FLIGHT - FREEZE - COLLAPSE
THE Autonomic NERVOUS SYSTEM:

Sympathetic Nervous System:

Parasympathetic Nervous System:

THREAT Response SYSTEM ACTIVATION

• The more “sensitized” the neurons, the more sensitive the child. They will perceive more things as threatening than the average child.

• Like a muscle, pathways in our brain become stronger the more that we use them: the more we use the “alarm center” in our brain, the more easily activated it is.
Window of Tolerance

Externalized Behaviours

Overwhelmed
Chaotic Responses

Hyper-Aroused
Fight / Flight Response

Outbursts
Anger / Agression / Rage

Calm, Cool,
Collected, Connected

Hypo-Aroused
Freeze Response

Internalized Behaviours

Shut Down
Dissociation

Flat Affect /
No Display of Emotion

Calm, Cool,
Collected, Connected
**Mirror Neurons**

Mirror neurons allow us to learn through imitation; reflecting body language, facial expressions, emotions, and most importantly, the development of empathy.

---

**Trauma and Memory**

Explicit Memory:

---

Implicit Memory:

---

- Integration of left and right brain functioning requires cortical functioning (cerebellum)
- Cortical functioning goes offline when the threat response becomes activated
- Trauma: left and right brain not integrating information
  - experience and emotion are not connected
  - cannot recall integrated narrative
  - may recall sensation without words
  - words without sensation (older children & youth)
THE MANY FACES OF Trauma

Misdiagnosis

• **Traumatized Children:** dysregulation, problems with attention and concentration, difficulties getting along with self and others

• There is no single set of behavioural patterns that will present in a child
  • There is no right or wrong way to behave following the experiences of trauma.

• Kids present differently from adults

• Often present very similar behaviours to other disorders of childhood, like anxiety, depression, ODD, etc.

• Working with professionals to differentiate between pre-existing diagnoses and traumatic behaviours: they need ALL the information

• In examining clusters of behaviour, we will look at them through the predominant trauma response –
  • fight/flight (externalizing),
  • freeze (internalizing/dissociation)
Externalized Behaviours

Irritability, quick to anger
Increased arousal, edginess and agitation
Avoidance or reminders of trauma
Feelings of fear, helplessness, uncertainty, vulnerability
Feelings of guilt or shame
Dissociation, feelings of unreality or being “outside of one’s body”
Continually feeling on alert or threat of danger
Unusually reckless, aggressive, or self-destructive behaviour

Internalized Behaviours

Difficulty concentration and learning in school
Easily distracted
Often doesn’t seem to listen
Disorganization
Hyperactive
Restless
Difficulty sleeping

Dissociative Behaviours

Difficulty sustaining attention
Struggling to follow instructions
Difficulty with organization
Fidgeting or squirming
Difficulty waiting or taking turns
Talking excessively
Losing things necessary for tasks or activities
Interrupting or intruding upon others
Trauma AND Attachment

Attachment Styles:

Secure Attachment:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Anxious Attachment:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Ambivalent Attachment:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Disorganized Attachment:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Circle of Security®
Parent Attending To The Child’s Needs

**IMPACT OF Trauma ON THE ATTACHMENT SYSTEM**

- **Egocentricity** – children view themselves as the center of their world, and the things that happen as a result of their actions
- Child’s perception of others to keep them safe can be impacted
- Internalization: “my parents are fighting because I’m bad”
- Parents “all knowing” so must know it was happening; therefore, it’s ok
- Ruptures in relationship resulting from managing behaviours following experience of trauma
**Interventions AND Therapies**

Help children understanding their feelings

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Left-Right Brain Integration

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

**Attachment FOCUSED INTERVENTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routines</th>
<th>Caregiver Affect Management</th>
<th>Attunement</th>
<th>Praise and Reinforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routines for mealtimes, bedtimes, etc.</td>
<td>Tune into and notice child successes</td>
<td>Respond to affect NOT behaviour: separate the child from the behaviour Be hypervigilant of child’s cues; learn to read child’s non-verbals and teach to others</td>
<td>Notice changes Notice child coping well Celebrate successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce stressors in the home / classroom</td>
<td>Learn emotion regulation skills</td>
<td>Psycho-education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent, appropriate limit setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2020 Institute of Child Psychology
www.instituteofchildpsychology.com
Managing BIG FEELINGS

Time-In’s

A.C.T
A- Acknowledge Feelings
C- Communicate Limit
T- Target an Alternative

Aggression

DISCIPLINE

RECONNECTING
# Fight-Flight-Freeze Grounding Tools

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signs Of Flight</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grounding Flight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signs Of Fight</strong></td>
<td><strong>Slowing Down Fight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spotting Of Freeze</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grounding Freeze</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C.B.C MODEL OF De-Escalating ANXIETY

Connect

• Label emotions
• Label reactions
• Give permission for the emotion
• Touch
• Listen

Body AND Breath

Physical Contact

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Ice-Cold Water

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Getting Unscared

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Shaking on Purpose

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Vigorous Exercise

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Chair Breathing

Heart And Belly

Glitter Jars

Bubbles, Balloons, Windmills, and Cups
Dragon Breaths

Pizza Breath

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Guided Visualization
4 B's

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Crossing the Midline

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Change the Thoughts

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Suicide AND Self-Harm

Self harming behaviours can include: cutting, scratching, head banging, picking, burning and hair pulling

Why do people self-harm?

• Self-harm can be in response to intense emotional pain, being overwhelmed by negative feelings, thoughts, or memories
• Self-harm can offer temporary relief
• The pain associated with self-harm can sometimes give a physical representation of internal pain

Supporting someone with self-harm:

• Be non-judgmental and calm
• Avoid blaming, assuming, and ultimatums
• Help them to identify how they are feeling
• Listen to how your youth is feeling
• First aid/seek medical attention
• Suggest distractions/alternative coping
• Seek professional support

Suicide

• At times an individual’s worries and wounds can seem overwhelming and everything may appear hopeless accompanied with a feeling of helplessness
• In supporting youth:
  • Directly addressing your concerns will not plant seeds
  • Remain calm, in control, and non-judgmental
  • Acknowledge the feelings
  • Listen to them without trying to make everything better
  • Seek professional support
  • Safety plan, increase positive supports, ensure your own supports are in place
## Trauma Specific Therapies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Stem</th>
<th>Limbic Brain</th>
<th>Pre-Frontal Cortex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0m - 2 yrs</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 - 4 yrs</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 - 6 yrs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythmic and patterned sensory input (swinging, tapping, rocking chair, throwing a ball back and forth)</td>
<td>Complex movement (i.e., brain gym; figure eights, hookups, ball throw)</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional And Physical Warmth</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Play Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sameness And Proximity</td>
<td>Social Experiences</td>
<td>Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple* Narrative (If Past 6m)</td>
<td>Play Therapy</td>
<td>Formal* Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music And Movement</td>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>CBT / Insight Oriented Therapies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reiki</td>
<td>Belonging And Loyalty</td>
<td>Unconditioned Love and Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Assisted Tx</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Expressive therapies combined with expressive elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Tx (Attachment / narrative based)</td>
<td>No separation or shame based discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No separation or shame based discipline</td>
<td>No separation or shame based discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Security Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Topics:

Play and Trauma
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Technology and Trauma
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Common Questions
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
HELPFUL Resources

Trauma Through a Child's Eyes - Peter E Levine & Maggie Kline
The Whole Brain Child – Daniel J. Seigel & Tina P. Bryson
No Drama Discipline - Daniel J. Seigel & Tina P. Bryson
Parenting From the Inside Out – Daniel Seigel & Mary Hartzel
The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog – Bruce Perry & Maia Szalavitz
Born for Love - Bruce Perry & Maia Szalavitz
The Body Keeps Score – Bessel Van Der Kolk
Hold On to Your Kids – Gordon Neufeld & Gabor Mate
In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts – Gabor Mate
When the Body Says No – Gabor Mate
Scattered Minds – Gabor Mate
Rest Play Grow – Deborah Macnamara
www.beaconhouse.org.uk
www.childtrauma.org
The Institute of Child Psychology was founded to educate parents and professionals on issues pertaining to children’s mental health, and to promote the psychological and emotional well-being of children and adolescents.

Our mission is to empower parents, teachers, therapists, social workers and psychologists by giving them pertinent insights, skills, and tools necessary to help children thrive.