



Vibrant Disaster Behavioral Health Symposium

The Power of Community and Connection in
Disaster Behavioral Health

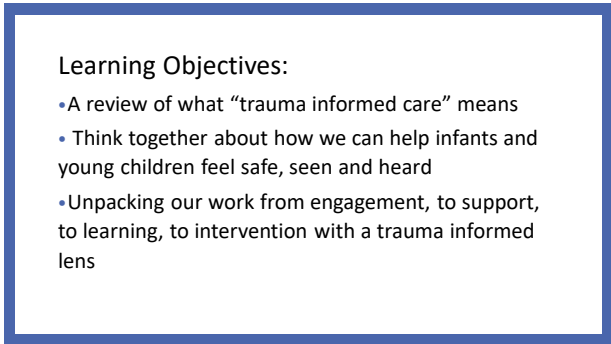
1



Presented by Julia
Yeary, LCSW, IMH-E®
(Mentor, Clinical and
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THE FOUNDATIONAL ROLE OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE IN OUR WORK WITH INFANTS, YOUNG CHILDREN, AND THEIR FAMILIES

2



Learning Objectives:


- A review of what "trauma informed care" means
- Think together about how we can help infants and young children feel safe, seen and heard
- Unpacking our work from engagement, to support, to learning, to intervention with a trauma informed lens

3

What is TRAUMA?

When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma.


National Child Traumatic Stress Network



4

Pause and consider "what might the child be experiencing?"

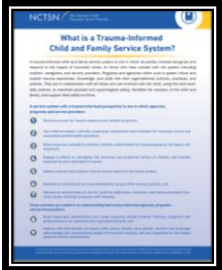
A caregiver and their child are inextricably linked. If you are primarily supporting an adult who has a young child, both adult and child will influence how the other is.



5

Trauma Informed Care


Trauma-Informed Care | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (nctsn.org)



6

Babies and tender age children need a trusted caregiver to feel safe

What happens when that trusted caregiver cannot respond or reassure the child?



7

Dr. Donald Winnicott

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BABY...

There is a baby and someone!

8

Remembering to ask:
And how are YOU, momma/poppa?

The importance of parallel process!



9

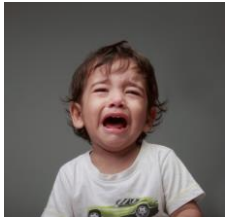
Challenges to Early Development



Toxic Stress: Events occurring repeatedly over time that provoke an intense stress reaction, and which are not buffered by a supportive caregiver.

10

Common Concerning Behaviors



- Frequent crying for what seems like no reason
- Fear of leaving caregivers, clinginess
- Fear of the dark
- Nightmares
- Fear in new situations
- Increase in attention seeking behavior
- Changes in eating/sleeping patterns
- Irritability/fussiness
- Aggressiveness
- Withdrawal, hiding
- Difficult to calm

11

What Young Children Need

- Consistency
- Emotional attunement
- Sensitivity
- Contingent responsiveness
- Co-regulation



What happens when the primary caregiver has been traumatized ?

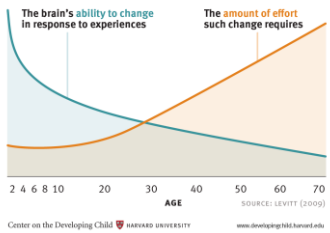
12

Fight, Flight or Freeze



13

Neuroplasticity ...Change is Possible



14

Secure attachment as buffer



Stress that would be toxic becomes tolerable when a young child has a secure attached relationship with at least one caregiver . The difference?

Having a secure base!

15

Regulation and Co-Regulation

•How infants/toddlers engage in self-soothing, comforting and self-regulating behaviors/strategies (regulation)

•How a parent or caregiver helps an infant regulate their response to stress (attunement)

•How infants, parents and caregivers influence each other through emotions (co-regulation)



16

Buffering Young Children from Stress

Knowledge That Support is There

Ability to Predict What Comes Next

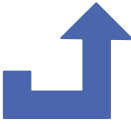
Having a Sense of Control

17

Knowledge of Support

- Say out loud what you think the child may be feeling
 - Using social stories
- Remind the child that "you" are there and will keep the child safe
- Don't be afraid to name the stress or trauma!
- Understand child may need more holding and help with regulation
- Be the calm you want the child to feel!

18



LET'S TRY IT OUT!

Vignette A

19

What strategies might you consider that promote social support?

Amal is a 26-month-old child who is with his uncle and aunt in this emergency shelter. They fled Afghanistan when the US withdrew, during the hectic evacuation. Amal has always lived with his parents and siblings in the same home as his uncle and aunt, and culturally consider them parent figures. Amal was with his aunt and Uncle when a terrorist bomb went off, his siblings were with his parents. They do not know what happened to his family. Amal's cousin was thought to have been killed in the same bomb attack, but he turned up in Qatar 2 weeks later. Because of this, the uncle and aunt have not told Amal anything about his parents. When asked where his papa and mama are, they simply say they will come soon. No one in the family has mourned the loss of these five family members because "what if they are alive in a hospital but cannot call anyone?" The child's doctor asked the family to talk with you because Amal has been having severe stomach issues, and there is no medical reason. Amal's pediatrician suspects the stomach ailment is caused by the trauma he has experienced.

20

Help child's ability to predict what comes next

- Routines are critical!
- Keep in place as many rituals as possible, for example bedtime ritual, or morning wake up ritual
- Ensure child gets recommended sleep. If child refuses to nap, use "quiet time"
 - CDC - How Much Sleep Do I Need? - Sleep and Sleep Disorders
- Let child know what is happening even if they are pre-verbal
 - "I am going to pick you up now to change your diaper"

21

Foundational Role of Trauma Informed Care in Our Work

LET'S TRY IT OUT!
Vignette B

22

What strategies might you consider that promote predictability?

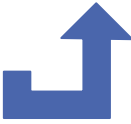
Maya is in an emergency foster home following her crossing the border without any legal family member 6 weeks ago. She came to this foster home 2 weeks ago. At 41 months of age, she can dress herself and feed herself. Her motor skills are on track. Maya is having difficulty regulating her emotions. She usually has 5 to 6 tantrums a day, and frequently her foster parents cannot figure out what the cause is for the meltdown. Her foster parents do not speak Spanish, which is all Maya understands. The Office of Refugee Resettlement has determined there is a great aunt in the United States, and efforts are being made to do a home check so Maya can be placed with her. It is anticipated this will take place in 2 weeks. Her biological mother's whereabouts is unknown. Maya left to come to the USA 3 months ago with her mother; the person who surrendered Maya at the border simply said her mother asked her to bring Maya across the border with a piece of paper with Maya's name, birthdate, and contact information for her great aunt. Family members in her home country of Venezuela state her father is suspected of being one of the gang members that terrorized their community and forced many young women and teens to have sex. Biological mother denied being raped but was physically abused by several gang members when she lived in her village. They do not know who Maya's father is. The foster parents ask you what they can do to stop all the tantrums.

23

Provide opportunities for child to have a sense of control

- Allowing child to choose between options when possible
 - *"Do you want milk or water with breakfast?"*
 - Choices within limits!
- If child needs help doing the requested behavior, remember to give them a choice between doing the task on their own or getting help to do the task
 - *"I asked you to please put on your shoes. Do you want to put them on by yourself or would you like me to help you?"*

24



LET'S TRY IT OUT!

Vignette C

25

What strategies might you consider that promote controllability?

Otis is two and is the light of his parent's life. Their community is still recovering following a devastating tornado and floods. The family's home was destroyed, and they have found a new apartment to live in. They feel very lucky. However, they confide in you that they are at their wits end! Otis throws such a fuss when they take him to his child development center. They have been trying everything they can think of; leaving quietly so Otis does not notice, staying an extra 30 minutes with Otis before leaving, and everything in between. His teachers report he cries for his parents for the entire morning and does not engage in activities with any enthusiasm until lunch. Mondays are the worst!!!! Parents tell you it is hard to get Otis ready for school, too, and wonder if it means they should change childcare centers, maybe Otis just doesn't like his teachers. When asked about home routines, parents share they follow Otis's lead regarding his time at home. They feel he will eat when he is hungry and sleep when he is tired. They make sure he has lots of choices for toys and activities. The only thing Otis doesn't have a choice on is leaving for school. Both parents must go to work on time, something new since the end of the pandemic.

26

Remember, the child isn't giving you a hard time...



...they are having a hard time!

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27

Foundational Role of Trauma Informed Care in Our Work

Resources

- **Shelter from the Storm | ZERO TOTHREE**
• <https://www.zerotothree.org/shelter-from-the-storm/>
- **Stories For Social Good| Piplo Productions**
• <https://piploproductions.com/>
- **Handling Emergencies | Sesame Street in Communities - Sesame Street in Communities**
• <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/emergencies/>
- **Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (nctsn.org)**
• <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

28

How you are is as important as what you do!



Jeree Pawl

29

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO
TO SUPPORT THOSE IN
NEED, ESPECIALLY THE
CHILDREN

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30

Foundational Role of Trauma Informed Care in Our Work

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31

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32

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33