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TRAUMA
Nationally, 1 in 4 children have been either exposed to or are actively experiencing some type of trauma.
When you hear the phrase, what comes to mind?
Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of 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, and Olivet, 2010)
Fascinating Trauma Fact

Trauma is **ubiquitous**. In the general population, **67% of us** have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience. In people of color, that is more likely to be **83%**.

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76% of adults will be exposed to trauma in their lifetime.

50% of women and 33% of men have experienced sexual or physical violence (B.C. Ministry of Health, 2013).
The most common causes of childhood trauma

- Accidents
- Bullying/cyberbullying
- Chaos or dysfunction in the house
- Death of a loved one
- Domestic violence
- Emotional abuse or neglect
- Incarcerated parent
- PANDEMIC (COVID-19)
- Parent with a mental illness
- Physical abuse or neglect
- PROTESTING/RACISM
- Separation from a parent or caregiver
- Sexual abuse
- Stress caused by poverty
- Substance abuse
- Sudden and/or serious medical condition
- Violence (at home, school or in surrounding community)
- Natural disasters
- War/terrorism
DEGREES OF STRESS

POSITIVE STRESS
Examples:
First day of school
Moving to a new house
Making a speech in class

TOLERABLE STRESS
Examples:
Losing a family member
Natural disaster
Sustaining a bad injury

TOXIC STRESS
Examples:
Exposure to violence
Chronic neglect
Living with an addict
KEY MESSAGES for Stress and Trauma

• Stress is any external stimulus that threatens the body
• Stress activates the body’s “fight or flight” survival mechanism.
• Short term stress does not harm brain development, but the body must have relief from stress to re-establish balance.
• When children grow up experiencing toxic stress, the more primitive areas of the brain are highly developed, and the areas that handle rational thinking may not fully develop.
• Children who are exposed to toxic stress over a long period are more likely to demonstrate aggressive and violent behavior.
• Loving, consistent relationships with adults can mitigate damage caused by toxic stress.
A PERSON WITH 4 OR MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IS*

12.2 TIMES AS LIKELY TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE
10.3 TIMES AS LIKELY TO USE INJECTION DRUGS
7.4 TIMES AS LIKELY TO BE AN ALCOHOLIC


A PERSON WITH 4 OR MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IS*

2.2 TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE
2.4 TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE A STROKE
1.9 TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE CANCER
1.6 TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE DIABETES

• Resiliency is the child’s ability to adapt successfully during stressful experiences.
• The brain’s structure is not rigid, it has the ability to adapt to changes in the environment, making it possible to mitigate damage from toxic stress.
• Resiliency is influenced by positive adult-child relationships creating new pathways in the brain.

Adapted from Betters Brains for Babies, 2017
• Children experiencing violence and trauma need consistent, reliable relationships to help reduce the toxic stress they are experiencing.

• A strong, supportive adult can make a difference to a child who has been exposed to trauma.
SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Children experiencing violence and trauma need a consistently **safe environment** where they can relax without fear or harm.
- A child whose home is not safe may still feel safe in another familiar setting, such as **school**.
- Consistent **routines** and loving, **responsive** adults can help children establish the feeling of safety.

Adapted from Betters Brains for Babies, 2017
When you look at children who come out of terrible environments and do well, you find that someone in their lives somehow instilled in them the attitude that they aren’t helpless, that they aren’t powerless, that they can do something.

~Dr. Bruce Perry

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
How does trauma and stress affect the brain?
How does trauma and stress affect the brain?

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD
Center on the Developing Child - HARVARD UNIVERSITY
How does trauma and stress affect the brain?

- **Brain Stem**
  - “Survival State”

- **Limbic System**
  - “Emotional State”

- **Pre-frontal Lobe**
  - “Executive State”
Repeated stressful & chaotic experiences impact the wiring of the child’s brain and because we have fewer receptors, we go from 0-60 really quickly and it takes us longer to calm down.
Once we’ve experienced trauma, our nervous system gets easily ‘stuck on high’ (hypervigilant, panicky, manic, angry, nervous) or ‘stuck on low’ (depressed, numb, lethargic) or oscillates between the two.

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BEHAVIOR
Hitting
Throwing
Pushing over bookcase

TRAUMA
Children/
Adults trying
to self-regulate
THE FOUR R’s OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

REALIZE the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery

RECOGNIZE the signs and symptoms of trauma in students, families, staff and others

RESPOND by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices

RESIST re-traumatization of children, as well as adults who care for them
“What do I do?”
Trauma-Informed Support for Children

1. Create safety
   If the child is overwhelmed, perhaps guide them to a quiet corner or allow them to decompress by visiting the restroom. If you are in a classroom, maybe you have a peace corner that you’ve outfitted with blankets or a screen so that it feels like a safe place.

2. Regulate the nervous system
   Stress brings a predictable pattern of physiological responses and anyone who has suffered toxic stress or trauma is going to be quickly stressed into hyperarousal (explosive, jittery, irritable) or hypoarousal (depressed, withdrawn, zombie-like). No matter how ingenious our regulation strategies, how artsy-crafty we get with tools, the child has to find what works for them.

3. Build a connected relationship
   This is the number one way to regulate the nervous system. When we are around people we care about, our bodies produce oxytocin, which is the hormone responsible for calming our nervous system after stress. If we stay connected, then eventually the calm discussion of each person’s feelings and needs can take place.

4. Support development of coherent narrative
   Creating predictability through structure, routines and the presence of reliable adults helps reduce the chaos a child may feel and allows them to start creating the kind of logical sequential connections that not only help them understand their own narrative, but are also the fundamental requirement of many types of learning.
“What do I do?”
Trauma-Informed Support for Children

5. **Practice ‘power-with’ strategies**
   One of the hallmarks of trauma is a loss of power and control. When someone is wielding power over you with no regard to your thoughts or feelings, the toxic shame of the original trauma may come flooding back. As adults, we should use our power well. If we model a ‘power-with’ relationship with children it’s our best chance of creating adults who will treat others with dignity and respect.

6. **Build social emotional and resiliency skills**
   Trauma robs us of time spent developing social and emotional skills. The brain is too occupied with survival to devote much of its energy to learning how to build relationships and it’s a good chance we didn’t see those skills modeled for us. Learning to care for one another is the most important job we have growing up.

7. **Foster post-traumatic growth**
   We know that there are qualities and skills that allow people to overcome the most devastating trauma and not just survive but find new purpose and meaning in their lives. Problem solving, planning, maintaining focus despite discomfort, self-control and seeking support are all known to lead to post-traumatic growth and are skills we can foster in children.

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LET’S DISCUSS

TRAUMA

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