TRAUMA
The experience of an event that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects.
Nationally, 1 in 4 children have been either exposed to or are actively experiencing some type of trauma.
When you hear the phrase "Trauma-Informed Care," 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
- Parent with a mental illness
- Physical abuse or neglect
- 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
- PANDEMIC (COVID-19)
- PROTESTING/RACISM
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
• 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.
• **Resiliency** is the 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 **relationships** creating new pathways in the brain.

Adapted from Betters Brains for Babies, 2017
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

RELATIONSHIPS

- Persons 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.
- The loving support of a responsive adult can mitigate the damage caused by toxic stress.
SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Persons experiencing violence and trauma need a consistently **safe environment** where they can relax without fear or harm.
- If a home environment is not safe, students may feel safe in another familiar setting, such as **school**.
- Consistent **routines** and loving, **responsive** adults can help establish the feeling of safety.
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”
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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Repeated stressful & chaotic experiences impact the wiring of the brain and because there are fewer receptors, we go from 0-60 really quickly and it takes us longer to calm down.
Students who are exposed to traumatic events, (ex., school shooting) are “at risk for increased levels of PTSD, depression, and other forms of mental distress”. (Hawdon & Ryan, 2012, p. 3)

Students’ responses and coping strategies to such tragedies can vary greatly. (Palus et al., 2012)
What Does That Look Like?

- Students may miss classes, have poor concentration, and have difficulties with memory, motivation, and studying (Sharkin, 2006).

- Sharkin (2006) identified the following signs of distress: change in behavior (e.g., academic performance, social interactions, and class participation), falling asleep in class, requesting special consideration, not completing assignments, and frequently needing clarification from the instructor.

- Instructors can use these signs as an opportunity to intervene to prevent academic probation or withdrawal from their university.

- Faculty may need to take a very different approach with a distressed student who may truly need accommodations in order to be academically successful.
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
CREATE SAFETY
If a person is overwhelmed, create a space for them to go decompress or calm down.

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). Each person has to figure out what works for them.

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.

SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF COHERENT NARRATIVE
Create predictability through structure, routines and the presence of reliable adults helps reduce the chaos a person 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

PRACTICE ‘POWER-WITH” STRATEGIES
One of the hallmarks of trauma is 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-with” relationships with others so they learn how to treat others with dignity and respect.

BUILD SOCIAL EMOTIONAL AND RESILIENCY SKILLS
Trauma robs us of time spent developing social emotional skills. The brain is too occupied with survival to devote much of its energy to learning how to build relationships and its a good chance we didn’t have those skills modeled for us. Learning to care about one another is the most important job we have growing up.

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.
LET’S DISCUSS

TRAUMA

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