

## Trauma Informed Care

Many of the “most difficult” individuals in your homes have experienced complex trauma.

- ✓ Trauma can affect an individual’s behavior, feelings, relationships, and their view of the world in profound ways
- ✓ An individual’s traumatic stress reactions and other responses to trauma can disrupt a home environment
- ✓ It’s not the answer to everything, but it’s another piece of the puzzle.
- ✓ It’s not an excuse, but it may be an explanation

### What is Trauma?

A traumatic experience:

- Threatens the life or physical integrity of a child or of someone critically important to that child (such as a parent, grandparent, or sibling)
- Causes an overwhelming sense of terror, helplessness, and horror
- Produces physical changes such as pounding heart, rapid breathing, trembling, dizziness, or loss of bladder or bowel control

### Types of Trauma

- **Acute Trauma:** A single event that lasts for a short time
- **Complex Trauma:** The experience of multiple traumatic events.

The term *Complex Trauma* is used to describe a specific kind of chronic trauma and its effects on children and adults:

- Multiple traumatic events that begin at a very young age
- Events caused by the actions, or inactions, of adults who should have been caring for and protecting the child

Over time, *Complex Trauma* can get in the way of healthy development and affect the individual in the following ways:

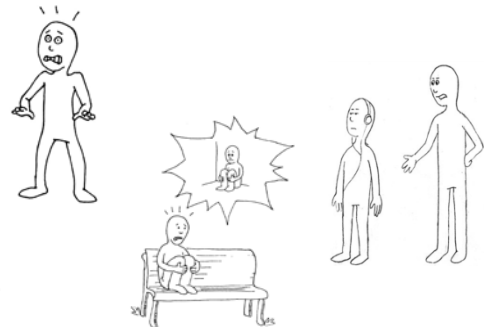
- Ability to trust others
- Sense of personal safety
- Emotional reactions and ability to manage emotions
- Ability to navigate and adjust to life’s changes
- Physical and emotional responses to stress

### Factors that influence responses to a traumatic event include:

- Age and developmental stage
- Perception of the danger faced
- Past experience with trauma
- Challenges faced after the trauma
- Presence and availability of adults who can offer help, reassurance, and protection

### Responses to Trauma

- Hyperarousal:
  - Nervousness, jumpiness, quickness to startle
- Re-experiencing:
  - Intrusive Images, sensations, dreams
  - Intrusive memories of the traumatic event or events
- Avoidance and withdrawal:
  - Feeling numb, shut down, or separated from normal life
  - Pulling away from activities and relationships
  - Avoiding things that prompt memories of the trauma



## What are some examples of reminders of trauma?

- Screaming or shouting
- The sight of blood
- The dark
- An angry expression on an adult's face
- Seeing another child get hurt
- The color red
- The smell of alcohol
- Having to go to the bathroom
- Shadow on the wall
- Scar
- Stomachache or headache
- Being dropped off at school
- Losing a tooth
- Santa Claus
- Seeing a group of young men hanging out on a street corner

## Talking about Trauma

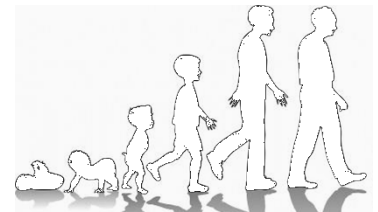
- Talking about certain events all the time
- Bringing up the topic seemingly “out of the blue”
- Be confused or mistaken about details
- Remember only fragments of what happened

## What you might see:

- Problems with concentrating, learning, or taking in new information
- Difficulty going to sleep or staying asleep; nightmares
- Emotional instability; moody, sad, angry or aggressive, etc.

## Traumatized Young Children:

- Be very sensitive to loud noises
- Revert to behaviors they had previously outgrown (e.g., thumb sucking), or lose skills they had developed (e.g., toilet training)
- Be clingy and unwilling to separate from familiar adults
- Resist leaving places where they feel safe
- Reject or avoid being touched
- Be confused about what's dangerous and who to go to for protection



## Traumatized School-Age Children:

- Alternate between being shy and withdrawn and unusually aggressive
- Have difficulties with learning
- Demand attention (increased demands for food, toys, etc.)
- Revert to old behaviors (wanting adults to feed or dress them, baby talk)
- Show specific anxieties and fears (such as fear of the dark)

## Traumatized Adolescents or Adults:

- Live “in the moment” and have trouble imagining or planning for the future
- Over or underestimate danger
- Behave in aggressive or disruptive ways
- Abuse drugs or alcohol
- Engage in reckless or self-destructive behaviors, including “cutting” and risky sexual behaviors

## What about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is diagnosed when the person displays several traumatic stress reactions, the reactions persist for a long period of time, and the reactions get in the way of living a normal life.

## Getting Development Back on Track!

- ✓ Trauma survivors can learn new ways of thinking, relating, and responding
- ✓ Rational thought and self-awareness can help children override primitive brain responses
- ✓ Unlearning and rebuilding takes time

## What is Safety?

Physical safety is not the same as Psychological safety. To feel psychologically safe, individuals need:

- To feel oriented in their own environment
- To have control over some aspects of their lives
- To know what will happen next
- To be seen and appreciated for who they are
- To have a sense of connection and continuity with their past.

Individuals who have been through trauma are less likely to feel safe than others who have not experienced trauma. These individuals may have real life worries pertaining to safety:

- Will my stepfather seek revenge because I got him arrested?
- Will my sister be okay in her abusive marriage?
- Will my mom get so depressed without me to cheer her up that she goes back to drugs?

## Rules and Control

When explaining House Rules:

- ✓ Don't overwhelm
- ✓ Stress Protection
- ✓ Be Flexible

Provide Opportunities for control within limits, by providing an individual control over:

- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Self
- ✓ Activities

## Look Forward:

Let the individual know what will happen next, such as:

- Location and schedule for the day
- Upcoming doctor or dentist visits
- Timing and location of mental health treatment
- Legal proceedings, court dates, etc.
- Contact with caseworker and other members of the team

## Be an “Emotional Container”

- Be willing and prepared to tolerate strong emotional reactions
- Respond calmly but firmly to emotional outbursts
- Help identify sometimes-frightening feelings
- Let them know that these feelings are okay



## Physical Boundaries

Individuals who have been neglected and abused may:

- Have never learned that their bodies should be cared for and protected
- Feel disconnected and at odds with their bodies
- See their bodies as “vessels of the negative memories and experiences they carry, a constant reminder not only of what has happened to them but of how little they are worth.”

## Recovering from Trauma: The Role of Resilience

*Resilience* is the ability to recover from traumatic events. In general, Individuals who are resilient:

- ✓ See themselves as safe, capable, and loveable
- ✓ See the world, and life, as manageable, understandable, and meaningful

## Recovering from Trauma: Growing Resilience

Some factors that can increase resilience include:

- ✓ A strong relationship with at least one competent, caring adult
- ✓ Feeling connected to a positive role model/mentor
- ✓ Having talents/abilities nurtured and appreciated
- ✓ Feeling some control over one's own life
- ✓ A sense of belonging to a community, group, or cause larger than oneself

## Coping with Trauma Reminders

Plan Ahead - Help the individual to develop a plan for coping when faced with reminders:

### STOP

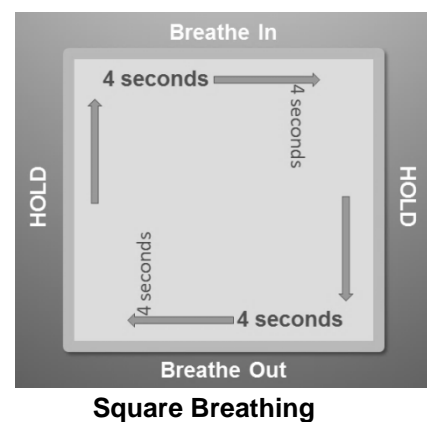
- Stop and take several long, deep breaths

### ORIENT

- Look around and take in where you are right now
- Note what's going on in your body

### SEEK HELP

- Use a "stress buster" to help you calm down
- If needed, call a friend or adult you can trust



## Encourage positive behaviors:

- ✓ "Catch" others good moments
- ✓ Praise, Praise, Praise!
  - Be specific
  - Be prompt
  - Be Warm
- ✓ Strive for at least six praises for every one correction

## Encourage and support the individual's strength and interests:

- ✓ Offer choices whenever possible
- ✓ Let others "do it themselves"
- ✓ Recognize and encourage unique interests and talents
- ✓ Help master a skill

## Correct and Build

When correcting negative or inappropriate behavior and setting consequences:

- Be calm, clear, and consistent
- Target one behavior at a time
- Keep age (AND "emotional age" in mind...exposure to trauma can stunt emotional development!
- Help with understanding links between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Help with understanding consequences of behavior (relevant to them, not you!)
- Help with identifying alternatives to problem/negative behaviors
- Encourage practice of techniques for changing negative thoughts and calming runaway emotions

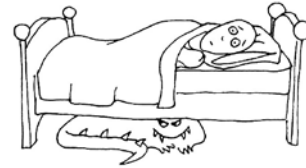
## Myths to Avoid

- If I love this person enough, I can erase the effects of everything bad that has happened before.
- They will be grateful for what I'm doing.
- They will love me as much as I love them.
- If they reject me, I'm a failure.
- They shouldn't love the parent or person who abused him or her.

## When Others Trauma Becomes Your Own

Exposure may cause:

- Intrusive images
- Nervousness or jumpiness
- Difficulty concentrating or taking in information
- Nightmares, insomnia
- Emotional numbing
- Changes in your worldview (how you see and feel about your world)
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness
- Anger at society or even at God
- Feeling disconnected from loved ones
- You may respond inappropriately or disproportionately, withdraw, or avoid trauma material



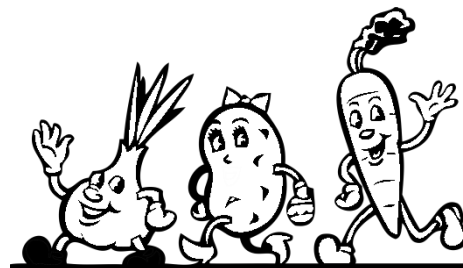
## When Other's Trauma is a Reminder

- Recognize the connection between other's trauma and your own history
- Distinguish which feelings belong to the present and the past
- Be honest with yourself and others
- Take a timeout
- Seek support
- Seek trauma-focused treatment—It's never too late

## Self-Care Basics

Take care of yourself!

- ✓ Get enough sleep
- ✓ Eat well-balanced meals, not on the run
- ✓ Use alcohol only in moderation
- ✓ Exercise regularly
- ✓ Take regular breaks from stressful activities
- ✓ Laugh every day
- ✓ Spend some time alone



What do you do every day, just for you?

- ✓ Walk the dog
- ✓ Play with the cat
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Meditate
- ✓ Read a romance novel
- ✓ Write in a journal
- ✓ Chat with neighbors
- ✓ Breathe deeply

**Sign and date:**

**I have read and understand the Trauma Informed Care Training**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Employer is:** \_\_\_\_\_