Putting Your Trauma Lens On

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• I do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in my presentation.
Learning objectives

At the conclusion of this activity, the participant should be able to:

• Define the 4 characteristics of a caregiving relationship necessary for healthy attachment
• Recognize the most common symptoms of trauma in children
• Identify seven resilience skills that should be supported in children
• Formulate a strategy to respond to children who present with trauma symptoms
Putting on your trauma lens
Some familiar concepts ...

ACEs

Toxic Stress
Some familiar concepts ...

ACEs

Toxic Stress

Resilience

- **Positive**: Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.
- **Tolerable**: Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.
- **Toxic**: Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.
Variable responses to threat
How does it translate to what you see?
So what we see as the stress response...

Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis (HPA)

- Stress activates axis.
- Peripheral release of epinephrine and cortisol.
- Stimulates multiple areas of body and immune system.
With trauma...

• **Stress and the tiger**
  • Bodies designed to respond to stress
  • Adrenalin and cortisol help us run from tiger or hide
  • Threat of short duration
Cortisol

Immune system

Other body systems

Inflammatory response

Infection fighting antibodies

HPA axis

Infection fighting antibodies

Inflammatory response
BUT...when the tiger lives in your home, neighborhood or life
Severe or prolonged trauma

CORTISOL

Other body systems

Immune system

Gene expression (epigenetics)

Inflammatory response

Infection fighting (antibodies)
What does that trauma response look like in children
What trauma looks like in children
Diagnoses seen in children exposed to trauma from NCTSN data

So with kids...when we put on the trauma lens, we will see something different than what we see with adults

So **what** are we looking for then with our trauma lenses?
The important thing is to see what others cannot see.
When we just see the stress response, we have forgotten the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the toxic stress definition.
The context of trauma (and resilience) is always relationships, or the attachments children have
Yes, I said it: THE “A” word
Attachment prototype
That secure attachment comes from safety and security, predictable compassionate availability
With a secure base from a predictable compassionate available caregiver one can grow
And that brings us to the question of grow, HOW? Answer: Grow in our RESILIENCE:

- As defined by from Ann Masten, PhD.
- Resilience is a dynamic process of positive adaptation to or in spite of significant adversities; can be applied to a child, family, system or community or ecosystem.
  - For children, the pathways to resilience are rooted in
    - the give and take of safe, stable and nurturing relationships that are continuous over time (attachment), and in
    - the growth that occurs through play, exploration and exposure to a variety of normal activities and resources
Masten called this Resilience: *Ordinary Magic*

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  - the growth that occurs through play, exploration and exposure to a variety of normal activities and resources
Magic trick revealed
Masten’s “ordinary magic”

- Resiliency comes from:
  - Attachment relationships
  - Learning and thinking brain
  - Mastery of age salient developmental tasks
  - Self control: self regulation
  - Belief life has meaning, hope for the future
  - Self efficacy
Magic of resilience achieved with THREADS

- Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
  - **T**hinking and learning brain
  - **H**ope
  - **R**egulation or self control
  - **E**fficacy
  - **A**ttachment
  - **D**evelopmental skill mastery
  - **S**ocial connectedness
Under threat, you are alone, dysregulated, and in need of support to regulate
Another way to think about trauma is that it acts against all the factors that correlate with resilience.

- **Resiliency skills** the THREADS of childhood:
  - Thinking and learning brain – shuts down
  - Hope – to deal with present danger, looking ahead shut down
  - Regulation or self control – shuts down - need impulses to deal with threat
  - Efficacy – lost – reacting to situation, not controlling it
  - Attachment – acting alone, not available in toxic stress
  - Developmental skill mastery – learning shut down
  - Social connectedness – alone with threat
Trauma results from being psychologically alone in unbearable emotional pain; dysregulated; FRAYED

• You are FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)
  • Fits, Frets and Fear
  • Restricted development
  • Attachment difficulty
  • Yelling and yawning
  • Educational delays
  • Defeated/dissociation
So what does FRAYED look like in the clinic, office or hospital
Let's think about the example of the child who won't sleep after experiencing trauma.
CORTISOL

- Immune system
- Other body systems
- Gene expression (epigenetics)
  - Inflammatory response
  - Infection fighting (antibodies)

Significant trauma

Cortisol in humans

Antibody production
Not sleeping
What you are told about is one skill that is off, suggesting that the child is FRAYED

- Without it, you are FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)
  - Fits, Frets and Fear
  - Restricted development
  - Attachment difficulty
  - Yelling and yawning
  - Educational delays
  - Defeated
The child became dysregulated (traumatized) because of experience of being alone with unbearable fear.
The other way to think of it that the child has had some of their resilience skills challenged

• Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
  • Thinking and learning brain
  • Hope
  • Regulation or self control
  • Efficacy
  • Attachment
  • Developmental skill mastery
  • Social connectedness
Will need to use the THREADS still available to you

- Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
  - **Thinking** and learning brain
  - **Hope**
  - **Regulation** or self control
  - **Efficacy**
  - **Attachment**
  - **Developmental skill mastery**
  - **Social connectedness**
Look to a toolbox of skills to grow/repair each of the THREADS
Reassuring, Restoring Routine, Regulating
Reassuring
Bedtime routine

- Brush teeth
- Put on jammies
- Read story
- Get in bed
- Kisses
- Lights out
Regulating: Holding the **mind in mind**
Regulating through **attachment** and **social connectedness**
Suppose instead of sleep, the symptom is tantrums
For tantrums we often say (outside of trauma) ignore them, but kids who experienced trauma need more supports.
What you are told about is the skills that are FRAYED

- FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)
  - Fits, Frets and Fear
  - Restricted development
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Look to a toolbox of skills to grow/repair each of the THREADS
Reassuring, Restoring Routine, Regulating
Reassurance: Caregivers Have To Model Calm Behavior Despite The Distress, Promotes Efficacy
Caregiver as an emotional container
Reassurance: Emotional container

- Tolerate strong emotions
- May act out with you
- But emotion not about you
- Respond calmly
- Help name feelings
Restoring routine: Staying with routine limits dysregulation
Regulating: Calming the stress response
Regulation: That can look a little different depending on the age of the child
It starts with attachment and security, and that allows you to build (or rebuild) each of these

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You’re skeptical; cute mnemonic, but won’t work in cases that are more complicated....
Other end of the spectrum, child in foster care after experiencing DV, neglect, abuse
CORTISOL

Other body systems

Immune system

Gene expression (epigenetics)

Inflammatory response

Infection fighting (antibodies)

Significant, prolonged traumas
Neurobiology of Trauma

Amygdala

- Amygdala: Input from sensory, memory and attention centers
  - Emotional memory system = The brain’s alarm system
Neurobiology of Trauma

Hippocampus
- Interface between cortex and lower brain areas.
- Major role in memory and learning.
  - The brain’s file cabinet or search engine.
Neurobiology of Trauma

Prefrontal cortex
• Executive function
  • Impulse control
  • Working memory
  • Cognitive flexibility
What you are told about is many skills impacted, suggesting that the child is FRAYED

- FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)
  - Fits, Frets and Fear
  - Regulation disorder
  - Attachment disorders
  - Yelling and yawning
  - Educational delays
  - Defeated
Child comes with invisible suitcase because there was no predictable compassionate availability
• I am in danger
• I am worthless
• I am powerless
• You are not reliable
• You cannot protect me
• You will be dangerous or rejecting
Magic of resilience achieved with THREADS

• Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
  • Thinking and learning brain
  • Hope
  • Regulation or self control
  • Efficacy
  • Attachment
  • Developmental skill mastery
  • Social connectedness
Resilience the result of 6 factors, but there is an order to these...

THREADS

• Hope
• Social connectedness
• Efficacy
• Thinking and learning brain
• Developmental skill mastery
• Regulation or self control
• Attachment
ATTACHMENT

**REGULATION**

EFFICACY
- Developmental skill mastery
- Thinking and learning brain

HOPE

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS
ATTACHMENT

- Safety and security
- Emotional container
- Predictable compassionate Availability
- Keeping Mind in mind
Four Key (Forkey) factors of attachment form the SEAM

Safety and security – physical and psychological
Emotional container
Availability – predictable and compassionate
Mind in mind
When so many things have happened the attachment to a predictable compassionate and available caregiver has been challenged

• FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)
  • Fits, Frets and Fear
  • Regulation disorder
  • Attachment difficulty
  • Yelling and yawning
  • Educational delays
  • Defeated
The other way to think of it that the child has had many of their resilience skills challenged

• Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
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  • **Social** connectedness
Will need to use the THREADS still available to you

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Look to a toolbox of skills to grow/repair each of the THREADS
Four Key (Forkey) factors of attachment form the SEAM

**Safety and security** – physical and psychological

**Emotional container**

**Availability** – predictable and compassionate

**Mind in mind**
Reassuring, Restoring Routine, Regulating
Reassurance: Restores safety, predictable compassionate availability
Routines of positive interactions: predictable compassionate availability, emotional container
Regulation: Need to recognize emotion and be able to modulate it

Source:
Regulation: Keeping the mind in mind

• Trauma limits self regulation, ability to describe feelings or internal states, and ability to communicate wishes and desires
Caregiver needs to help child develop language (thus identification) of emotions
Regulation – identification and modulation

ANGER

Grief  Shame  Helplessness
Disappointment  Rejection
Fear  Guilt  Hurt
Disgust  Frustration
Regret  Worry  Jealousy
Four Key (Forkey) factors of attachment form the SEAM

Safety and security – physical and psychological

Emotional container

Availability – predictable and compassionate

Mind in mind
Starting with the SEAM, use the THREADS to weave him back to health
Then we can achieve resilience – we just have to have the right lens!!

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  • Thinking and learning brain
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  • Developmental skill mastery
  • Social connectedness
Learning objectives

At the conclusion of this activity, the participant should be able to:

• Define the 4 characteristics of a caregiving relationship necessary for healthy attachment: safety (often communicated through routines), predictable compassionate availability, caregiver as emotional container, caregiver keeping the mind in mind – the SEAM!!

• Recognize the most common symptoms of trauma in children: FRAYED

• Identify seven resilience skills that should be supported in children: THREADS

• Formulate a strategy to respond to children who present with trauma symptoms: Consider which THREADS are frayed, giving you the FRAYED symptoms; look for which THREADS are present to work with, and pull out your sewing kit to help child and family weave back to health
Suggested Reading


