Putting Your Trauma Lens On

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Disclosure

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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
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.
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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

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Cortisol

Immune system

Other body systems

HPA axis

Infection fighting antibodies

Inflammatory response

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BUT... when the tiger lives in your home, neighborhood or life
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CORTISOL

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

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What does that trauma response look like in children

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What trauma looks like in children
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Diagnoses seen in children exposed to trauma from NCTSN data


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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?

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THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO SEE WHAT OTHERS...

...
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When we just see the stress response, we have forgotten the 2nd half of the toxic stress definition:

- **Positive**: Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.
- **Tolerable**: Set point that is maintained by ongoing exposure.
- **Toxic**: Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

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The context of trauma (and resilience) is always **relationships**, or the attachments children have.

![Image of children interacting](image_url)

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Yes, I said it: THE "A" word.

![Black Box](image_url)
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 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
• For kids, the pathways to resilience are rooted in
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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
devvelopmental 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:
  - Thinking and learning brain
  - Hope
  - Regulation or self control
  - Efficacy
  - Attachment
  - Developmental skill mastery
  - Social 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?
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Let's think about the example of the child who won't sleep after experiencing trauma.

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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)
  - Fists, Frets and Fear
  - Restricted development
  - Attachment difficulty
  - Yelling and yawning
  - Educational delays
  - Defeated

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The child became dysregulated (traumatized) because of experience of being alone with unbearable fear

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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
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Reassuring

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Routines Communicate Safety, Shutting Down Stress

Response

Bedtime routine

Brush teeth
Put on jammies
Read story
Get in bed
Kisses
Lights out

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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

- Fits, Frets and Fear
- Restricted development
- Attachment difficulty
- Yelling and yawning
- Educational delays
- Defeated

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Look to a toolbox of skills to grow/repair each of the THREADS
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Reassuring, Restoring Routine, Regulating

Slide 53
Reassurance: Caregivers Have To Model Calm Behavior Despite The Distress, Promotes Efficacy

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Caregiver as an emotional container
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Reassurance: Emotional container

• Tolerate strong emotions
• May act out with you
• but emotion not about you
• Respond calmly
• Help name feelings

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Restoring routine: Staying with routine limits dysregulation

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Regulating: Calming the stress response
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Regulation: That can look a little different depending on the age of the child

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It starts with attachment and security, and that allows you to build (or rebuild) each of these

- Resiliency skills the THREADS of childhood:
  - Thinking and learning brain
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  - Efficacy
  - Attachment
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You’re skeptical; cute mnemonic, but won’t work in cases that are more complicated....
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Other end of the spectrum, child in foster care after experiencing DV, neglect, abuse

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CORTISOL

Immune system

Other body systems

Gene expression (epigenetics)

Inflammatory response

Significant, prolonged traumas

Infection fighting (antibodies)

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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.

Prefrontal cortex
• Executive function
• Impulse control
• Working memory
• Cognitive flexibility
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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

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Child comes with invisible suitcase because there was no predictable compassionate availability

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Magic of resilience achieved with THREADS

- 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...

- 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
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**ATTACHMENT**

- Safety and security
- Emotional container
- Predictable compassionate Availability
- Keeping Mind in mind

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Four Key (Forkey) factors of attachment form the SEAM:

- Safety and security – physical and psychological
- Emotional container
- Availability – predictable and compassionate
- Mind in mind

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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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Will need to use the THREADS still available to you

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  - Developmental skill mastery
  - Social connectedness

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

Danger
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
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Caregiver needs to help child develop language (thus identification) of emotions

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Regulation – identification and modulation
- Anger
- Grief
- Shame
- Helplessness
- Disappointment
- Rejection
- Fear
- Guilt
- Hurt
- Disgust
- Frustration
- Regret
- Worry
- Jealousy

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Four Key (Forkey) factors of attachment form the SEAM
- Safety and security – physical and psychological
- Emotional container
- Availability – predictable and compassionate
- Mind in mind
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Starting with the SEAM, use the THREADS to weave him back to health.

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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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  - Attachment
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  - Social connectedness

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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


