

Welcome!

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What Do We Mean by "Trauma"?

- Trauma is in the eye of the beholder
- Traumatic reactions are NORMAL responses to ABNORMAL situations
- Trauma shifts people away from emotional safety, emotional balance and predictability.
- Calls on the system to restore balance, to return to center.

Content adapted from National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health



Self Awareness:
First, Find Your Balance...

Self-Awareness

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Awareness of our own experiences with trauma, how we are affected by the work and how we may be affecting others

- Self-reflection
- Attention to what helps you stay balanced, focused, caring and effective
- Willingness to do the self-work

Families, Trauma & Domestic Violence

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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF
TRAUMA ON CHILDREN, ENHANCING
PARENTING CAPACITY AND
STRENGTHENING PARENT-CHILD BONDS



The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

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WWW.NATIONALCENTERRDVTRAUMAMH.ORG

How we grow and develop...

- is shaped by our earliest relationships with parents, and other caregivers
- in the context of our culture, family, community, and society

**NATURE + NURTURE + EXPERIENCES
= DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES**

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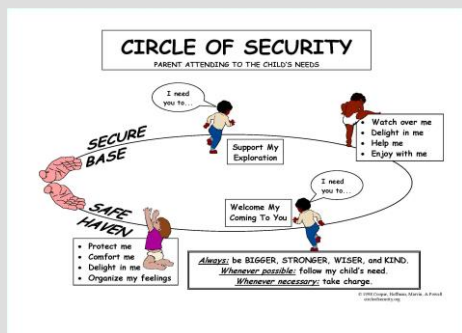
Outcomes are better for children who are securely attached

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When parent or caregiver is...

- Attuned and responsive to the child's needs
- Helps manage feelings
- Provides a secure base to explore from
- A safe haven to come back to when upset, scared, overwhelmed

Parent as...Secure Base and Safe Haven



Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 1998; circleofsecurity.net

www.circleofsecurity.net

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VIDEO

Exposure to Domestic Violence =

A kind of traumatic stressor
that compromises the child's source of
safety and protection

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Child exposure to domestic violence may include...

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- Seeing
- Hearing
- Being told about what happened
- Witnessing the aftermath of abuse
- Being forced to witness or participate in the abuse
- Directly experiencing harm, injury, or abuse
(intentional, inadvertent, or during child's attempt to
protect the non-abusive parent)

Continuum of Exposure to Domestic Violence



Domestic violence may occur at the same time as other stressful and traumatic experiences in children's lives

National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, OJJDP, 2009, 2011

Children experiencing DV are also at greater risk of being abused

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- In 40 – 75% of families where DV occurs, children are experiencing physical abuse at the same time
- Studies in the U.S. have also found that children living in homes with DV are at greater risk of being sexually abused

Children may experience higher rates of traumatic stress based on age, proximity, severity, and ongoing exposure to domestic violence and other trauma

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These interrelated factors can increase or protect against the traumatic impact of DV

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- Child's age, developmental stage, and individual characteristics
- Nature of the event, ongoing exposure
- Family and social environment
- Other stressors, adversities

Pynoos, et. al. (1999)

Impact is buffered and may be lessened by the totality of protective factors in children's lives

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What protects children and promotes healing and resilience?

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- Child's innate resources
 - Temperament, personality, intelligence
- Sense of self-agency
 - "I can be effective..."
- Beliefs, values, practices
 - Religious, spiritual

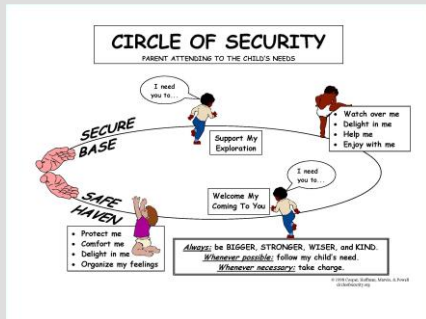
What protects children and promotes healing and resilience?

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- Stability and responsiveness of systems and social supports for the child and family
- Loving relationship with parent or other adult invested in the child's well-being over time

Domestic violence can undermine the quality of the caregiving relationship and create risks for the child's ongoing development

How might the non-abusive partner's parenting be affected?



Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 1998; circleofsecurity.net

When the traumatic effects are intergenerational...

- What if the parent has experienced DV and/or other abuse as an adult,
- AND...also experienced trauma as a child?
- How might that affect the parent-child relationship in the present?

Using a dual lens to understand the effects of DV on children's behavior



- Trauma
- Development

Challenges of Experiencing Trauma: Early Childhood

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- Disrupted sense of trust in caregiver
- Disrupted sense of autonomy
- Strong fears that parent or child will die or be seriously hurt
- Disruptions in the ability to distinguish reality and fantasy
- Disruptions or loss of recent skills

Van Horn/NCDVTMH, 2008

Challenges of Experiencing Trauma: School Age and Adolescence

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- Disrupted sense of competence and independence
- Makes child feel babyish and helpless
- May prompt bullying or false shows of strength
- May prompt risky behaviors
- May prompt retreat into a fantasy world

Van Horn/NCDVTMH, 2008

What You May Observe: Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

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- Sleep or feeding disturbances
- Generalized fearfulness
- Specific new fears
- Loss of recently acquired developmental skills
- Clinginess and separation anxiety
- Inhibited play and exploration
- Thinking and talking about the traumatic event
- Avoidance
- Irritability or aggressiveness
- Scanning for danger/expecting danger
- Easily startled

What You May Observe: School-Age Children

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- Posttraumatic play*
- Thinking and talking about the trauma outside of play
- Being upset at reminders of the trauma/avoiding reminders
- Specific fears, often triggered by traumatic reminders
- Feeling guilty about the trauma and responsible for what happened
- Fantasies of revenge
- Fear of being overwhelmed by feelings
- Impaired concentration and difficulty learning
- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches, stomach aches
- Concerns about safety
- Aggressive behavior
- Anxiety
- Withdrawn behavior

What You May Observe: Adolescents

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- Detachment, shame and guilt
- Self-consciousness about their fears and intense feelings
- “Acting out” and sensation-seeking behaviors
- Abrupt shifts in relationships
- Desire for and plans to take revenge
- Radical changes in attitude and changes in self-identity
- Premature entrance into adulthood or reluctance to leave home
- Being upset at reminders of the trauma/avoiding reminders
- Coping behaviors that may include self-endangering behaviors such as substance abuse or cutting

Children’s behavior has meaning and can be understood within the context of their traumatic experiences

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When we use a trauma lens, we might wonder...

Is this a child with ADHD, who can't sit still and concentrate in school?

or

Is this a child showing hyperarousal symptoms from trauma exposure?

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Parents can be the single most important resource for their children's recovery from the effects of traumatic stress

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Lieberman and Van Horn, 2008

SASS

A resiliency-based approach

- Safety
- Attachment
- Self-regulation
- Self-esteem, self-agency

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Blumenfeld, NCDVTMH, 2012

SASS: Restoring Safety

- Physical and psychological safety
- Creating structure and predictability
- Understanding the traumatic effects
- Support parent to acknowledge the effects on self and children
- Safe “space” to play or talk about what they experienced, feelings, worries, concerns

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SASS: Attachment and Regaining Trust in Relationships

- Strengthening the parent-child bond
- Re-establishing pleasure and connection (if disrupted)
- Parents’ hands on the circle

35 SASS: A resiliency-based approach

How do we hold the parent’s needs and the child’s needs in mind *at the same time*?



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SASS: Self-Regulation

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Parents help scaffold children's self-regulation through various ages and stages

SASS: A resiliency-based approach

Regaining a Sense of Control

- Deep Breathing
- Muscle relaxation
- Grounding
- Self-soothing
- Movement
- Distraction (interrupting negative, unhelpful or intrusive thoughts and images)

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Pick a Flower, Blow a Pinwheel



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Draw a Safe Place

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Enhancing Self-Esteem and Self-Agency

41 SASS: A resiliency-based approach

SASS: Self-Esteem / Self-Agency

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Some ideas...

- Having fun! with structured activities that promote closeness
- Helping parents give specific praise, mirroring child's strengths
- Finding after-school and community-based sports, arts and other activities that child can excel in
- Giving back to others, volunteering

Using SASS as a Tool to Support Parents and Children

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- **At your table**, consider how you would apply one or more strategies for each SASS component to help Brenda and her son, Eddie, holding both “in mind.”
- **Decide together**: “What would I do next?” “How would I go about engaging and supporting Brenda and responding to her concerns about Eddie?”

Safety, Attachment, Self-Regulation, Self-Esteem and Self-Agency

Using this approach helps children impacted by DV and other trauma

- Develop supportive, trustworthy relationships with non-abusive parents, other caring adults, and peers
- Gain more adaptive ways of coping with the traumatic effects of experiencing DV
- Alter negative views about self, others, and the world
- Build richer self-capacities

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On Resilience, Attachment Relationships and Self-Esteem

“I’m not sure if resilience is ever achieved alone...But if we have someone who loves us...enough to be on our side—then it’s easier to grow resilience, to grow belief in self, to grow self-esteem. And it’s self-esteem that allows a person to stand up.”

~ Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

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Closing Thoughts

One of our most important roles as advocates will be supporting children's attachment relationships with non-abusive parents and caregivers. This is the single most important resource for children's healthy growth and development.



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Closing Thoughts

By supporting the safety, well-being and parenting capacities of non-abusive caregivers, we help support healing from the traumatic effects of abuse, and foster children's and families' resilience and well-being in the future.



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Online Resources

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1. Tips on Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to DV: What you might see and What you can do
1. Webinar on "Helping Children and Teens Cope with the Effects of DV: Fostering Healing & Resilience"
Available at <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org>
3. Promising Futures: Best Practices for Serving Children, Youth and Parents Experiencing DV
Available at <http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org/>
4. Resources on Children Exposed to DV, including fact sheets for parents, from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Available at http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/childrenanddv_factsheetseries_complete.pdf

Thank You!



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