

TRAUMA INFORMED/ ATTACHMENT BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN

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ATTACHMENT/TRAUMA CONNECTION

- ▶ Exposure to violence increases cortisol production and secondarily decreases the number of synapses between the cortex and limbic system.

• Bessel Vanderkilk, M.D.

COMMON REACTIONS TO STRESS OR TRAUMA

- ▶ Feelings of shame and guilt
- ▶ Feeling sadness/grief/loss
- ▶ Feeling angry
- ▶ Health complaints
- ▶ Feeling bad about yourself
- ▶ Easily startled
- ▶ Nightmares or sleep issues
- ▶ Feeling scared for no reason
- ▶ Decreased concentration
- ▶ Hypervigilance
- ▶ Inability to remember parts of the trauma
- ▶ Intrusive/obsessive thoughts
- ▶ Feeling crazy or out of control

TRAUMA VS COMPLEX TRAUMA

- ▶ **TRAUMA** is the emotional response to a terrible event such as an automobile accident, a natural disaster or a rape.
- ▶ **COMPLEX TRAUMA** is children's exposure to layers of traumatic events and the wide range and long term impact of those events. It occurs repeatedly, cumulatively and increases over time.

COMPLEX TRAUMA

- ▶ Occurs when an event elicits a real or perceived threat of danger, injury or death.
- ▶ Triggers certain neurobiological responses, a primitive survival mechanism.
- ▶ The body experiences a fight, flight or freeze response to a threat.
- ▶ Stress hormones flood the body and brain; the body is thrown into a state of hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance.
- ▶ Someone in this hyper-aroused state is unable to access higher order thinking.

COMPLEX TRAUMA

- ▶ Children who have experienced ongoing trauma react out of a place of fear.
- ▶ They are living out of a state of survival.
- ▶ "We must remember that a child caught in this place of survival cannot partake of or value another person's point of view but his own". —Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control

FEAR RESPONSES IN CHILDREN

- › Are both instinctive and learned
- › Triggered by real or perceived life-threatening situations
- › Body responds by releasing large amounts of adrenergic neurotransmitters and the stress hormone cortisol
- › Fearful memories are encoded differently than non- traumatic memories

FEAR RESPONSES CONT.

- › The Fear Response in children can become generalized so that people, places, things or situations that seem innocuous can trigger the child's fear response that produces the same level of fear as the original trauma.

A TALE OF TWO SEAS



IDENTIFYING NEED

- **Cue-**
direct or indirect signal from the child for a specific need to be met

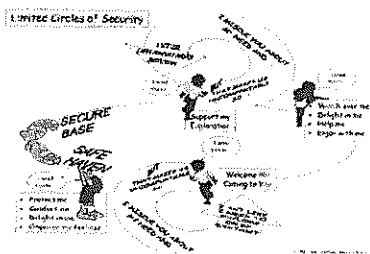
- **Miscue-**
a misleading or contradictory cue used to protect the child from the pain of having a specific need exposed and/or unmet

MISCUES

- Children with histories of relational trauma can develop particular defense strategies for self preservation. They have the tendency to "miscue" their caregivers in ways that indicate that nurturance or attention is not needed when actually the need is present or act clingy when independence is needed.

CIRCLE OF SECURITY PROJECT

Look for miscues when the child is expressing a need on the less-used side of the circle.



COMMON SURVIVAL BEHAVIORS

- ▶ Lack of Eye Contact
- ▶ Poor Impulse Control
- ▶ Indiscriminately Affectionate
- ▶ Eating Issues
- ▶ School Behavior Issues
- ▶ Stealing
- ▶ Running Away
- ▶ Toileting Issues
- ▶ Lying
- ▶ Drug Use
- ▶ Violent or Aggressive Behaviors Toward Self or Others
- ▶ Over-Sexualized Behaviors
- ▶ Cruelty to Animals
- ▶ Pre-occupation with Fire, Blood or Gore

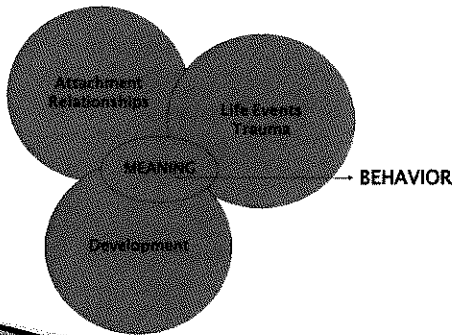
▶ We live in a world where big people take care of little people.

▶ They live in a world where big people hurt little people.

TREATMENT

- › Discerning the meaning of the behavior is a crucial step in the healing process.
- › Child's history and current behavior will provide clues to the child's inner working model, (the conclusions formed early in life regarding the self and others)

FINDING MEANING



WHAT TREATMENT?

- A variety of services which focus on strengthening the infant/parent relationship
- Evidence based treatments

ASSESSING PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

- Observation of the pair in different circumstances
–Crowell, Marschack Interaction Method
- PSI or SIPA–
Parent Stress Index or Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents



MARSCHAK INTERACTION METHOD

- Structured technique for observing and assessing aspects of the relationship between two individuals
- Contains a series of simple tasks designed to elicit a range of behaviors in 4 dimensions: structure, engagement, nurture, and challenge

Source: Lindaman, S.L., Booth, P.B, & Chambers, C.L. (1999)

CROWELL

Episodes designed to elicit behaviors indicative of different domains of parent-child relationship:

- **Free Play** – comfort, affection, familiarity, fun vs. task, partnership
- **Clean Up** – compliance/cooperation, transition
- **Bubbles** – positive affect/enjoyment
- **Tasks** – limit setting and structure, teaching, encouragement, availability, transitions, fun
- **Separation/Reunion** – child's response

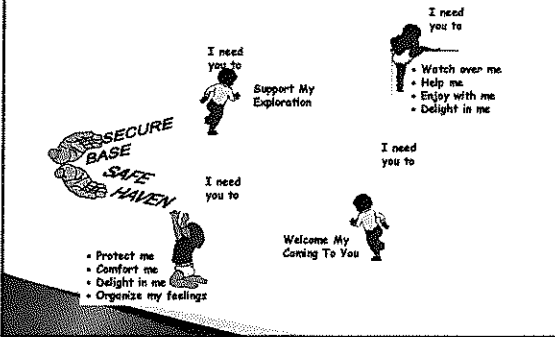
Source: Crowell and Feldman (1988)

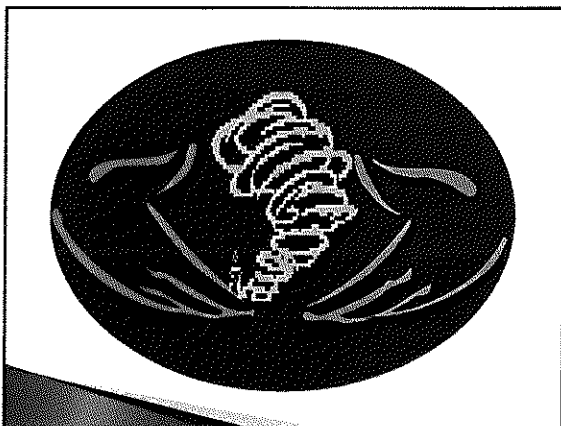
RELATIONSHIP BASED INTERVENTIONS

- Parent–infant Psychotherapy
- Child–Parent Psychotherapy
- Relationship Based Home Visiting
- Partners in Relationships
- Filial Therapy
- Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Theraplay
- Narrative therapy
- Circle of Security

CIRCLE OF SECURITY

Parent Attending to the Child's Needs





WHAT MAKES THERAPY FAIL?

- ▶ Not engaging caregiver in the therapeutic process
- ▶ Not understanding attachment and complex trauma and the impact on children
- ▶ Not understanding the "control" factor

CAREGIVER'S VALUE

- Regular caregivers (teachers, foster parents, day care workers, therapists, etc.) are the "active ingredients" of any treatment.
- The relationship is what allows a child to grow and thrive.
- Without at least **one** such relationship, development is disrupted and the consequences can be severe.
- A sensitive, caring relationship can foster remarkable recovery

STUDY BY DOZIER, CHASE-STOVALL, ALBUS AND BATES (2001)

- First study to look at connection between foster mother's state of mind as assessed by AAI and infant attachment as assessed by the Strange Situation
- Infants between 3 and 20 months of age at time of placement, most of whom suffered early neglect and some of whom suffered abusive parenting
- 72% match between the foster mother's state of mind and child attachment
- Only 21% of secure-autonomous foster mothers had children with disorganized attachment, compared with 62.5% of nonsecure foster mothers

FOSTER CARE STUDY CONTINUED

- Authors proposed that foster children may organize their attachment around the availability of their foster parents
- Found that secure foster parents were skillful in overriding "miscue" signals and provide sensitive caregiving despite the message that none is sought

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

1. The importance of time for the child.
2. The importance of permanence for the child.
3. The importance of the concept of attachment in decision making.
4. Relationships are more important than biology.
5. Importance of early intervention.

We are guilty
of many errors and many faults
but our worst crime
is abandoning the children,
neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need
can wait. The child cannot.
Right now is the time
his bones are being formed, his
blood is being made, and
his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer
'*Tomorrow.*'
His name is '*Today.*'

Gabrielle Roy's last
Nobel Prize winning poem from Ch. 14

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