



CREATING A TRAUMA-INFORMED ATMOSPHERE FOR

Kids & Teens AT YOUR Church

Presented by The Alliance

THE NEED FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CHURCHES

In 2019, nearly half of all kids in the US had a history of childhood trauma. Now, after a 2-year pandemic, nearly all children and teens have experienced uncertainty, major life disruptions and varying degrees of vulnerability. As a result, kids often don't feel safe, know how to regulate their emotions or get their needs met in healthy ways....even when they come to church.

This breakout is designed to equip church staff, children's ministry teams and youth group leaders to connect with kids & teens that have experienced past trauma.

Presenters: Tiffany Loeffler, DPT & Heidi White | The Alliance

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS COURSE

Understanding Childhood Trauma

- What is Trauma
- Different Forms of Trauma
- The Effects of Childhood Trauma

Recognizing Trauma-Related Behavior

- Felt Safety & Emotional Responses
- Typical Trauma-Related Behaviors

Trust Based Relational Intervention™

- Connecting
- Empowering
- Correcting

Providing Trauma-Informed Care

- Responses That Don't Work
- 5 Tools to Help Kids Thrive

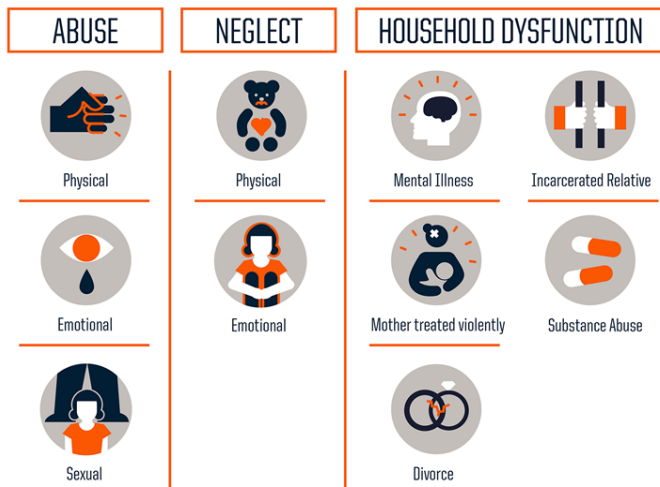
MODULE 1 - UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

TRAUMA DEFINED

An event or series of events that overwhelms our ability to cope.

-Dan Siegel

FORMS OF TRAUMA - ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)



TRAUMA EFFECTS ON THE BODY

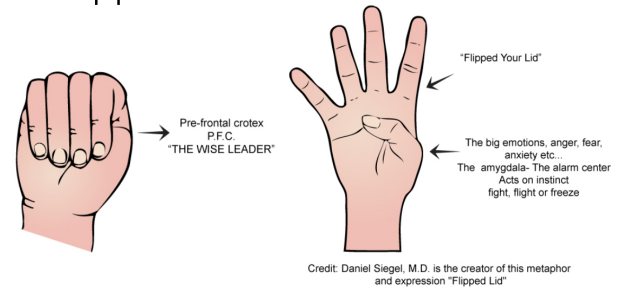
- Low energy levels or hyperactivity
- Somatic complaints (headaches/pain)
- Lack of coordination / balance
- Reduced immune function
- Poor metabolism / digestion issues
- High risk of addiction

TRAUMA EFFECTS ON AGE

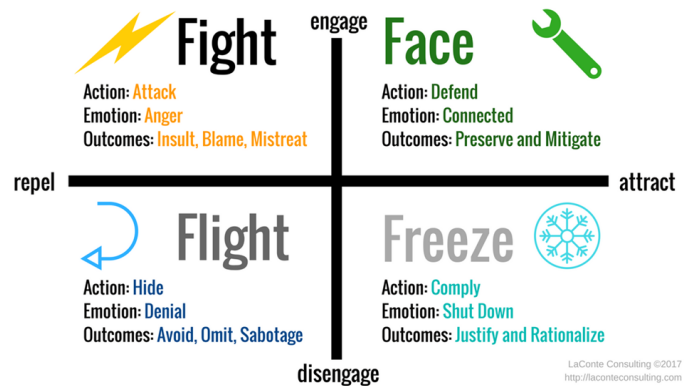
- Chronological age: birthdate
- Emotional age: maturity, response to triggers
- Mental age: IQ vs. street smarts

TYPICAL TRAUMA RESPONSES

- The Flipped Lid Brain

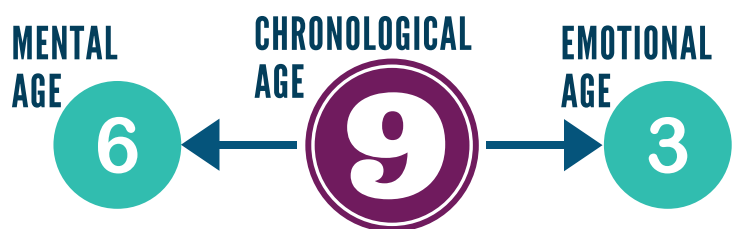


- The FFF System



TRAUMA EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

- Delayed or poor development of the upper parts of the brain
- Decreased brain size
- Easily distracted/Memory lapses
- Learned helplessness
- Intrusive thoughts
- Dissociations / flashbacks



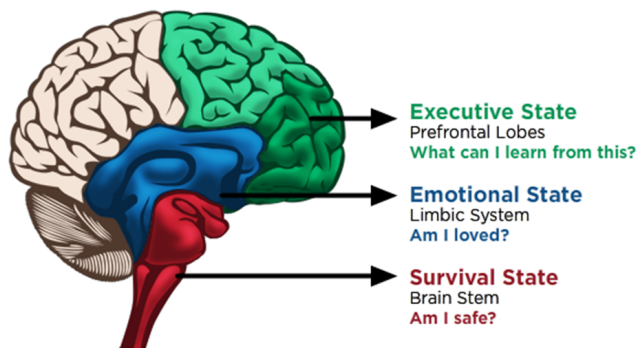
MODULE 2 - RECOGNIZING TRAUMA-RELATED BEHAVIOR

PREVALENCE OF TRUAMA

- 1 in 5 kids have a mental health disorder
- 1 in 2 kids have experienced trauma

“Every child comes into the world looking for someone who's looking for them.”
CURT THOMPSON

UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN



FELT SAFETY

- Being safe & feeling safe are different
- Feeling safe = **not anticipating** harm
- When kids don't feel safe, they act out what they can't talk out

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO PAST TRAUMA

- Anger
- Fear / Anxiety
- Guilt or shame
- Low self esteem
- Emotional numbness

TRAUMA-RELATED BEHAVIORS

- Compulsive behavior
- Sensory issues
- Delayed developmental skills
- Hypervigilance
- Mistrust in adults
- Poor socialization skills

TRAUMA BEHAVIOR PROFILES



Attention Seeking

Notes: _____



Anxious

Notes: _____



Controlling

Notes: _____



Sensory Seeking/Avoiding

Notes: _____



Age Inappropriate

Notes: _____

SECONDARY TRAUMA

- Emotional stress from hearing about or being around those with firsthand trauma
- Antidotes = safe people | self care

MODULE 3 - TRUST BASED RELATIONAL INTERVENTION™



CONNECTING

Mindful Awareness

- Be fully present in the moment
- Know your own triggers & trauma history

Engagement Strategies

- Meaningful eye contact/soft eyes
- Regulate your tone & expressions
- Match kids behavior

Notes:



EMPOWERING

Environmental Strategies

- Be a detective
- Keep things simple & predictable
- Use scaffolding

Physiological Strategies - Every 2 hours incorporate

- Healthy snacks
- Sensory activities
- Water breaks
- A balance of play & rest

Notes:



CORRECTING

Proactive Strategies

- Give options
- Encourage compromises
- Allow "re-dos"

Responsive Strategies - The IDEAL Response

- Immediate
- Action-based
- Direct
- Leveled at the behavior
- Efficient

Notes:

MODULE 4 - PROVIDING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

WHAT DOESN'T WORK FOR KIDS WITH PAST TRAUMA

- Time Outs
- Hearing "NO"
- Long explanations
- Taking away food
- Love & Logic (standard version)

5 STRATEGIES TO HELP KIDS & TEENS THRIVE



1

This helps us to:

- Regulate ourselves
- Respond appropriately

2

Structured environments help kids feel safe.

- Let kids/teens know the plan
- Keep things consistent
- Finish the activities you start
- Plan for transitions
- Have a calm down space

3

Common Triggers Include:

- Anything from their past
- Loud music, sounds, bright lights
- Harsh voices or direct commands
- Transitions
- Taking things away from them
- Movies/stories with family conflict

4

- Always look for ways to say "yes"
- Affirm good choices
- Be an active listener
- Keep phrases short (3-5 words)
- Give 2-3 options

Don't run	→	Please walk
Don't jump	→	Please go down slowly
Don't yell	→	Please use a quiet voice
Don't hit	→	Please be gentle
Don't throw the toys	→	Please put the toys down gently
Don't talk to me like that	→	Please use kind words
Don't grab toys from other kids	→	Please use your words and ask for the toy
Don't slam the door	→	Please close it gently
Get over it, stop your tantrum	→	I'm here for you, tell me what happened

5

- Don't take behavior personally
- Avoid passing judgement
- Offer empathy, not sympathy

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONS / WEBSITES



- The Alliance defendingthecause.org
- Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development child.tcu.edu
- ACEs Connection acesconnection.com
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network nctsn.org
- Christian Alliance for Orphans cafo.org
- One Big Happy Home onebighappyhome.com

VIDEOS



- ACEs: How Childhood Trauma Affects Health [On YouTube](#)
- The Fight Flight Freeze Response [On YouTube](#)
- TBRI: Trust-Based Relational Intervention [On YouTube](#)
- TBRI: The IDEAL Response [On YouTube](#)
- TBRI An Overview: Putting the Pieces Together [On YouTube](#)
- Brene Brown on Empathy [On YouTube](#)

BOOKS



- The Connected Child (By Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross)
- The Body Keeps the Score (By Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk)
- The Whole-Brain Child (By Dr. Daniel Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.)
- The Deepest Well (By Dr. Nadine Burke Harris)
- How to Talk So Kids Will Listen... (By Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish)

PODCASTS



- Trauma Informed Education (By Dr. Kay Ayre)
- The Trauma Therapist (By Guy Macpherson, Ph.D.)
- The Empowered Parent Podcast (By One Big Happy Home)
- The Forgotten Podcast (By The Forgotten Initiative)
- Foster Movement Podcast (By CAFO)