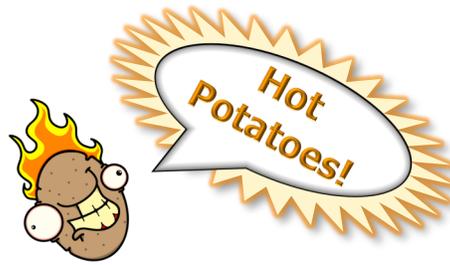


Trauma Informed Care



Conversations with Families about Hot Topics

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Seeing Children in Need Through a Trauma Lens

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.

-Wayne Dyer

While this quote can apply to many aspects of our lives, one of the most important applications would be the way we view the children of our community. Trauma-informed care asks us to change our inquiry from, "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" The answers to the two questions are different ones, and our responses to those answers will be different too.

On December 9, 2016, Cook County educators and community members were joined by Stacey Otto, social worker and owner of Nurturing Connections, a trauma informed service program. She provides consulting, workshops, and intervention services to children, families and professionals. Her 20+ years of experience helped shed light on what childhood trauma is, how it influences individual development and behavior, how it can span generations, and the ways in which caring adults can

generate effective responses to trauma experienced by children.

Traumatic experiences can profoundly affect children's behavior, feelings, relationships, and the way they view the world. When the adults that care about them assume a "trauma lens," they are better able to help those children learn and grow.



It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.

- Henry David Thoreau

Effects and Symptoms of Trauma in Children

Traumatized children:

- Are often misunderstood;
- Live in a daily state of terror;
- Perceive ordinary stress as a life or death struggle;
- May need little or no external provocation to become upset.

This may show up as problems with:

- Memory,
- Sleep,
- Behavior regulation,
- Relationships,
- Attention,
- Learning,
- Planning,
- Organization,
- Inhibition.

What are we seeing?

"An entirely different way is being developed of viewing all kinds of individual and social misbehaviors and maladaptations - moving from viewing as "sick" or "bad" or both, to "injured."

- Sandra Bloom

What is Trauma?

Trauma is a physical or emotional injury or an overwhelming experience that creates feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, being in danger, or loss of control.

This can spring from things like:

- physical, emotional or sexual abuse,
- neglect,
- witnessing domestic violence,
- the death of a loved one,
- a car accident,
- natural disasters,
- illness.

Most importantly though, trauma is not defined by the event but by the way the child perceives and processes the event.



Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) & Resiliency

An ACE is exposure to any of the following before age 18:

- ⇒ Recurrent physical abuse or neglect
- ⇒ Recurrent emotional abuse or neglect
- ⇒ Sexual abuse
- ⇒ Living with an alcoholic or drug abuser
- ⇒ An incarcerated family member
- ⇒ Living with someone who was chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
- ⇒ Violence between adults in the home
- ⇒ Parental separation or divorce

ACEs are common and can happen in any family. Their consequences are damaging and long-lasting, and they have a cumulative effect: the more ACEs someone has, the greater that person's risk of engaging in high-risk behaviors such as smoking, abusing drugs or alcohol, or promiscuity. They also are more likely to have poor health outcomes,

such as developing depression, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, liver disease, stroke, autoimmune disease, and diabetes. ACEs increase the risk of teen pregnancy, suicide, injuries, HIV and STDs, and early death, and are a leading determinant of public health spending.

Resilience is the ability to recover, and become healthy again after a traumatic experience. It's even possible that recovery from trauma can lead to greater skills and higher levels of functioning. Children's innate resilience can be supported by caring adults who act as role models and mentors, and when the

child is part of a strong social network. When we accept that a child's neurobiology has been affected and focus on creating a sense of safety, we can decrease the child's anxiety and fear. They can learn self-regulation and feel confident in their resilience as they encounter future challenges.



We are continually faced with great opportunities which are brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems.

-Margaret Mead

Historical Trauma

Historical Trauma is the cumulative injury to an entire people that is caused by past as well as present emotional, psychological, and physical abuses. Its injury spans years and generations. Historical Trauma is distinct from Intergenerational Trauma. Intergenerational trauma affects only one family. The initial traumatic event may have happened decades earlier, but each generation continues to transmit its pain and beliefs about self, the world, safety and danger, first to its children and then to grandchildren and beyond.

Historical Trauma, on the other hand, is experienced by an entire community of people. Examples would be the experiences of Native Americans after European colonization, the enslavement of African Americans, and the Holocaust. Modern events which are reverberating into current and future generations are the genocide in Rwanda and the Yugoslav wars.

Communities that have experienced Historical Trauma have higher rates of:

- Depression
- Substance Dependence
- Diabetes
- Dysfunctional Parenting
- Unemployment

Both intergenerational and historical trauma are ever-expanding and ever-evolving for the families and communities that are living that reality. The effects begin to dissipate when trauma-informed care becomes part of daily life, in public service, schools, and business, between generations, and across communities.

When we all change the way we look at things, the things we look at WILL change.

"A lot of what we do is conversation. Contact. Connecting... Whatever is said, we go deeper. Whatever is said we know is only part of what is meant...it goes deeper behind the pain...what is it that you cannot say? Can you reach and connect with what I cannot say, what I do not have words for? What I only have songs for, what I only have stories for, what I only have poetry for. Can you reach that?" — Elder Atum Azzahir

For More Information on Trauma Informed Care, ACEs, and Historical Trauma...

<p>Stacey Otto, LCSW Nurturing Connections sodr@sbcglobal.net (920) 573-2763</p> <p>Cook County Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sawtooth Mountain Clinic - Integrated Behavioral Health 218-387-2330• Human Development Center - www.humandevelopmentcenter.org/locations/cook/ 218-387-9444	<p>ACEs www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy</p> <p>Trauma Informed Care Levine, P. & Kline, M. (2007). <u>Trauma Through a Child's Eye: Awakening The Ordinary Miracle of Healing Infancy Through Adolescence.</u></p> <p>Historical Trauma Booklist https://www.extension.umn.edu/family/cyfc/our-programs/historical-trauma-and-cultural-healing/docs/ht-booklist.pdf</p>
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