Trauma Informed Approaches in Home Visiting

Michigan Home Visiting Conference
August 6, 2015
Objectives

- Describe the impact of trauma/toxic stress on young children & their families
- Discuss strategies for incorporating trauma informed approaches in home visiting.
- Identify key components of a trauma informed approach
The Science of Trauma & Development

Knowledge from the fields of **neuroscience**, **immunology**, **genetics** and **epidemiology** have increased our understanding of the ways experience impact our biology, behavior & long term physical & mental health.
How Does Stress Work?

- Stress is a normal and necessary part of life.
- Stress disrupts our sense of well-being.
- Stress causes physiological reactions.
- Stress causes behavioral reactions.
Reactions to Stress

Elevated heart rate & blood pressure

Increased hormonal levels (cortisol & adrenaline)

Fight, Flight, Freeze
Three Types of Stress

Positive
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable
Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
What Are Trauma & Toxic Stress?

- **Trauma** – an intense event that threatens safety or security of an individual
- **Toxic Stress** – re-occurring negative experiences that threaten safety or security
- **Traumatic Stress** – event, the experience, and the effect
How Do Young Children Respond to Trauma?

- Young children experience trauma differently than older children or adults
- Primarily a sensory experience
- Not as able to anticipate danger and protect self
- Limited ability to express thoughts & feelings
- Different understanding of causation - the power of thoughts, wishes, fears

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Impact of Toxic Stress on the Brain

Center for Developing Child, Harvard University
Experience Influences Genetic Expression

Association of DNA with histones showing some common posttranslational modifications that influence this interaction.
The Dance Between Nurture and Nature

Experience → Brain Development ← Epigenetic Changes

Behavior

AAP: Helping Foster and Adoptive Families Cope With Trauma; 2013
ACE Pyramid

Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
Trauma Informed Approach

Getting to the Heart of the Matter
Trauma Informed Care: Key Assumptions

- **Realize:** understand trauma & its impact
- **Recognize:** signs of trauma & its prevalence
- **Respond:** use/connect to trauma informed interventions
- **Resist:** avoid re-traumatization

SAMHSA, The Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma Informed Approach.
Objectives for a Trauma Informed System for Infants/Toddlers

- Two generation approach - Focus on children and caregivers
- Maximize physical & psychological safety
- Identify trauma-related needs
- Enhance well-being & resilience
- Partner with families, agencies and systems to increase continuity & coordination of care

Jones Harden, Brenda, “Services for Families of Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Trauma”, Network of infant/toddler Researchers
Two Generation Approach

- Talk about potential impact on adult life & parenting
- Talk about potential impact on child
- “Can’t rewrite the beginning of the story but can change how it ends”

University of Kansas, “Lemonade for Life”
## Lemonade For Life

### The Lemon (Bad Experience)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I had really bad asthma and breathing problems when I was a kid. I was told I was lazy and wasn't able to keep up in sports.</td>
<td>I am really picky about no smoking around my kids. I also take them to the doctor right away if they start having any chest colds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My dad used to call me fatty and tease me about my weight all the time.</td>
<td>I tell my kids they are beautiful and make sure they have good food and get exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was molested by a friend of our family when I was just a kid. I didn't feel like I could tell my parents. I didn't think they would believe me.</td>
<td>I make sure that my kids know that no one has the right to touch them like that. I am careful that they aren't put in dangerous situations where this could happen to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hated school. I didn't get very good grades. I ended up dropping out.</td>
<td>I don't want that for my kids. I enrolled my kids is preschool to give them a head start. I go to their school events and ask them about their homework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maximize Safety

- **Physical Safety**
  - Help families think about/work toward safety
  - Raise questions about unsafe situations
  - Be aware of sensory environment
  - Work on crisis/safety plan

- **Psychological Safety**
  - Explain what will happen & why
  - Offer choices
  - Think about personal space, voice, gestures
  - Begin & end in a safe place
Identify Trauma-Related Needs

Risky or Maladaptive Behaviors

- Serve as coping strategies
- A way to feel safe, reduce tension, and feel better
- A signal of distress
Strategies for Home Visitors

1. Prepare
2. Ask
3. Listen
4. Accept and Affirm
5. Remember
6. Follow Up

Region X ACE Planning Team, “NEAR@Home - Addressing ACEs in Home Visiting by Asking, Listening, and Accepting”
Handling Disclosures of Trauma

- Be prepared
  - Expect disclosures
  - Know agency policies & protocols
  - Know state reporting laws
  - Have referral info available

- After disclosure
  - Acknowledge & validate
  - Discuss confidentiality & reporting requirements
  - Follow up & stay connected

JSI Research and Training Institute, http://rhey.jsi.com
Ask Questions

How are you managing?

What are you doing that helps?

Is there something else you want to do?
Resilience

- Ability to successfully confront challenges & bounce back from setbacks.

- Resilience can be nurtured & recaptured
Resilience

Supportive Relationships

- Decrease stress hormones
- Increase positive neural connections
- Enhance a sense of safety
- Teach positive coping skills
Enhancing Resilience

- Supportive relationships-home visitor to parent & parent to child
- Address basic needs
- Follow the parent/child’s lead
- Encourage connections-family, community
- Focus on strengths & abilities
- Teach coping & calming skills, e.g. mindfulness
- Stay connected
What is Resilience?

Partnerships to Increase Continuity & Coordination

- Know your community partners
- Help families connect
- Follow up
BECOMING A TRAUMA INFORMED ORGANIZATION

- Organizational Policies & Practices
- Program Capacity & Practices
- Staff Capacities, Supports & Practices

Questions to Ask

- What are the goals of your HV program & how might a Trauma Informed approach support/enhance your program?

- How does your program create a safe environment for parents & children, staff? What else can you do?

- How does your program identify trauma related needs?

- How does your program enhance/support resilience for parents & young children, staff? What else can you do?

- What resources exist in your community to prevent/address the impact of trauma/toxic stress? How are you connected to them?

- What are 1st steps that you/your program could take?
Organizational Policies & Practices

- Leadership/advisory bodies assess for inclusion of TI policies & practices
- Develop/maintain partnerships with other TI community agencies
- Policies are clear, transparent and communicated to staff and families
- Emergency/crisis protocols are reviewed for TI approach
- Staff development & support mechanisms
Program Capacity & Practices

- Staff training & supervision is available
- Use of evidenced-based practices that support/enhance resilience
- Focus on family engagement
- Explore for presence of trauma/toxic stress
- Provide information to families about impact of trauma & resources available
- Focus on physical & psychological safety
- Ensure culturally & linguistically appropriate practices
Staff Capacities, Supports & Practices

- Form trustworthy, collaborative relationships with families
- Provide warm, non-judgmental, empathic interactions
- Provide clear explanations of program rules & legal requirements
- Support nurturing/supportive parent-child interactions
- Maintain healthy boundaries with families
- Maintain healthy self-care activities
Trauma Informed Care: Key Principles

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Collaboration
- Peer Support
- Voice & Choice
- Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues
Secondary Traumatic Stress

- In helping professions the self is most important tool
- STS is our occupational hazard
- Attention to STS is = to using Personal Protective Equipment
- Protects us so we can continue to care for others effectively
Resources

- Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University, www.developingchild.harvard.edu
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy
- Jones Harden, Brenda, “Services for Families of Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Trauma”, Network of infant/toddler Researchers,
- University of Kansas, “Lemonade for Life”, www.lemonadeforlife.com
- Region X ACE Planning Team, “NEAR@Home - Addressing ACEs in Home Visiting by Asking, Listening, and Accepting
- Office of Adolescent Health, “A Checklist for Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach into Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs”
Questions
For More Information

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