Inviting Our Bodies to Speak

Recognizing the Connection Between Mind and Body in Supporting Health and Resilience through Mindful Movement and Interpersonal Play

Introductions

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Creative Arts Therapies

- The intentional use of the creative arts (drama, art, music, poetry, dance, etc.) to achieve therapeutic goals.
- Focus is on creative expression as healing and health including playful and embodied expression.
- Non-verbal communication and expression via metaphor is equally important to verbal expression and processing.
- CATs are trained dually in psychology and the art modality they practice in—they are at once therapists and artists.

What do we bring to the table?

Wisdom

Talents, Education, Experience

Worldview

Beliefs, Values, Expectations, Memory, Culture

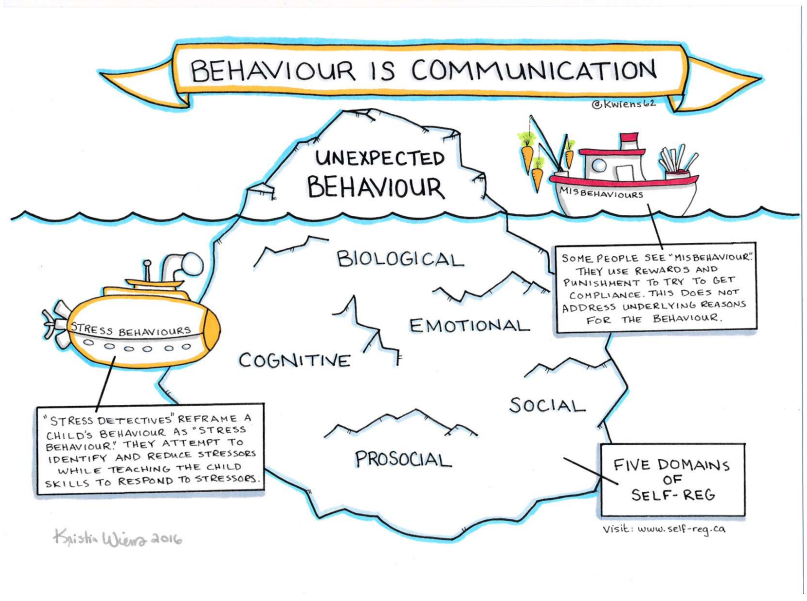
Willingness

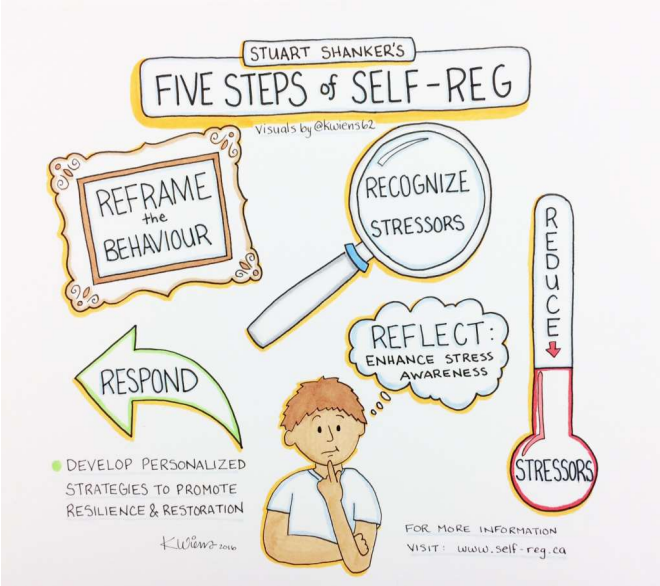
Questions, Participation, Curiosity

Our Map of the World

Group Agreements…

I feel _____; I need _____.





Beginning to Understand Disrupted Neurodevelopment

SHIFT Your Perspective

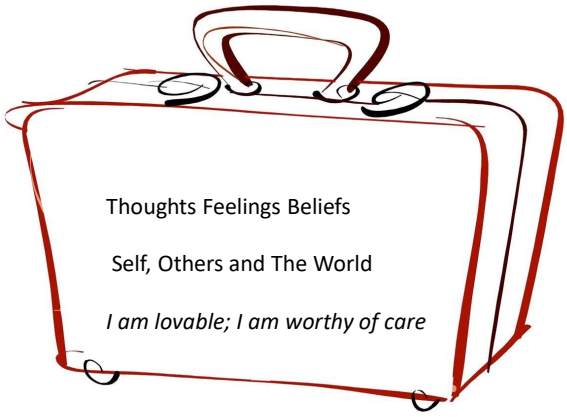
Another Definition of Trauma…

"Trauma is not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness."

-Peter Levine

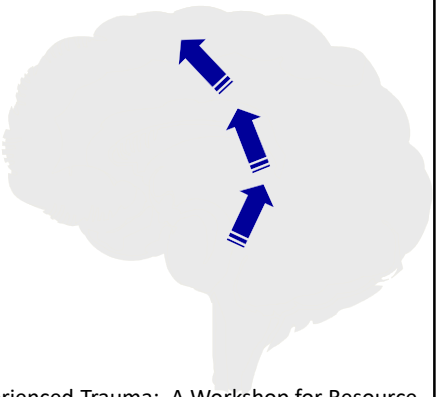
The Invisible Suitcase

from NCTSN Curriculum *Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents (2010)*



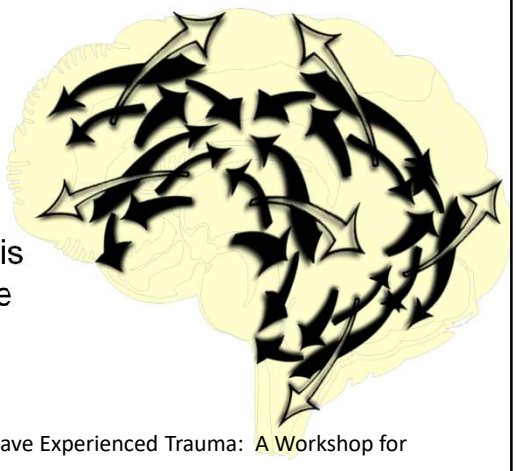
Experience Grows the Brain

- Brain development happens from the bottom up:
  - From primitive (basic survival)
  - To more complex (rational thought, planning, abstract thinking)

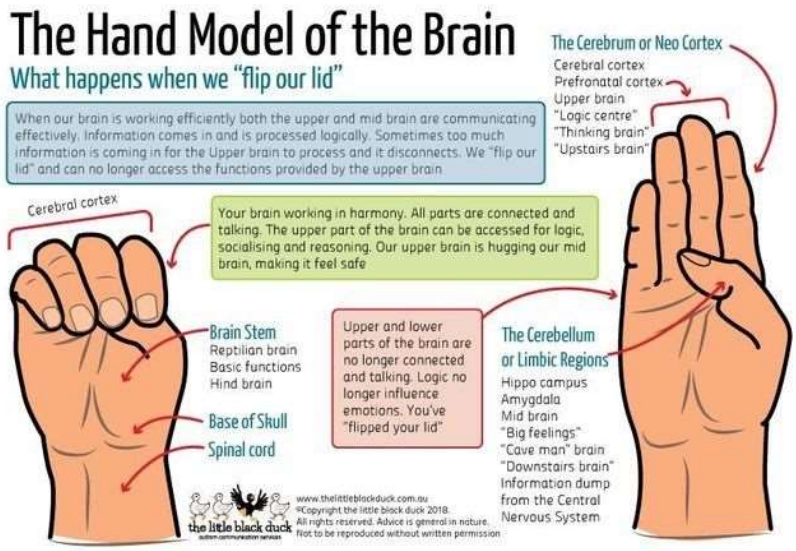


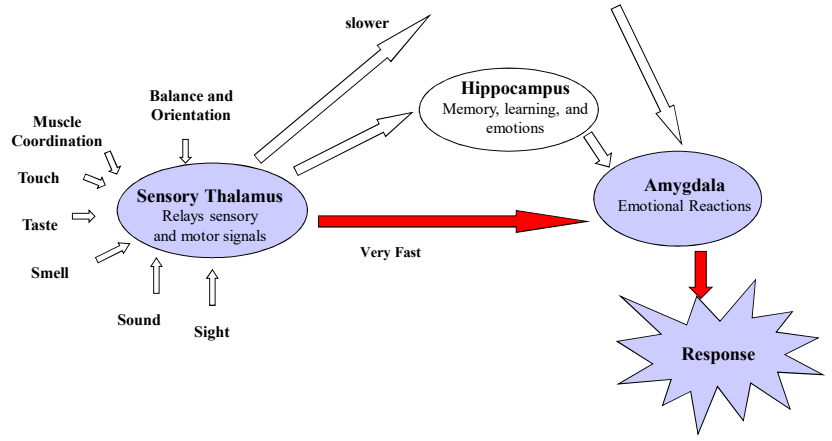
Experience Grows the Brain
(Continued)

- The brain develops by forming connections.
- Interactions with caregivers are critical to brain development.
- The more an experience is repeated, the stronger the connections become.



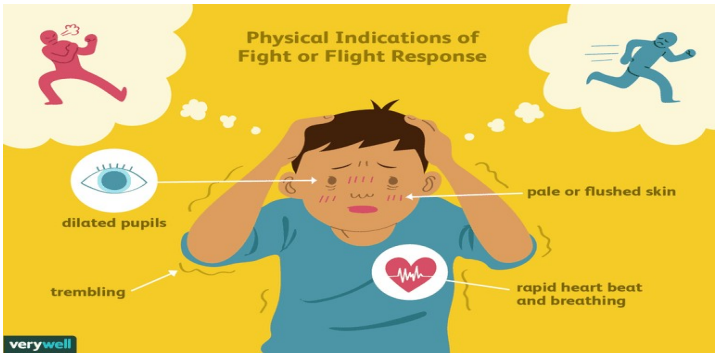
Helping Youth Understand Trauma



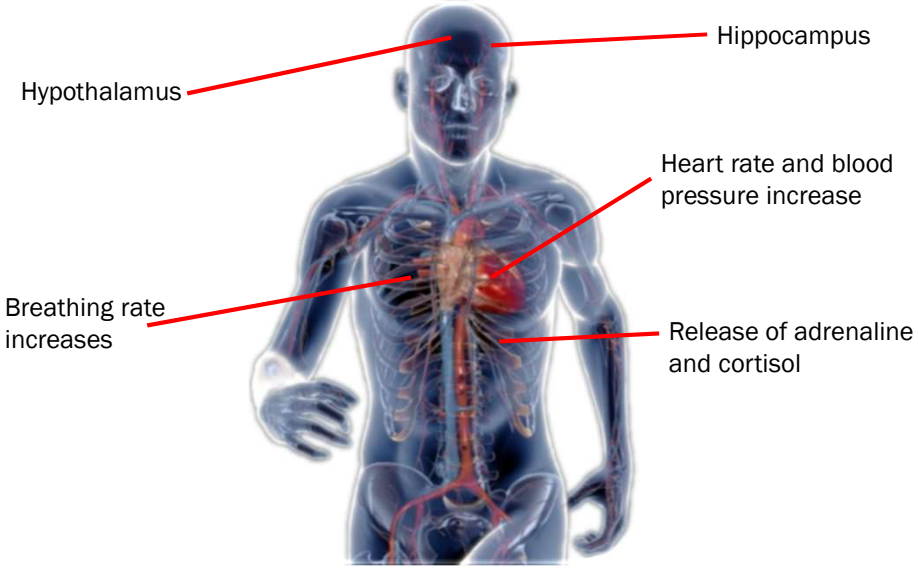


Video: Kids Want to Know

Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions?



Fight, Flee, or Freeze (to protect)



THINK Trauma

Dr. Bruce Perry
Regulate, Relate, Reason

- Information is filtered from the bottom up.
- We regulate in relationship.
- Trying to modulate behavior from the top down is extremely difficult even in ideal situations.
- Brains develop from the bottom up, but there are gaps that can occur within. When this happens, a child struggles when stressed to complete tasks they previously have show ability to do.

Breath, Movement and Touch

- Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, in *The Body Keeps the Score*, notes that the three things that can cross the automatic response and the conscious response boundary are:
  - Breath
  - Movement (Rhythm)
  - Touch

Our Triune Brain

Carrie Contey, PhD.

www.carriecontey.com/wp-content/uploads/Parenting-the-Brain.pdf

We MUST be responding to where the child is…meeting the child and building a bridge to where we hope to go:

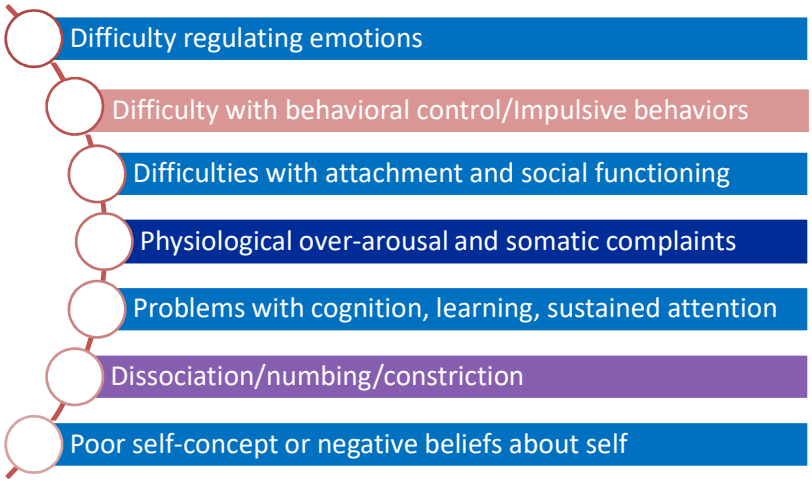
- **Human** (Learning, Empathy, Creating)
  - Guide and Give the Yes's
  - Language is On-Line
- **Mammal** (Feeling)
  - Slow and Low
  - Relationship and Attachment
- **Reptile** (Fearing)
  - Stop and Soothe (yourself and the student)
  - Eating, Sleeping, Movement, Cycles

Trauma Reminders

Things, events, situations, places, sensations, and even people that a youth consciously or unconsciously connects with a traumatic event

THINK Trauma

Key Developmental Deficits for Complex Trauma



Think Trauma

Early Relationships

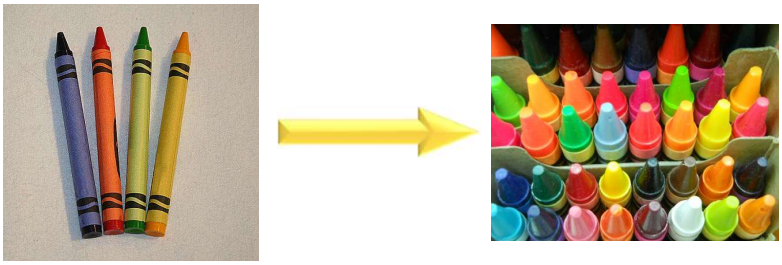
Relationships are developed through the emotional bond between the child and caregiver. It is through this relationship that we learn to:

- Regulate emotions/self-soothe
- Develop trust in others
- Freely explore our environment
- Understand ourselves and others
- Understand that we can impact the world around us
- Begin to establish a worldview

SHIFT Your Perspective

Trauma's Impact on Emotional Development

- Difficulty with self-regulation
- Difficulty describing feelings/internal states
- Difficulty communicating wishes and desires

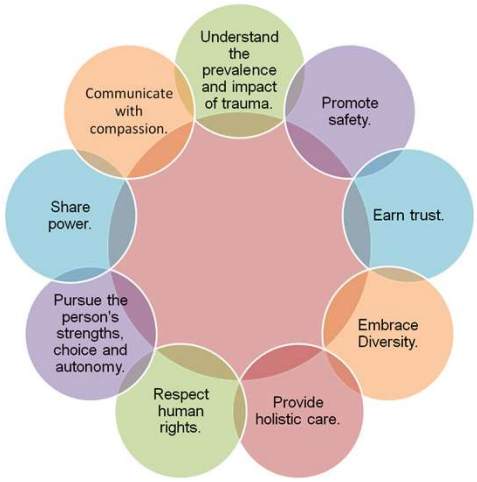


THINK Trauma

We Can’t Stop the Waves…

But We Can Learn to Ride Them…

Wisconsin's TIC Guiding Principles



SHIFT Your Perspective

Bringing the Body Into Our Work

- **Building a different experience with people we support and building new pathways in the brain**
- **A recursive cycles of traumatic re-enactment—trigger, belief, behavior, response from other—or connection and healing—noticing, feeling, animating, expressing (Dr. David Read Johnson ALIVE Program)**
- **Helping one another regulate, reflect, try new alternatives.**

Developmental Transformations

Dr. David Read Johnson, PhD, RDT-BCT

- Embodied
- Encounter
- Playspace

Playing with the Unplayable

"DvT attempts to *lower fear* of the instability of Being, rather than lowering the instability of Being. Lowering the instability of Being leads to the control of the external and interpersonal environment, which can only partially succeed, and inevitably leads to greater instability within that environment. These fears lead to conditions such as Withdrawal, Clinging, Rigidity, Confusion, Control, Submission, Violence, and Hatred…

In contrast, lowering one's own fear of instability involves learning how to accept *risk*, and learning how to maintain one's balance amidst uncertain and unstable circumstances. The result is a dimensionalization of experience that allows for a dynamic equilibrium."

-David Read Johnson PhD, RDT-BCT Text for Practitioners

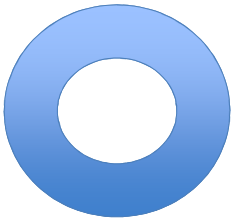
Developmental Transformations

Dr. David Read Johnson, PhD, RDT-BCT

The Recursive Cycle

Notice

Express



Feel

Animate

5 Developmental Dimensions

Dr. David Read Johnson, PhD, RDT-BCT

Structure

Complexity

Media of Representation

Affect Expression

Interpersonal Demand

PrACTice!

- Group
- Individual
- Training
- Play and Dramatic Improv

Resources

- Developmental Transformations
  www.developmentaltransformations.com
- North American Drama Therapy Association
  www.nadta.org
- National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies
  https://www.nccata.org

  National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  www.nctsn.org