

Early Childhood Evaluation Program – Technical Assistance & Consultation

Continuing Education series for NM FIT Providers

ECEP Office Hours

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Early Childhood Evaluation Program (ECEP) Interdisciplinary Clinical Faculty and Staff

Infant Mental Health: Understanding the impact of trauma in early childhood and how to respond

Julia Oppenheimer, PhD, IMH-E®(III)

September 14 & September 16, 2022

University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center

Department of Pediatrics - Center for Development & Disability

Introductions and Housekeeping

- Today's ECEP Team
- We want to see you!
- We want to hear you!
 - Please use the chat or jump in with comments, ideas, and questions.
 - Goal is to share experiences and knowledge



Objectives for today



- Understand trauma-informed care as a framework and how it applies to Early Intervention practices.
- Identify red flags for trauma and how trauma symptoms are exhibited by infants and toddlers
- Identify when to refer families for treatment, available resources, and how to discuss Infant Mental Health referrals with families.



Frequent Traumatic Stressors in Childhood

Exposure to violence

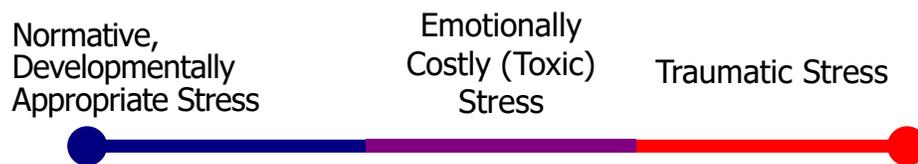
- Child Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Community Violence

Accidents

- Car crashes
- Near-drownings
- Dog bites
- Burns
- Medical events

And now, COVID-19-related events

Risk as a Continuum from Stress to Trauma



Lieberman, A; & Van Horn, P (2008). *Psychotherapy with infants and young children: Repairing the effects of stress and trauma on early attachment*. The Guilford Press, New York

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

- A service system with trauma-informed perspective
 - Routinely screens for trauma exposure and related symptoms
 - Uses evidence-based, culturally responsive assessment/ treatment, recognizing community factors including historical trauma
 - Makes resources available on trauma exposure, its impact, and treatment
- Aims to strengthen resilience and protective factors for those impacted by/ vulnerable to trauma.
- Addresses parent and caregiver trauma and its impact on the family system
- Emphasizes continuity of care and collaboration across service systems.
- **Maintains an environment of care for staff that addresses, minimizes, and treats secondary traumatic stress, and that increases staff wellness.**

Thinking about “Multiple Moments”

A traumatic experience consists of different traumatic moments that are encoded in the brain and body at multiple levels

At each moment – what is the child’s experience?

What is the caregiver’s experience?

How does this experience change from moment to moment? What gets encoded?

Trauma and Loss Reminders: Trauma can generate distressing reminders that may affect the child’s life and functioning long after the event has ended → Trauma triggers

Trauma response in infants and toddlers

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of previously acquired developmental skills - Poor verbal skills, poor skill development - Exhibit memory problems - Difficulties focusing or learning in school - Temper tantrums - Aggressive behavior like hitting, kicking, throwing things, or biting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physiological changes (e.g., overeating, breathing or coloration changes under stress) - Sleep difficulties (night terrors/nightmares, shutting down/napping under stress). - Scream or cry excessively - Poor appetite, low weight, or digestive problems - Experience stomachaches or headaches - Bed wetting - Thumb sucking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act out in social situations - Imitate the abusive/traumatic event - Be verbally abusive - Be unable to trust others or make friends - Believe they are to blame for the traumatic event - Lack self-confidence - Acting younger than their age - Trouble separating from their parents - Not playing with other kids their age |
|--|---|--|

When problems occur...

Infants and toddlers who have experienced trauma, abuse, neglect, or separations often show specific challenges, including:

Problems with relationships/peer interactions

Behavior challenges

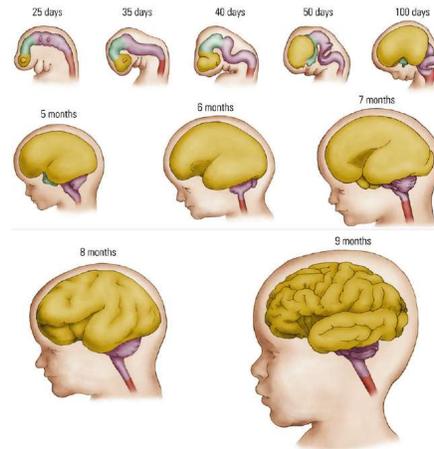
Unmet emotional needs

Developmental delays

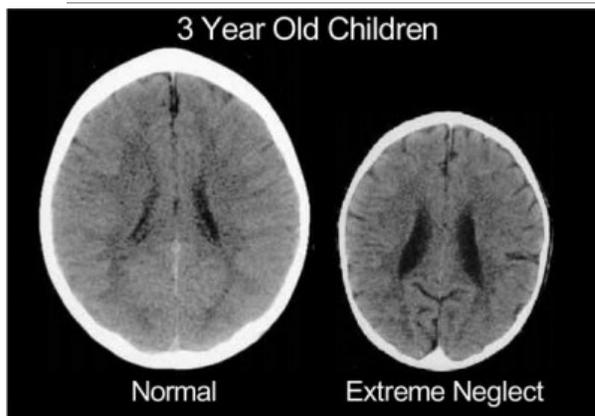
Cognitive difficulties (impulse control, self regulation, focus)



Brain Development



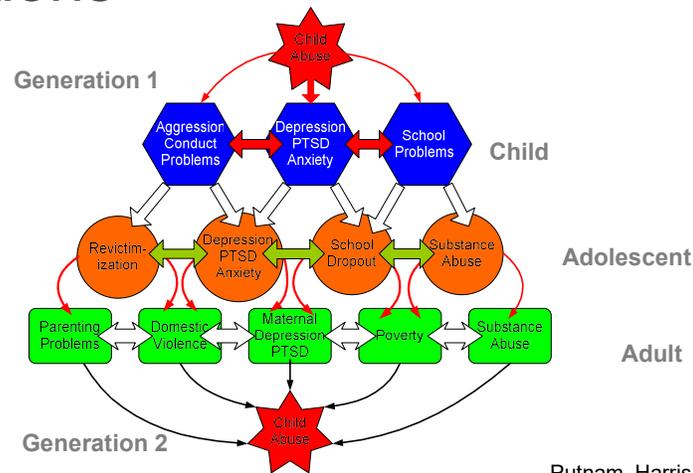
Traumatic Stress and Impact on the Body



- Chronically high levels of stress hormones
- Lower levels of cortisol (mood enhancing neurotransmitter)
- Anatomical (Structural) differences in brain structures related to memory and planning
 - *Smaller brain volume, larger fluid-filled cavities, less connective matter*

www.ChildTrauma.org Bruce Perry, MD
(DeBellis & Putnam, 1994, DeBellis et. al., 1999)

Transmission of Trauma (ACES) Across Generations



Putnam, Harris, Lieberman, et. al, 2015

How can we help?

Infant/ Early Childhood Mental Health

- Embedded in early intervention approach

Provide psychotherapy treatment services that are **trauma-informed, play-based, and** relationship-based

- Focus on **building positive relationships** between young children and caregivers
- Address the **impact of trauma** on infants and young children
- Requires that **caregiver is open** to recognizing impact of trauma on child and supporting their healing

I/ECMH Models

Child Parent Psychotherapy

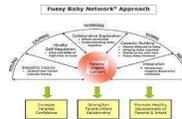


- Play based, dyadic therapy involving caregivers (biological or foster) in weekly sessions with their child.
- Help families heal and grow after stressful experiences
- Evidence based: Research shows improved mood, learning, trauma symptoms, and stress responses in children AND parents following CPP treatment

Circle of Security International



Erikson Institute- Fussy Baby Model



Resources in your community

<https://cyfd.org/behavioral-health/infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health-services>

<https://childparentpsychotherapy.com/resources/roster/>

<https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/find-a-facilitator/>

<https://www.erikson.edu/academics/professional-development/district-infancy-programs/facilitating-attuned-interactions/>

<https://www.nmimh.org/resources/registry-of-endorsed-professionals/>



Questions?



Contact information

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References

NCTSN; <https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/creating-trauma-informed-systems/healthcare>

Ghosh Ippen, Layne, & Pynoos, 2011. NCTSN Core Curriculum for Childhood Trauma.

Ghosh Ippen, 2019. Wounds from the Past: Integrating Historical Trauma into a Multicultural Infant Mental Health Framework. In Zeanah, Charles H.; Handbook of Infant Mental Health, Fourth Edition.



Complete our survey for CEUs!

<https://www.research.net/r/XQJFRCZ>

Join us in October:

Understanding typical and atypical language development, recognizing Apraxia, and related topics (e.g., tongue ties)

October 12 at 3:30, October 14 at 8am

