



NCR- 27.04.23

How to help traumatized children

schedule for the day:

- Introduction-
- How trauma affects children according to their age
- the importance of parents – «the protective shield»

- what is trauma, trauma reactions and helpers challenges- trauma model
- Tool connected to the trauma model

Children in war

Living under major stress

- anxiety, uncertainty
- separation and sorrow
- big changes in daily life
- changes in the behavior of the grown ups

• Experiencing trauma events

- overwhelming emotions/fear
- confusion
- changes in oneself and others
- etc



The most common trauma reactions in children

PTS reactioner in general

- Re-experiencing
 - *Nightmare, flash-backs, triggers*
- Increased activation /arousal
 - Sweaty, irritable, narrow-minded, sleep deprived
 - easily scared, jumpy,
- Avoidance
 - Not talking about, not thinking about, not seeing/hearing anything that reminds you of the trauma

Age-specific

- 0-3
 - Clinging, separation anxiety, crying, regulation of sleep, food etc, losing skills like bladder control, language etc
- Pre-schoolers 3-ca. 7
 - Repetitive play or lost play ability
 - In addition, separation anxiety, crying and anxiety, may regress in development, "Shut-down"/still and passive
- 7-12
 - All PTS reactions+ over thinking, concentration difficulties, anxiety
- 12-18
 - Over thinking , concentration difficulties, thoughts of justice, aggression, missing friends, politicisation

Children may need specialised help if the reactions are unusually strong, last for a very long time and increase in intensity

What happens to the capacity to play?

(Kostnley, Eriksson Inst.)

Play capacity
restored

- Play with rescue motives, someone there to comfort or to win over a monster.

- Play with revenge motives

- Playing rigid, repetitious play, hopelessness, very little- if any-phantasy

Severe
traumatized

- Totally lost capacity to play

Brains and danger

- Our brain is made to know and react to signs of danger



FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

- but for human beings – also attachment cry- and as part of freeze: submission and shut down

1 Typical long-term survival strategies

Scan/Freeze	Attach	Flight	Fight	Submission	Dissociates, shuts down
<p>Focuses on potential threats.</p> <p>Lacks concentration.</p> <p>Thinks rigidly.</p> <p>Tense.</p>	<p>Clingy.</p> <p>Rejects others or easily feels rejected.</p> <p>Fears abandonment.</p>	<p>Runs away.</p> <p>Hides.</p> <p>Isolates.</p> <p>Avoids.</p> <p>Withdraws.</p>	<p>Hyperactive.</p> <p>Unable to follow through.</p> <p>Compulsive.</p> <p>Impulsive.</p> <p>Resists.</p> <p>Hits or kicks.</p>	<p>Compliant, submissive, reserved.</p> <p>Pleasing.</p> <p>Does not show needs.</p> <p>Focuses mostly on the needs of others.</p>	<p>Forgetful, daydreams.</p> <p>Numb, tired.</p> <p>Low energy.</p> <p>Passive.</p> <p>Collapses.</p> <p>Somatic complaints.</p>

Traumedefinition:

«an external event that is experienced as a threat to physical or psychological integrity»

- what are the elements, what are the reactions and what needs to be repaired

What are trauma

and which areas are affected:

sudden external event

lack of protection

attack on the child's autonomy

overwhelming emotionally

cognitively confusing

Trauma reactions

feeling unreal, like a film,
dissociation

distrust in others

helplessness,
loss of feeling of self agency,
being an object instead of a subject

dysregulation of emotions,
confusion and unawareness of own
feelings

incorrect meaning attribution,
fragmented memory
blocked future

helpers challenges

- be a witness, listening and making it real
- building a trusting relation
- strengthen autonomy and the child's feeling of influence
- to do co-regulation, teach relaxation exercises
- build awareness of feelings and reactions
- psychoeducation about normal reactions
- correcting misunderstanding and help making a meaning
- make a coherent narrative
- install hope for the future

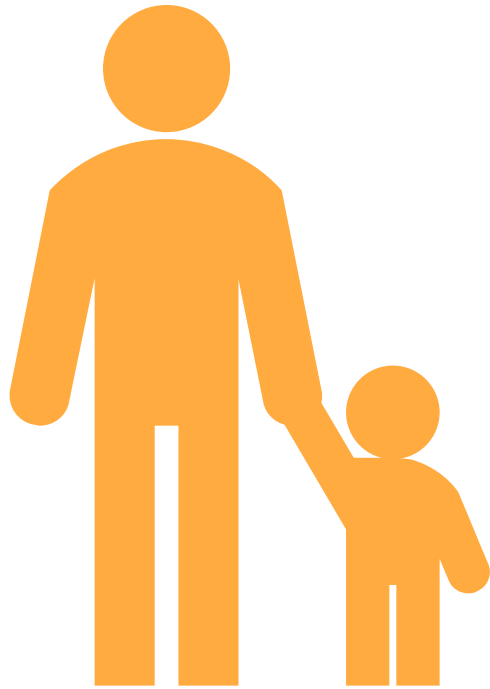
Tools connected to each dimension in the traumamodel



be a witness

- listen attentively
- regulate your own reactions and emotions
- be aware of your own non-verbal expressions
- never put pressure on a child to tell
- give praise

Building trust



- Be sensitive and help the child to regulate personal space and distance so that it can acquire experience of being safe with others.
- Parallel activities (reading together, watching films together, taking car journeys together) can establish distances that these children tolerate.
- be predictable and trustworthy

TOOL TO HELP THE CHILD SEE AREAS OF POSSIBLE INFLUENCE

- What can be influenced in your life by you?

- Outside my control:

- Inside my control:

Regulating Strategies and means of strengthening mastery and coping

- Gross Motor Activities
- Small trampolines
- Opportunities to run / jump / play / Exercise balls / yoga balls
- Balance beams
- Five-minute dance party

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDIfD1WFXeo>





Emotional co-regulation: Muscle relaxation

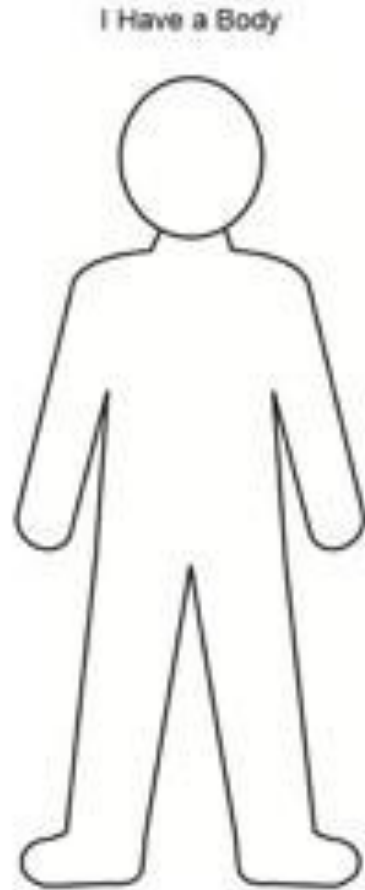
- Doorway stretch. Have children push with both arms against the doorframe, hold for 7, then release. Have children notice the difference between pushing and releasing.
- Spaghetti: Have children move like uncooked spaghetti, then cooked spaghetti
- Caterpillar/butterfly: Have children move like a caterpillar in the cocoon, then spread their wings like a butterfly
- Progressive muscle relaxation. tighten one by one muscle- hold 5 sec- release - notice the difference- scan the whole body- repeat where it is still tense

Regulating activities (middle childhood)

- **Breathing Technique:** Have children raise arms. Breathe in as arms go up; breathe out as arms come down. See how slowly they can move their arms up and down
- **Imagery:** Have children imagine taking a deep breath and blowing out birthday candles, have them smell flowers and blow a dandelion puff.



helping understand own feelings naming feelings- make an outline of the body



joy, happy

scared

angry

safe

tired

Where in your body do you notice these feelings? use colours in the drawing

Where is it nice and not nice to be touched ? show on the picture

In what situations do you have the different feelings:

i e With my mother, at school, playing with friends, when I am in my bed etc?

help fragmented memory-
make a life line- a narrative

birds

- before the war the war started the present time the future

river

The river represents life, goes in only one direction

The birds on the riverside represents your thoughts, emotions, worries and hope.
Place good and bad happenings on each side of the river

When do we know when a trauma is healed?

- •When the child is able to handle /tolerate the feelings connected to the memory of the event
- •When the child's physiological reactions are manageable
- •When the child can control the memories (instead of being controlled by them)
- •When the event is an integrated part of a narrative
- •When self-esteem is re-established
- •When the most important attachment relations are re-established
- •When meaning and hope for the future are re-established

Past- Present- Future (Nunn Kenneth)

- The past... needs clarification/comprehensibility and responsibility
- The present... needs safety
- The future... needs HOPE, that things can be OK

