

IDENTIFYING AND TREATING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

"A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to a child's life or bodily integrity. Witnessing a traumatic event that threatens life or physical security of a loved one can also be traumatic."



TRAUMA RESULTS IN A
FUNDAMENTAL REORGANIZATION
OF THE WAY MIND AND BODY
MANAGE PERCEPTIONS. IT CHANGES
NOT ONLY HOW WE THINK AND
WHAT WE THINK ABOUT, BUT ALSO
OUR VERY CAPACITY TO THINK.

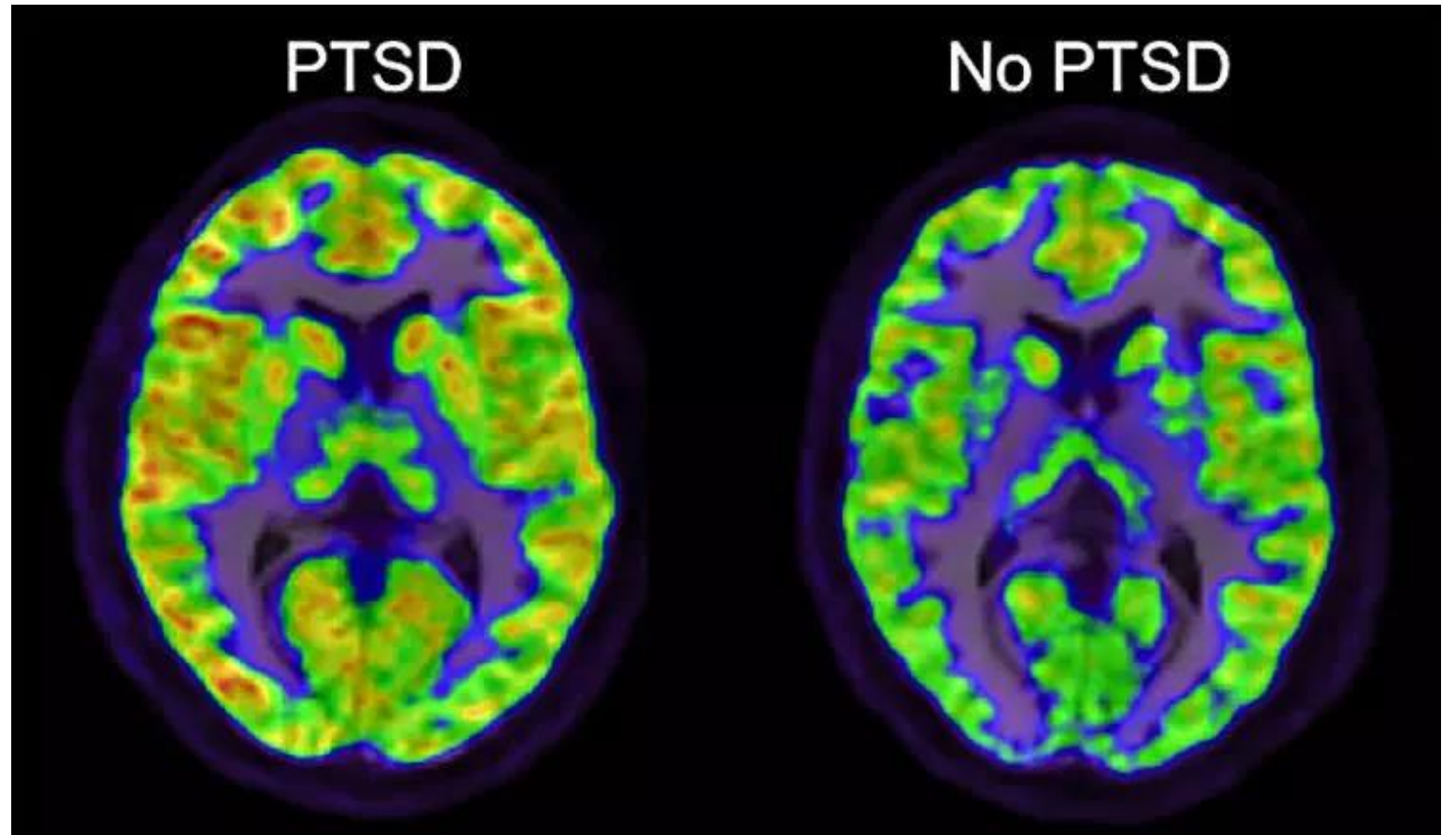
BESSEL VAN DER KOLK

WHAT EXPERIENCES MIGHT BE TRAUMATIC?

- Physical, sexual, or psychological abuse and neglect (including trafficking)
- Natural and technological disasters or terrorism
- Family or community violence
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Substance use disorder (personal or familial)
- Refugee and war experiences (including torture)
- Serious accidents or life-threatening illness
- Military family-related stressors (e.g., deployment, parental loss or injury)
- When children have been in situations where they feared for their lives, believed that they would be injured, witnessed violence, or tragically lost a loved one, they may show signs of child traumatic stress.

HOW THE BRAIN CHANGES

- Amygdala overload
- Fight or Flight
- “Flipping your lid”



TRAUMA VERSUS COMPLEX TRAUMA

“Complex trauma describes both children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events—often of an invasive, interpersonal nature—and the wide-ranging, long-term effects of this exposure. These events are severe and pervasive, such as abuse or profound neglect. They usually occur early in life and can disrupt many aspects of the child’s development and the formation of a sense of self. Since these events often occur with a caregiver, they interfere with the child’s ability to form a secure attachment. Many aspects of a child’s healthy physical and mental development rely on this primary source of safety and stability.”

NCTSN



Normal Life, Bad Things



PTSD



Complex Trauma

What is Complex Trauma: A Resource Guide for Youth and Those Who Care About Them

Source URL: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/what-complex-trauma-resource-guide-youth-and-those-who-care-about-them>



HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TRAUMA?

Trauma screening can include a particular tool or a more formalized process. Trauma screening should evaluate the presence of two critical elements: (1) Exposure to potentially traumatic events/experiences, including traumatic loss, and (2) Traumatic stress symptoms/reactions.

Screening typically covers the following types of traumatic stress reactions:

- Avoidance of trauma-related thoughts or feelings
- Intrusive memories of the event or nightmares about the event
- Hyper-arousal or exaggerated startle response
- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Behavioral problems
- Interpersonal problems
- Other problems based on the developmental needs and age of the child

Trauma History Screen (THS)
Youth Version

Name: _____ ID: _____
Date: _____
Child's DOB: _____

	Directions: Read each item. If it never happened, enter 0 and ask about the next item. If it has happened, ask about how many times it has happened, and then how much it affected the child when it happened, and now.	How many times did this happen? 0=Never	When this happened, how much did it affect you?					How much does this still affect you?				
			Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1	Have you ever been in or seen a really bad accident?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2	Has someone you know ever been so badly injured or sick that s/he almost died?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3	Has someone you known ever died?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4	Have you ever been so sick that you or the doctor thought you might die?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5	Have you ever been unexpectedly separated from someone who you depend on for love or security for more than a few days?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	Has someone close to you ever tried to kill or hurt him/herself?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7	Has someone ever physically hurt you or threatened to hurt you?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8	Have you ever been robbed or seen someone you care about get robbed?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9	Has anyone ever kidnapped you?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10	Have you ever been in or seen a hurricane, earthquake, tornado, or bad fire?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11	Have you ever been attacked by a dog or other animal?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12	Have you ever seen or heard people physically fighting or threatening to hurt each other? (in or outside of your family)		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13	Have you ever seen a family member arrested or in jail?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14	Have you ever had a time in your life when you did not have the right care (e.g. food, clothing, a place to live)?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15	Has someone ever made you see or do something sexual?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16	Have you seen or heard someone else being forced to do sex acts?		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

TRAUMA HISTORY SCREEN (THS)

ASSESSMENTS

Just a few...

- Trauma History Questionnaire (THS)
- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC)
- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Young Children (TSCYC)
- UCLA PTSD Reaction Index
- Young Child PTSD Checklist

EARLY
IDENTIFICATION
AND WHY IT IS
IMPORTANT

IF WE MISDIAGNOSE,
WE MISTREAT

THE DIAGNOSTIC PROBLEM

Current diagnostic guidelines leave out:

- Problems related to emotional/psychological abuse
- Attachment related trauma
- Chronic "t" traumas
- Current diagnosis of PTSD /Acute Trauma is limited to primarily to what we see in adults without consideration of the developmental issues that are often misdiagnosed as something else in kids
- Other disorders that are first diagnosed in childhood mimic the profound effects that trauma can have.

ODD, ADHD, Conduct Disorder

TREATING TRAUMA:
PARADIGM SHIFT FROM
DROP-OFF THERAPY TO
SYSTEMS WORK

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

THE NUMBER ONE
PREDICTOR OF
POSITIVE OUTCOMES
AFTER TRAUMATIC
EXPERIENCES IS THE
WAY THE
*ENVIRONMENT
AROUND THE CHILD
RESPONDS*

SOURCE OF PAIN

Hidden and enduring pain/
vulnerability which is easily
brought to the surface in the
form of defenses

Traces directly to a child's
traumatic experiences

Examples:

- Abandonment
- Incompetence
- Guilt
- Shame and worthlessness
- Basic lack of physical safety

BECOMING THE CAT HAIR

In some way our behavior resembles an aspect of the traumatic experience

It is often subtle: tone of voice, certain words/ phrases, smells and many more

It is associated with the child's primary source of pain

Frustrated responses from the environment due to lack of understanding

Repetition of the problem situation reinforces the belief the environment is not safe, the child is worthless, thereby creating more mistrust and reactivity

PEOPLE MAY NOT REMEMBER
EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID, OR
WHAT YOU SAID, BUT THEY WILL
ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW YOU
MADE THEM FEEL

MAYA ANGELOU

HOW DO WE
CURRENTLY
LOOK AT
PROBLEM
BEHAVIOR?

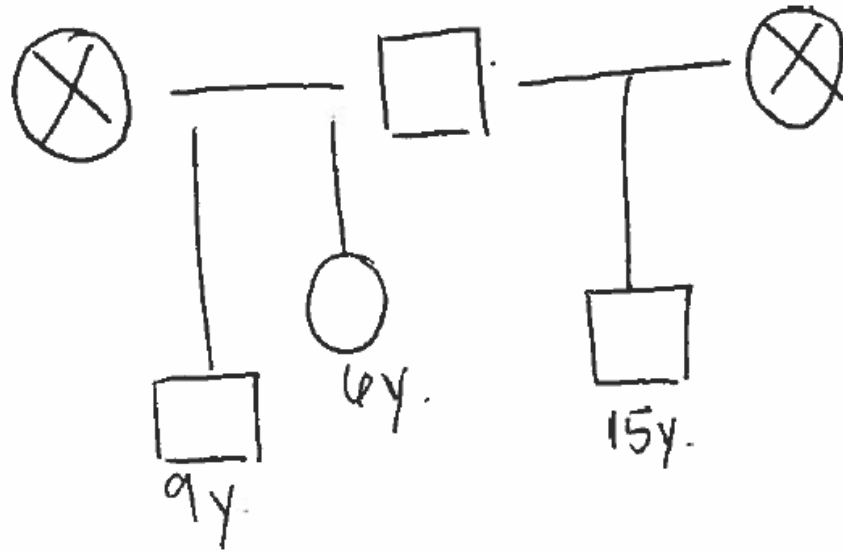
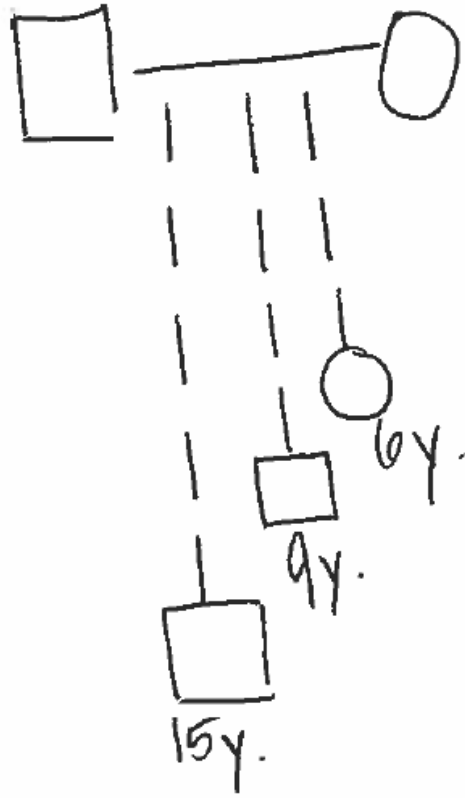
INTERVENING TRAUMA

Trauma glasses off	Trauma glasses on
Manipulative	<i>Getting needs met in ways that have worked in the past. Doing whatever is necessary to survive.</i>
Lazy	<i>Overwhelmed. Lacking the skills to make decisions about what to do first or to organize.</i>
Resistant	<i>Mistrustful of others due to history of being hurt by others. Scared to make progress and then lose everything.</i>
Unmotivated	<i>Depressed. Fearful. Overwhelmed. "Frozen."</i>
Disrespectful	<i>Feeling threatened, unsafe, out of control.</i>
Attention-Seeking	<i>Feeling disconnected, alone, or unheard by others. Looking for connection.</i>

FAMILY MATTERS: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT RELATED TO OUTCOMES



WHY THE SYSTEM MATTERS...



TRAUMA SYSTEMS THERAPY AND OTHER TRAUMA MODALITIES

Trauma Systems Therapy (TST)

- Treatment modality that addressed individual child's emotional needs as well as the social environment the child is a part of. It is both a clinical and organizational model.

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)

- Evidenced based practice for children and adolescents impacted by trauma and their caregivers. It has proven successful with children from ages 3-18. There is a parallel process occurring in treatment with child and caregiver.

Trauma Focused Integrated Play Therapy (TFIPT)

- Combines directive and non-directive approaches to support child and caregiver in promoting resolution of traumatic events.

QUESTIONS