

Trauma

Attachment

Healing

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Trauma - results from the **experience** of an **event**, series of events, or circumstances that are physically and/or emotionally harmful or threatening and have lasting adverse **effects** on a person's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.

Complex Trauma - exposure to multiple, repeated or prolonged traumatic events

(SAMHSA Technical Experts)

Acute Trauma

School shootings

Gang-related violence in the community

Terrorist attacks

Natural disasters (for example, earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes)

Serious accidents (for example, car or motorcycle crashes)

Sudden or violent loss of a loved one

Physical or sexual assault (for example, being beaten, shot, or raped)

Chronic Trauma



Physical abuse

Emotional/Psychological abuse

Sexual abuse

Human Trafficking

Neglect

Long-standing sexual abuse

Victim or Witness to Domestic violence

Bullying

Serious Physical Illness or Medical Procedure that are extremely painful and/or life threatening

System Induced Trauma and Re-traumatization

Wars and other forms of political violence

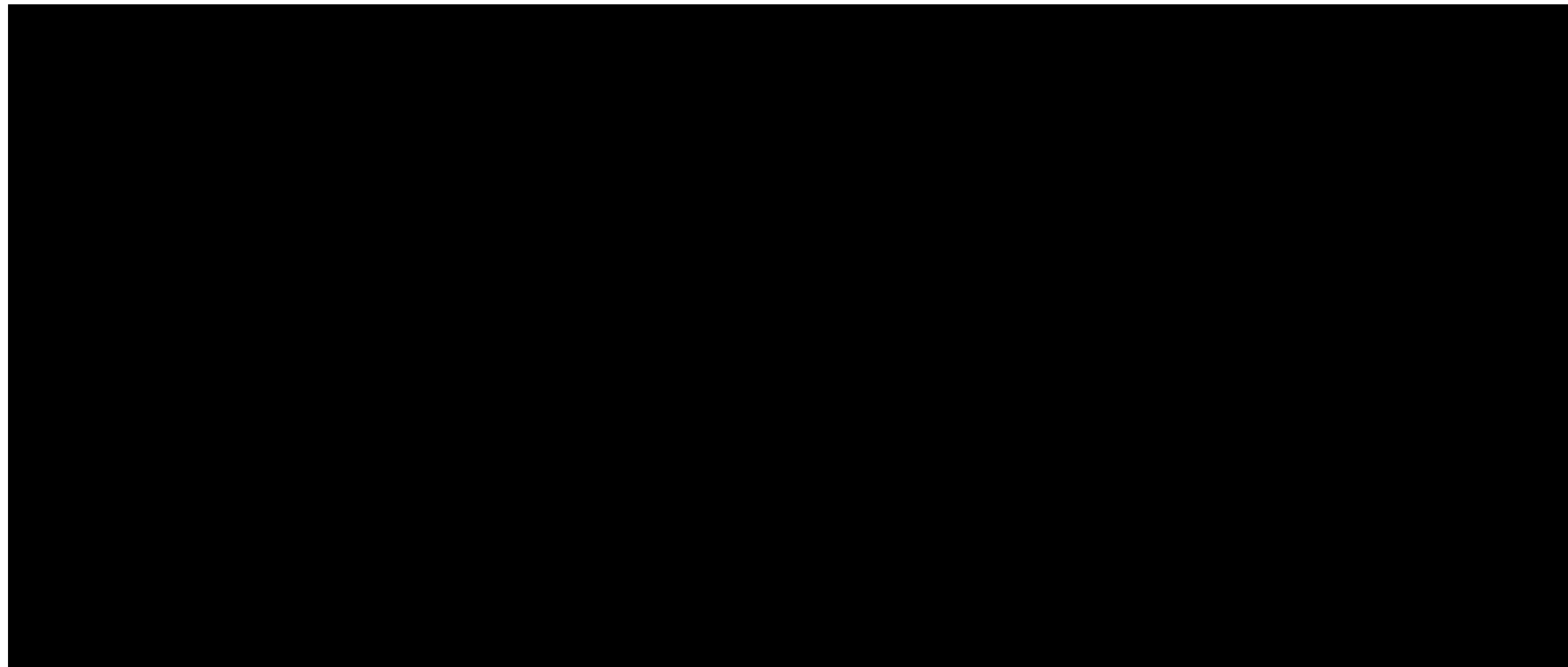
Complex Trauma

A person's experience of chronic and multiple traumatic events.

Exposure to traumatic and chronic stress in early life extends beyond PTSD and spans multiple areas of impairment to include:

- A- Self-regulatory, attachment, anxiety and affective disorders in infancy and childhood
- B- Addictions, aggression, social helplessness and eating disorders
- C- Dissociative, somataform, cardiovascular, metabolic and immunological disorders
- D – Sexual disorders in adolescence and adulthood
- E – Revictimization

National Child Traumatic Stress Network



How does Trauma affect Attachment?



Triggers/Cues/Behaviors

- Visual
- Olfactory (Smell)
- Auditory (Sounds)
- Touch to a certain part of the body
- Behaviors from others -
 - *Perception of others –mistrust of others*
- Beliefs about others behaviors –
 - *Adults have a motive – mistrust*
- Child displays overt anger –
 - *“I’ll get you before you get me”*
- Negative internal beliefs/Negative Cognitions of Self

Trigger – Cues etc.

- Need to control
- Food Hoarding
- Hyper-vigilance
- Poor impulse control
- Aggression – physical and/or verbal
- Hyperactivity – Appearance of ADHD
- Cutting or burning of the body – disfigurement
- Running away
- Anxiety
- Eating Disorders - Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge eating, Body Dysmorphia
- Depression
- Co-dependency
- Numbing of emotions with food, alcohol, drugs or other
- Sexual promiscuity
- Personality Disorders – Borderline, Narcissistic, Histrionic, Anti-Social
- PTSD



ACES

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente (an HMO) Collaboration
- Over a ten year study involving 17,000 people
- Looked at effects of adverse childhood experiences (trauma) over the lifespan
- Largest study ever done on this subject

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:



- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Illicit drug use
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Multiple sexual partners
- Intimate partner violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies

Lack of parental attachment and consistency =



- A child's ability to learn how to physically and emotionally regulate themselves
 1. Physical regulation to include: elimination (bathroom)
 2. Hungry/full
 3. Hot/cold
 4. Sleep
 5. Energy level
 6. Pain
 7. Attention
- Trauma arrests a child's development

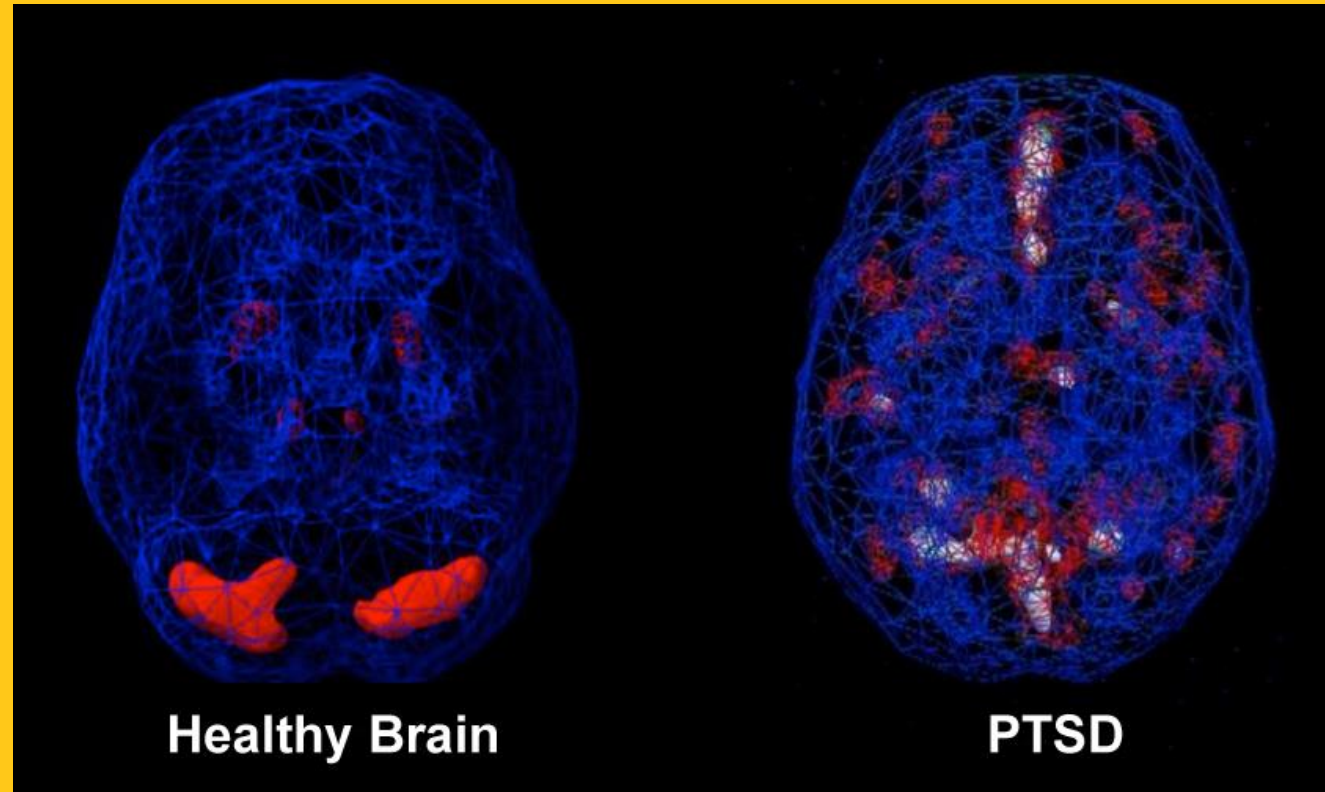
Impact Across the Lifespan



Includes:

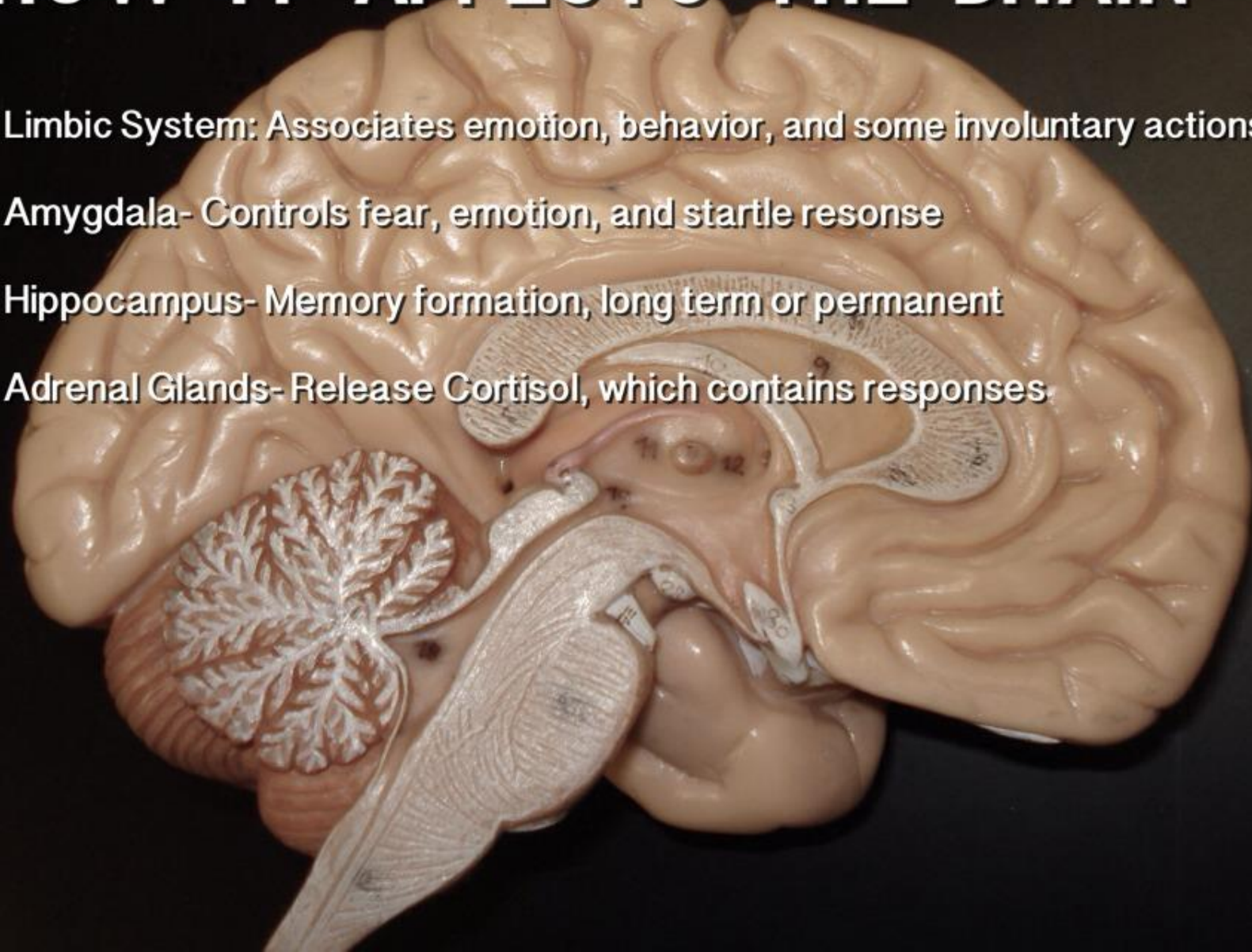
- Changes in brain neurobiology;
- Social, emotional & cognitive impairment;
- Adoption of health risk behaviors as coping mechanisms (eating disorders, smoking, substance abuse, self harm, sexual promiscuity, violence); and
- Severe and persistent behavioral health, health and social problems, early death.

Trauma and the Brain



HOW IT AFFECTS THE BRAIN

- **Limbic System:** Associates emotion, behavior, and some involuntary actions
- **Amygdala-** Controls fear, emotion, and startle response
- **Hippocampus-** Memory formation, long term or permanent
- **Adrenal Glands-** Release Cortisol, which contains responses



PTSD Changes Your Brain

Amygdala – The fear induced by trauma hypersensitizes it to danger. Everything is a threat.

Hippocampus – Converts short-term memory to long-term. Hippocampus may shrink.

Pre-frontal Cortex – Blood flow to the left side may decrease with less ability for language and memory. Blood flow to the right side may increase causing more sorry and anger.

*THE BRAIN'S
NUMBER 1
JOB IS
SURVIVAL!*

The Polyvagal Theory – Developed by Stephen Porges, PhD.

Looks at the autonomic nervous system and how the human brain evolved:

Brain Stem- Pre-programmed to regulate bodily processes and vital functions, such as the sleep-wake cycle, heartbeat, respiration and body temperature. The capacity for self-regulation and self-soothing starts here.

Basal Ganglia – Responsible for behavioral-motor routines learned from repeated behaviors, when then become automatic, such as riding a bicycle.

Limbic System (The Emotional Brain) – Uses pleasurable and pleasurable stimuli to organize and guide how we respond to the events of our lives.

Cortex - The Executive Prefrontal Cortex is the most developed area of the cortex. Brings in rational thought, capacity to plan for the future, direct attention to a task, regulate affect, and control voluntary movement.

Polyvagal Theory, cont.

Dorsal Vagas – Reptilian and more primitive part of the brain. It oversees our primary defensive strategies and drives the freeze response. It shuts down metabolic activity during immobilization due to **EXTREME TERROR**.

Ventral Vagas – Part of the brain that was later developed – “Mammalian”. The limbic-Based system modulates sympathetic arousal through social engagement with the goal of defusing aggression and tension. It provides safety through **CONNECTION**.

Connection Survival Style

Capacity for social engagement is severely compromised when there is early trauma on the psychological and behavioral level.

Leads to: Self-isolation and withdrawal from contact with others as well as multiple psychological symptoms.

Disconnection increases dysregulation that leads to psychological and physiological symptoms.

Bottom up and Top Down

The human brain evolved from the BOTTOM UP

Early trauma utilizes the older DORSAL VAGAL defensive strategies of immobilization dominate, leading to freeze, collapse, and ultimately to dissociation. (Immediate and instinctive)

Resulting in the ventral vagas failing to adequately develop and social development is impaired. Early trauma impacts the organ systems that can lead to a variety of physical symptoms.

Understanding how the brain works and functions aids in overall understanding and the identification of appropriate treatment interventions.

Neuroplasticity

The brain is malleable!

The brain is continually changing in response a person's lifestyle, physiology, and environment.

The brain possesses the ability to reorganize pathways, create new connections and, in some cases, even create new neurons throughout your entire lifetime.

Neurons that fire together wire together and neurons that fire apart, wire apart. The brain has the ability to change and adapt in response to experiences and tuning itself to meet a persons' needs.

Interventions

- Understanding the connection between trauma and attachment
- Understanding developmental stages vs. chronological age
- Understanding the love and attachment of the child to their neglectful and /or abusive parent/caretaker
- A home that is safe and secure to increase the individual's ability for resilience
- Need for consistency and stability
- A healing and supportive network – Therapeutic home environment
- Validation of the child/adult
- Parents/caretakers past traumas have been addressed and resolved
- Community involvement/participation
- Behavior charts/behavior modification may not work
- Multi-Agency involvement. Communication between agencies if child in foster care/dependency court





Therapeutic Interventions

- Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Play therapy
- Sand tray therapy
- Family therapy
- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Grounding
- Art therapy
- Parenting Education – Gottman’s Emotion Coaching



Therapeutic Interventions, Cont.

- Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART)
- Somatic Experiencing (SE)
- Neurofeedback
- Psychotropic medication in conjunction with mental health therapy
- Yoga

References:

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- The Body Keeps the Score, Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.
- SAMHSA – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- SEDNET
- Gottman – Emotion Coaching
- Healing Developmental Trauma, Laurence Heller, PhD and Aline LaPierre, PsyD
- Neuroplasticity studies reveal your brain’s amazing malleability, Dr. Mercola