Trauma Informed
Care As Our Guide

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Motivation

Set the Stage Activity

Setting the Stage

- How did the child get this way?
- What caused the lagging skills?
- Nature vs Nurture?
- How does it matter?
- How can we help the child develop the skills he or she is lacking?

- Behind Every Challenging Behavior is Either an Unsolved Problem or a Lagging Skill …

    or BOTH!

Traditional/Conventional Thinking

"Kids Do Well If They Want To …."

The problem to be solved:
"dys-regulaton"

Core Building Blocks of the Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency Framework

Trauma Experience Integration

Executive

Self-Development & Identity

Affect Identification

Modulation

Affect Expression

Routines & Rituals

Consistent Response

Caregiver Affect Management

Attunement

Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents Margaret E. Blaustein & Kristine M. Kinniburgh

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NEURO-Developmental Skills Deficits

"Dys-regulation" emerges through a variety of "pathways"

For Example:

Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Prenatal Exposure to Drugs/Alcohol

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Tourette Syndrome

Traumatic Brain Injury

Learning Disabilities/Communication Disorders

The evidence that informs our practice: Epidemiology

The ACES Study-Vincent Fellitti, M.D., and Robert Anda, Ph.D

ACES Study Preview-3:00

http://www.avahealth.org/ace_study/ace_study_dvd_institutional_license/

USE DEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT
~Bruce Perry, M.D.

"Neurons and neural systems are designed to change in a "use-dependent" fashion…Healthy organization depends on the pattern, frequency, and timing of key experiences during development. Patterned, repetitive activity changes the brain…Repetition, repetition, repetition: Neural systems, and children, change with repetition."

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- Relational (safe)
- Relevant (developmentally-matched)
- Repetitive (patterned)
- Rewarding (pleasurable)
- Rhythmic (resonant with neural patterns)
- Respectful (child, family, culture)

The ChildTrauma Academy – Bruce Perry, MD, Ph.D., © 2010
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KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN

Lagging Skills → Environmental Demand

"Challenging Behavior occurs when the cognitive demand being placed upon a person outstrip the person's capacity to respond adaptively" **Ross Greene, Ph.D 2010 Version**

"Unsolved Problems: Specific conditions in which the demands being placed upon a person exceed the person's capacity to respond adaptively." **Ross Greene, Ph.D 2010 Version**

"Behind every challenging behavior is a lagging skill and a demand for that skill" **Ross Greene, Ph.D 2010 Version**

Regulation-Adele Diamond

- "Executive functions is a term referring to a set of cognitive functions involved in the top down control of behavior in the service of a goal. They are needed whenever 'going on automatic' would be insufficient or detrimental."

- "Self-regulation refers primarily to emotional control and regulation...self-regulation also embraces the importance of motivation and alertness. Self-regulation researchers view emotions as equal partners in the learning process and in the achievement of one's goals."

Chronic Unsolved Problems

Presenting Problems

- Unpredictable
- Reactive
- Dysregulated
- Aggressive

Chronic Unsolved Problems

The Strategy

If you always do
what you always did,
You always get
what you always got

Attunement/AWARENESS:
Supporting modulation
-Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010

1. Be attuned: Notice the feeling (tune into the energy).
2. Keep yourself centered: Check in with yourself.
3. Ask yourself: Where is the child's energy? Where does it need to go (up or down)?
4. Reflect (simply) on what you're seeing: (e.g., "I see you are really mad).
5. Cue child in use of skills: (e.g., breathing, other regulation strategies).
6. Reinforce use of modulation skills: (e.g., "Nice job getting yourself calm).
7. Invite communication (when the child has become regulated).

Disabilities: A Comparison of Conventional Thinking

- Learning Disability in Math:
  - Assume the student wants to do well but lacks the skills to learn the math in the same way as others
  - Provide specially designed instruction
  - Provide supportive accommodations (more time, extra help etc)
  - Track progress in math skills

Disabilities: A Comparison of Conventional Thinking

- Emotional Disturbance:
  - Assume the child learned the behavior and chooses it willingly
  - Punish the child when she displays challenging behaviors
  - Provide incentives to motivate the child
  - Track failures and misbehaviors

So If They Don't Do Well …

What do we do?

- What do we do if they can't read?
  - Bribe?
  - Punish?
  - Consequence?

We need to figure out what's getting in the way so we can help.

OR DO WE…

- Assess
- Teach
- Re-teach/Differentiate
- Let student be part of the process

New Age Thinking
Kids Do Well If They Can ….
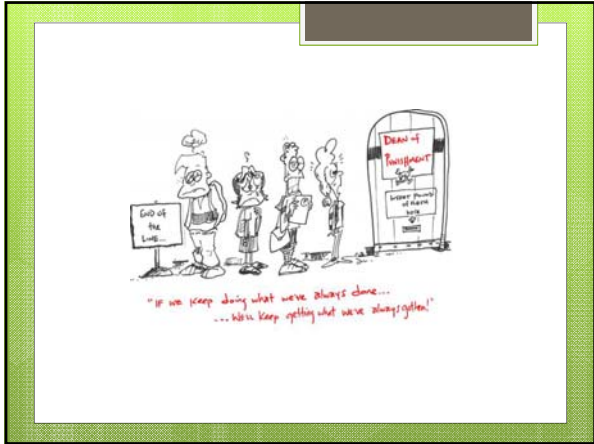
Skills & Demand

- We often create skill-demand incompatibility with these "overshoots" *(hence dysregulation and challenging behavior)*

- By accurately describing a student's neuro-developmental skills, we help them re-stabilize and get back on the skill development track.

Supply and Demands

- If our demands outstrip the students ability, what do you think we will see?

Unconventional Wisdom

- It's a Learning Disability
  - Research in neuroscience shows that challenging kids are delayed in the development of these crucial cognitive skills:
    - flexibility/ adaptability
    - frustration tolerance
    - Problem solving
  - OR: the skills are present, but child has significant difficulty applying them in critical moments.

New Wisdom Intervention

- Treat challenging behavior like you would any other learning disability:
  - Identify the lagging skills contributing to the maladaptive behavior and teach them *(collaboratively)*
  - Recognize the problems which precipitate maladaptive behavior *(antecedents)*

New Wisdom Intervention

○ Treat challenging behavior like you would any other learning disability (cont'd)

✓ Use a different approach to teach the students in increments he or she can handle

✓ Work collaboratively with the student

New Age Thinking

Kids Do Well If They Can ….

○ The Basics: Skill not Will

○ As applied to challenging kids, this model sets forth two major tenets of challenging behaviors:

○ Best understood as result of lagging thinking skills
rather than, for example, as attention-seeking, manipulative, limit-testing, or a sign of poor motivation

○ Best addressed by skill teaching and building
rather than through reward and punishment programs and intensive imposition of adult will

New Age Thinking

Kids Do Well If They Can ….

While challenging kids let us know they're struggling in some fairly common ways …

- Screaming
- Swearing
- Defying
- Hitting
- Spitting

- Throwing things
- Breaking things
- Crying
- Running
- Withdrawing

… they are quite unique as individuals when it comes to the mix of lagging skills that set the stage for these behaviors.

Deficits in:
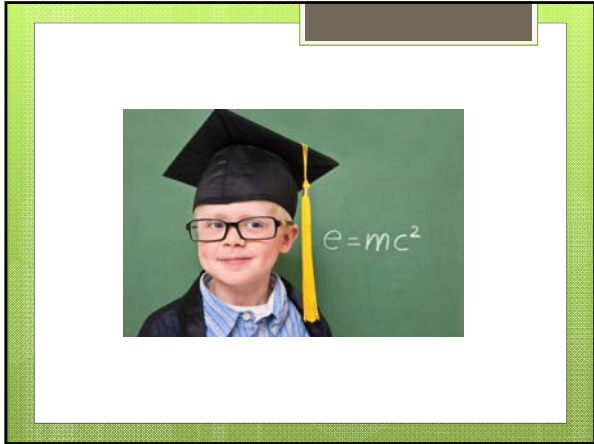
- Language & Communication Skills
- Attention & Working Memory Skills
- Emotion & Self-Regulation Skills
- Cognitive Flexibility Skills
- Social Thinking Skills

Cause problems in school:

- Following directions
- Taking turns
- Transitioning
- Staying on task
- Getting along with other children/adults
- Learning academics
- Remembering school routines
- Being consistent with what they know (one day to the next

In Trauma Informed Classrooms you will see:

- Talking with students
- Making individual plans with students
- Providing options
- Empathy
- Differentiating in academics and social emotional learning
- Academic and Social Emotional instruction

Disabilities you might see in Trauma Informed Classrooms:

- Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Bi-polar Disorder
- Depression

Furthermore:

- Some of students have experienced
  - school placement failures
  - home placement failures
  - abuse
  - neglect

- Added all together, and you might see:
  - swearing
  - yelling
  - leaving the classroom
  - pushing
  - crying
  - shutting down
  - throwing things
  - tip desk over

What to do:

- Listen
- Be present
- Be empathetic
- Follow staff lead
- Provide space

HELPING HANDS

What NOT to do … !

- Don't set up power struggles
  - *"You do your work or… "*
- Don't invade their space
- Don't promise things
  - *"You can earn …"*
- Don't touch the students
- Don't threaten
  - *"You'll lose recess"*

Empathy

- School is HARD!!!
- We follow the 3 R's
  - **R**elationship
  - **R**egulate
  - **R**outines

In Closing …

Staff should ask these questions hourly, daily, weekly …

Critical Components for Challenging Behaviors:

- What is happening that could be causing the shutdown, acting out...?
  - *How can I help the student through this?*

- Look at the issues as diagnostic: How is student impacted?
  - *Basic needs inventory: Hungry? Tired? Anxious? Over or underwhelmed?*

- Set expectations, not power struggles.....

They also ask:

- "What could I have done differently?"

- Is the physical space inviting, calming, and set up to meet the needs of students? (Not adults)

- Is the goal I set meaningful, and not an empty exercise to get done quickly?
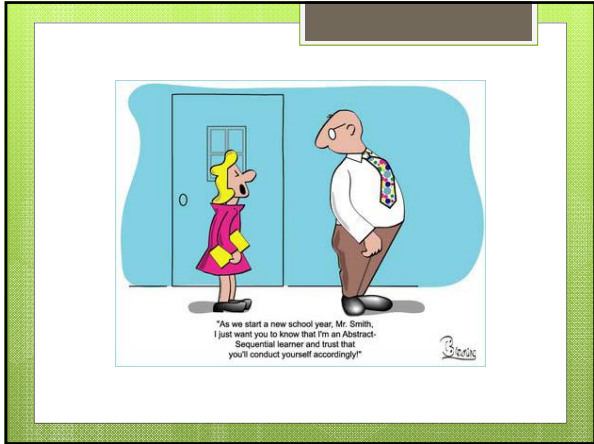
- Are student concerns leading the discussion?

Stay With Me …
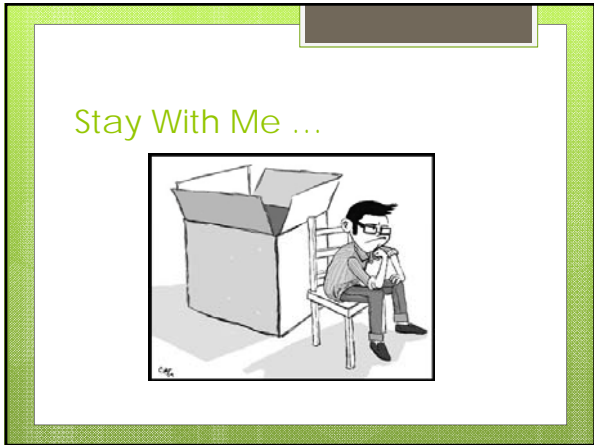
Remember …

- Our goal is to teach students to be safe, respectful, and responsible
  - *if they already had those skills they wouldn't be there*

- Parents/guardians are sending us the best kids they have
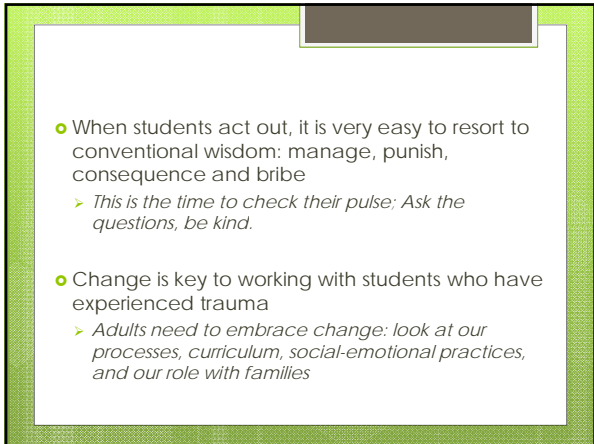 - *Adults also need to be safe, respectful, and responsible*

- When students act out, it is very easy to resort to conventional wisdom: manage, punish, consequence and bribe
  - *This is the time to check their pulse; Ask the questions, be kind.*

- Change is key to working with students who have experienced trauma
  - *Adults need to embrace change: look at our processes, curriculum, social-emotional practices, and our role with families*