

**MAKING SENSE OF TRAUMA:  
PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR HELPERS**

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**PSYCHOLOGICAL  
TRAUMA IS**

the unique experience of an event or enduring conditions in which a person's ability to integrate the emotional experience is overwhelmed or the individual perceives a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity.

— Pearlman, Laurie A. & Saakvitne, Karen W., 1995, *Trauma and the Therapist: Countertransference and Vicarious Traumatization in Psychotherapy with Incest Survivors*, p. 60

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**EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA**

**EVENTS**

Abuse	Natural Disasters	Accidents
Medical Procedures	Crime	Loss of Loved One: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prison</li><li>• Death</li><li>• Abandonment</li></ul>

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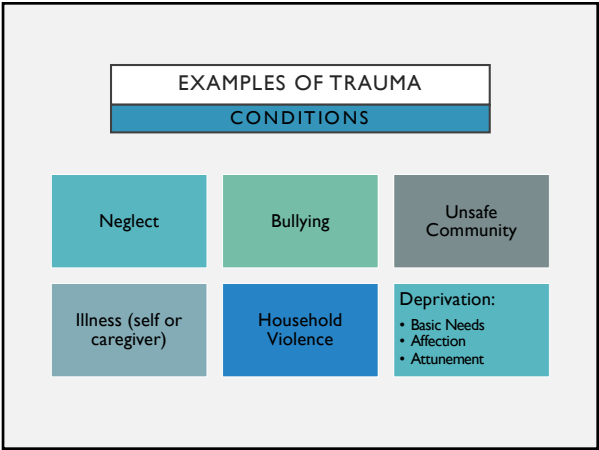
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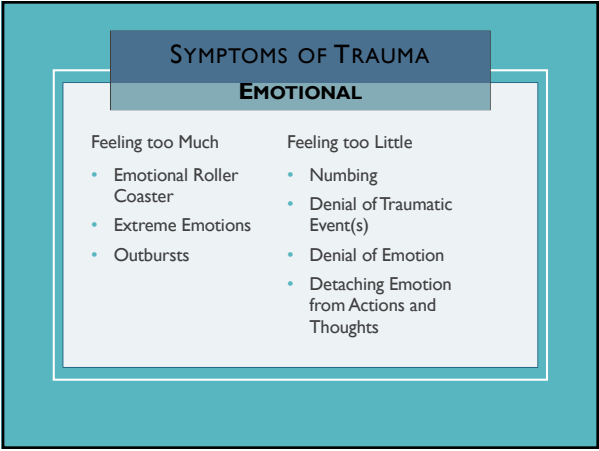
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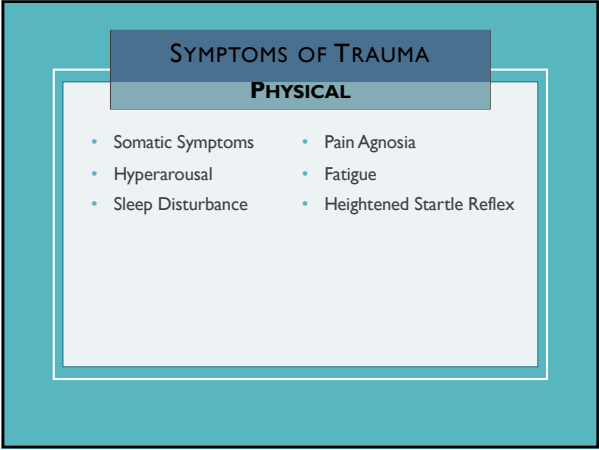
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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

COGNITIVE

- Cognitive Errors
  - Overestimating Current Danger
  - Excessive/Misplaced Guilt
  - Idealization of Perpetrator
  - Trauma-Induced Hallucinations/Delusions
  - Intrusive Thoughts/Memories

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

COGNITIVE

- Cognitive Errors
- Gaps in Memory
- Dissociation
- Depersonalization
- Derealization

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

BEHAVIORAL

- Re-Enactments
- Self-Harm
- Risk-Taking Behaviors
- Substance Use/Abuse
- Disordered Eating
- Stealing
- Age Regression
- Compulsive Behaviors
- Physical Aggression
- Verbal Aggression

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

INTERPERSONAL

- Avoidance
- Difficulty Trusting
- Lying
- Indiscriminance
- Controlling Behaviors
- Defiance
- Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors
- Rejection of Care
- Toxic Relationships (Avoidant)
- Toxic Relationships (Anxious)

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

INTRAPERSONAL

- Persistent Negative Self-talk
- Poor Hygiene
- Loss of Identity

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

YOUNG CHILDREN

- Generalized Fear
- Nightmares
- Heightened Arousal
- Confusion
- Physical Symptoms (stomachaches, headaches)

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

- Anger and Aggression
- Regression to younger behaviors
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Declining School Performance
- Repetitious Traumatic Play

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

ADOLESCENTS

- Depression
- Social Withdrawal
- Rebellion
- Revenge Plans/Fantasies
- Increased Risk-taking Behaviors
- Disordered Sleep
- Disordered Eating

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

ADULTS

- Sleep Problems
- Agitation
- Hypervigilance
- Isolation/Withdrawal
- Increased Substance Use

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

ELDERLY ADULTS

- Withdrawal/Isolation
- Reluctance to Leave Home
- Confusion
- Fear
- Depression
- Worsening of Chronic Illnesses

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

DIAGNOSES

- Acute Stress Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Anxiety/Depression
- Sensory Processing Disorders
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder

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SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

DIAGNOSES

- ADD/ADHD
- Bipolar Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Disinhibited Attachment Disorder
- Reactive Attachment Disorder

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**ADVERSE  
CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES  
STUDY**

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ACES

**Findings**

Adverse childhood experiences are common.

Adverse childhood experiences often occur together.

ACEs scores are highly correlated with health, social, and behavioral problems throughout the lifespan.

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ACES  
ADVERSE  
EXPERIENCES

CHILD	Household
Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
Emotional Abuse	Physical Neglect
Emotional Neglect	Domestic Violence
Substance Abuse	Mental Illness
Separation/Divorce	Incarceration

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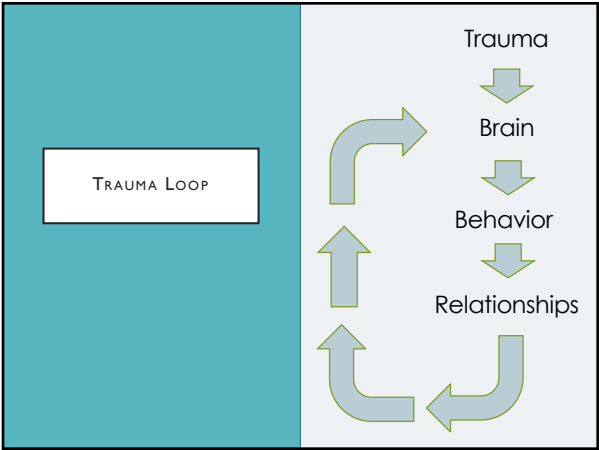
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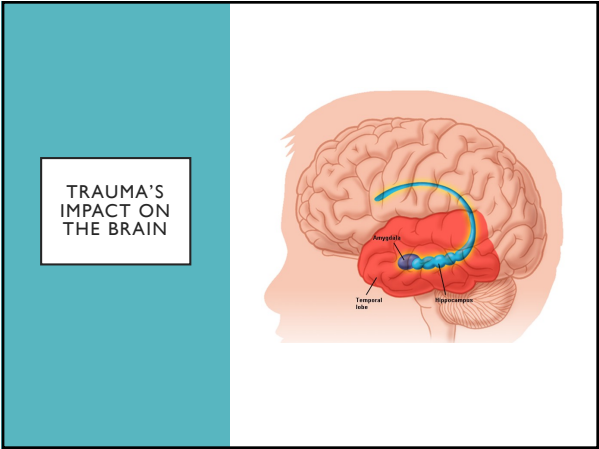
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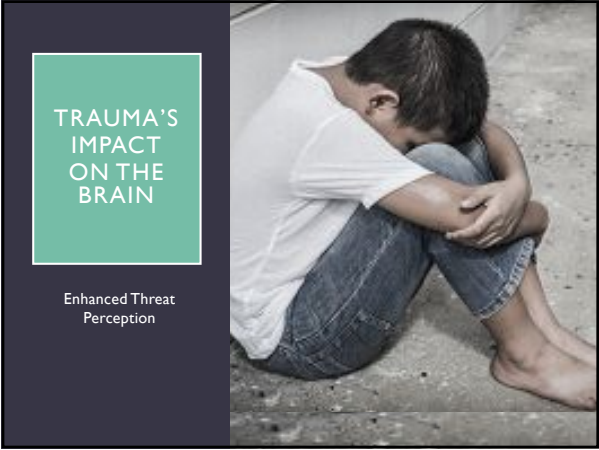
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TRAUMA'S  
IMPACT  
ON THE  
BRAIN

Altered Filter  
for Danger



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TRAUMA'S  
IMPACT  
ON THE  
BRAIN

Blunted Sense  
of Self



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BARRIERS TO HEALING

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

- Lack of Stability
- Pressure to be "Normal"
- Reactions of Caregivers or Support System
- Cultural Norms
- Social Media

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**BARRIERS TO HEALING**

**SUPPORT SYSTEM CHALLENGES**

- Poor Preparation
- Embarrassment
- Unrealistic Expectations of Sufferer and Self
- Compassion Fatigue

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**BARRIERS TO HEALING**

**THERAPIST BARRIERS**

- Consider experience and expertise
- Necessity of consultation
- Tarasoff

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**BARRIERS TO HEALING**

**COMPASSION FATIGUE**

- Natural consequent behaviors resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other.

— Figley, C. R. 1995, *Compassion fatigue: coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. Brunner-Routledge, New York: page 7

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BARRIERS TO HEALING

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Contributors:

- Secondary Traumatization
- Insufficient Recovery Time
- Unresolved Trauma History
- Powerlessness

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BARRIERS TO HEALING

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Emotional

- Anger
- Sadness
- Prolonged Grief
- Anxiety

Physical

- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Backaches
- Exhaustion

Interpersonal

- Isolation
- Cynicism
- Mood Swings
- Irritability

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BARRIERS TO HEALING

SELF CARE

- Boundaries
- Boundaries
- Boundaries
- Balance
- Support – Emotional, Practical, Functional
- Resource: [www.selfcompassion.com](http://www.selfcompassion.com)

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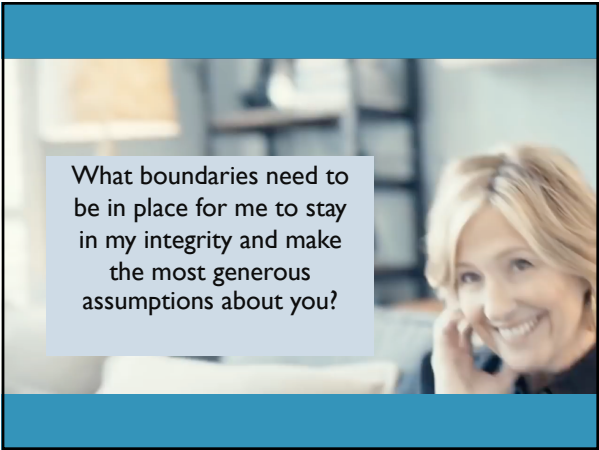
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What boundaries need to be in place for me to stay in my integrity and make the most generous assumptions about you?

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BARRIERS TO HEALING

SUPPORT SYSTEM CHALLENGES

- Poor Preparation
- Embarrassment
- Unrealistic Expectations of Sufferer and Self
- Compassion Fatigue
- Too Harsh or Lenient
- Attachment Wounds and Breaches

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ATTACHMENT

- A deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969).
- Begins in infancy.
- Is shaped by interactions with caregivers.
- Gives children a secure home base from which they venture to explore the world and return when needed.

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ATTACHMENT

- Develops and changes throughout adolescence and adulthood.
- Determines how people manage close relationships in order to feel secure.
- Allows adults to balance intimacy with independence.

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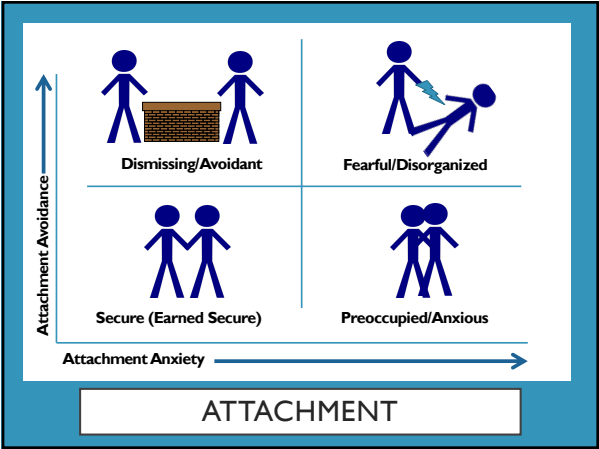
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ATTACHMENT:  
CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Attunement  
Balance  
Coherence

— Siegel, Daniel J., Hartzell, Mary, 2003, Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive, p. 103

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GENERAL SOLUTIONS

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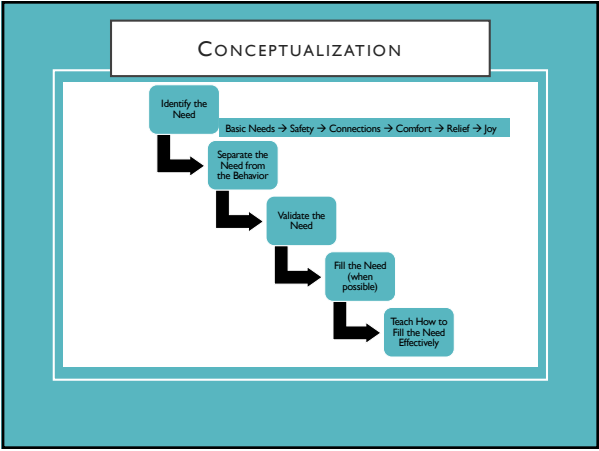
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GENERAL SOLUTIONS

Creating Safety

Empathic and Attuned Responses

Shame Resilience

Engage Caregivers or Support Systems

Skill-Building

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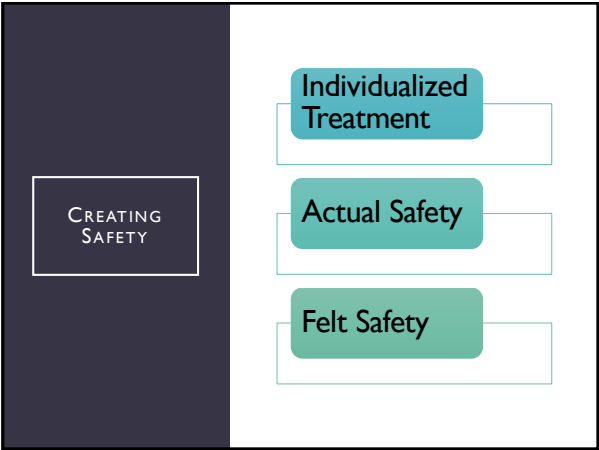
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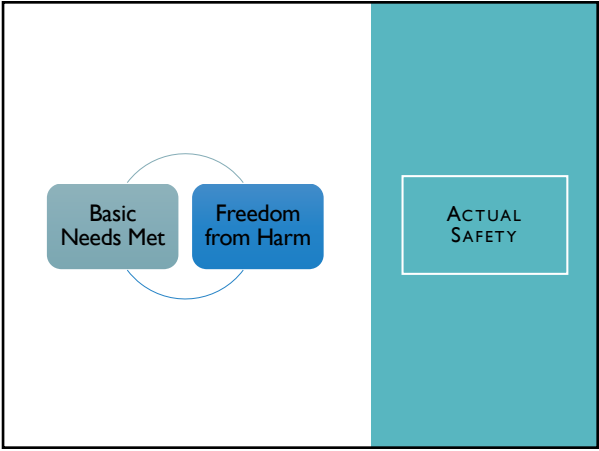
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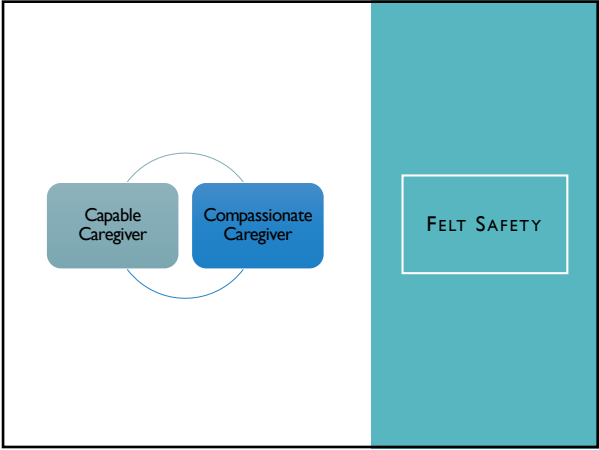
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"We are not retreating – we are advancing in another direction."

General Douglas MacArthur

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"You've made this day a special day by just your being you."

Fred Rogers

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FELT SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

- Consistency
- Clear Expectations
- Empathy
- Curiosity
- Kind Voices

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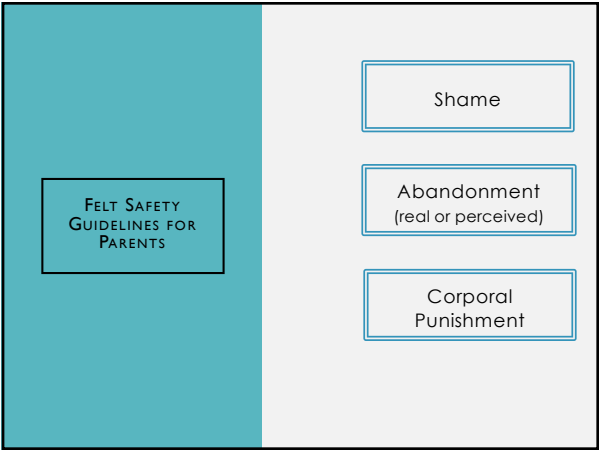
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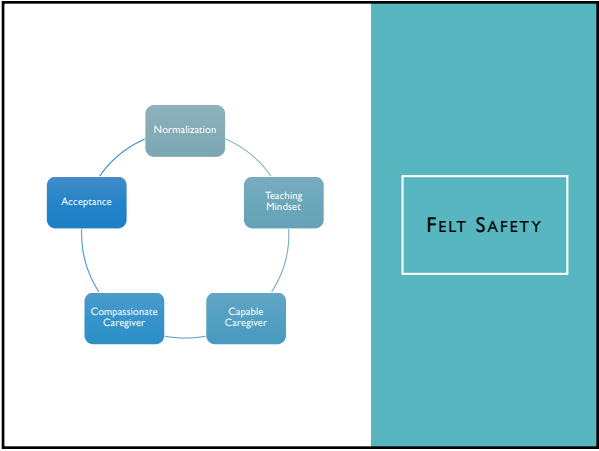
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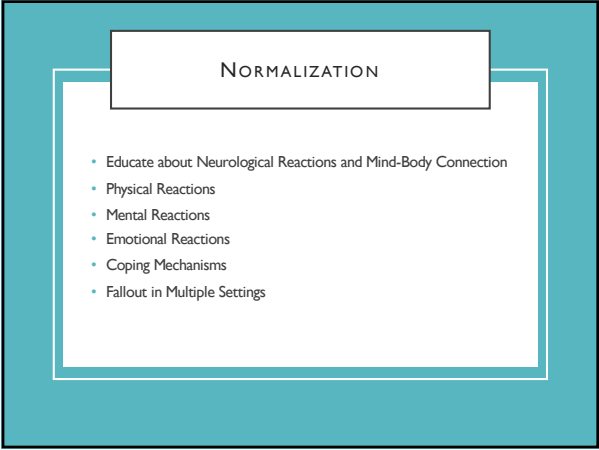
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EMPATHY

- Take the Other Person's Perspective
- Avoid Judgment
- Recognize Emotions
- Communicate Understanding

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SHAME RESILIENCE

"Shame is not guilt. Shame is a focus on self. Guilt is a focus on behavior.  
Shame is "I am bad." Guilt is "I did something bad."  
Guilt says, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake." Shame says, "I am a mistake."  
Shame is highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence, aggression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders.  
Guilt is inversely correlated with those things.  
The ability to hold something we've done or failed to do up against who we want to be is incredibly adaptive ... It's uncomfortable, but it's adaptive."

-- Brené Brown, TED Talk, 2013

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REACTIONS TO SHAME

Move Toward

Appease and Please

Move Against

Try to Gain Power

Aggression

Fight Shame with Shame

Move Away

Withdraw, Hide

Keep Secrets

Stay Silent

These Stances are Incompatible with Connection

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SHAME RESILIENCE

The ability to practice authenticity when we experience shame; to move through the experience without sacrificing our values and to come out the other side of the shame experience with more courage, compassion and connection than we had going into it.

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SHAME RESILIENCE: SOLUTIONS

Recognize

Recognize shame and its triggers

Practice

Practice Critical Awareness

Reach Out

Connect with Others

Speak

Speak Shame

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TYPES OF SUPPORT

Formal

Informal

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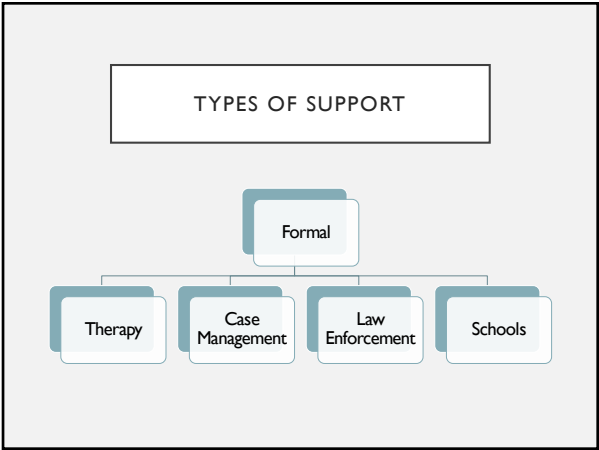
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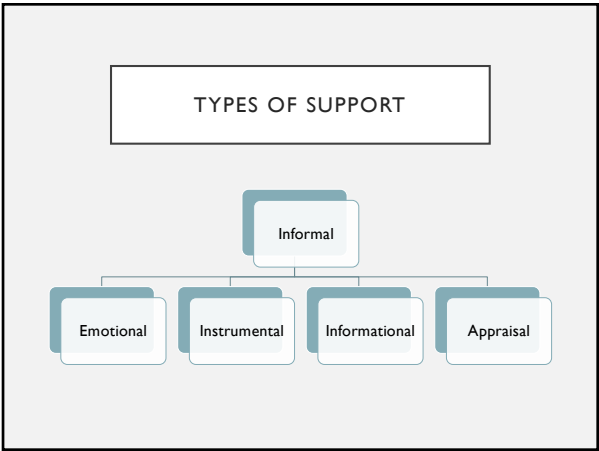
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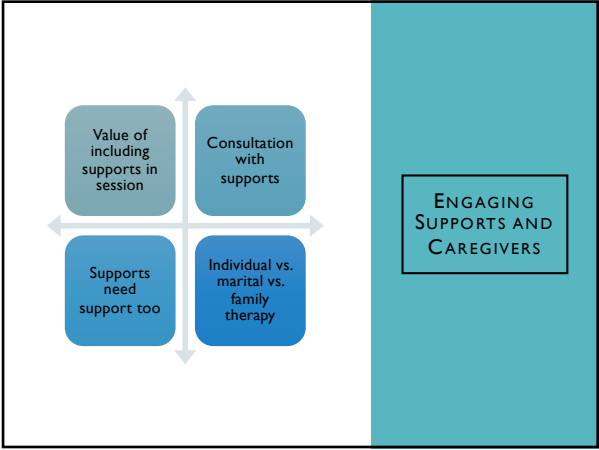
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SKILLS

Anxiety-Reduction

- Predict Triggers
- Mindfulness
- Grounding
- Breathing
- Visualization

Healthy Resources

- Faith/Spirituality
- Positive Supports
- Self-Care
- Safety Measures

Sense of Purpose

- Personal Mission
- Charitable Giving/Volunteerism

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SKILLS FOR PARENTS

Redo

Compromise

Build Emotional Vocabulary

Scaling Emotions

Time In

Natural and Logical Consequences

Safe Regression

Importance of Nutrition

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RESOURCES – BOOKS

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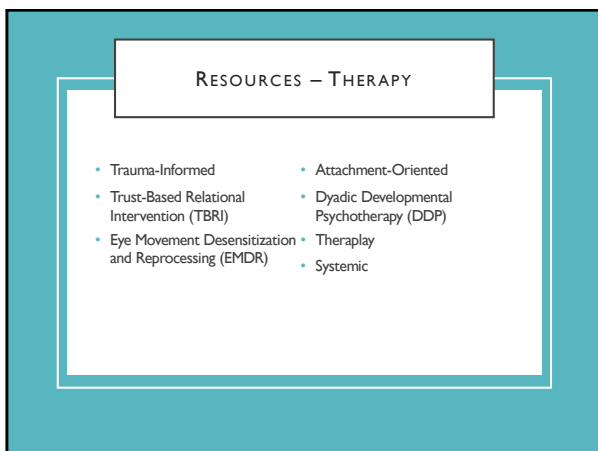
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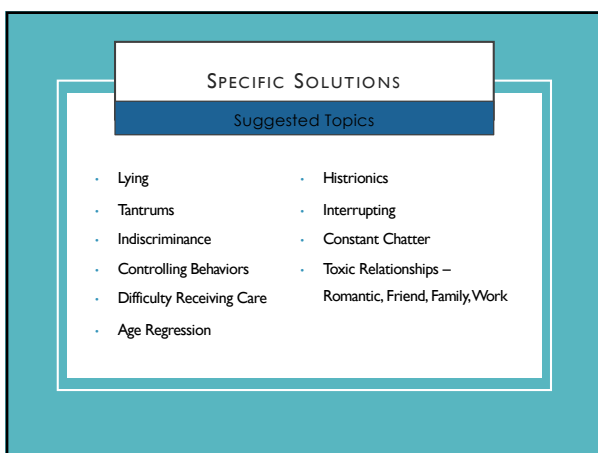
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