

Trauma and Parenting

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To help children overcome trauma and build new, more positive neural pathways

- Provide a secure base of love and protection
- Be emotionally and physically available
- Recognize and respond to a child's needs
- Provide guidance that includes appropriate reactions and responses
- Provide opportunities for children to safely explore the world

Beliefs about self, others, and the world

- When we protect children from harm, they learn...
- When we nurture the strengths of children and respond to their needs, they learn...
- When we provide affection and love, children learn...

Creating a safe place takes preparation

Children exposed to trauma need some things more, like

- Control
- Reassurance
- Information

Children have valid real life concerns about safety, find it difficult to trust, may be on high alert for threats (logical or illogical), and have trouble with emotional regulation.

Safe place

- Develop structure and routine: knowing what the rules and expectations are help a child develop a sense of safety and security
- Remain somewhat flexible: demanding precision sets a child up for feelings of failure; help a child strategize improvement
- Respond calmly and consistently when a child has behavioral outbursts, test the limits, or struggles to adhere to rules.

As parents, what stops us from doing this?

Be an emotional container

- Your child's outbursts are not about you. They are reflective of what is happening within your child. Behavior is the way children communicate when they lack other means.
 - Be aware of emotional hotspots (HALT, medical exams, personal grooming/bathing)
- Respond calmly, remaining willing to tolerate strong emotional reactions (as long as there is no harm to self or others, or property damage).
- Help your child label the feelings behind the behaviors and then model more appropriate ways of expressing feelings. Remember that *role modeling* is your greatest teaching tool.

Be aware of...

Bath
time

Mealtime

Sleep time

Trauma Reminders

- Sights, smells, sounds, people, emotions, smells, words, colors, foods, rooms, facial expressions, tones of voice, animals...
 - These can cause physical and emotional reactions that are threatening to a child's sense of safety and well being
 - These reminders may be subconscious and prompt the child to behave in unexpected ways, ways that may make sense in light of their traumatic experience
 - Because of the chronic state of upset these reminders can cause, you may see tantrums and avoidance or isolation.
 - What are the cues that this may be a reaction to a trauma reminder?

What can you do if your child is triggered?

Ensure
Safety

Reorient

Reassure

Define

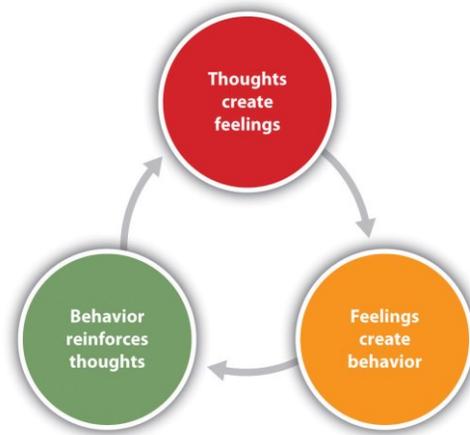
Normalize

Differentiate

Stress Busters: Let's Give Some Examples



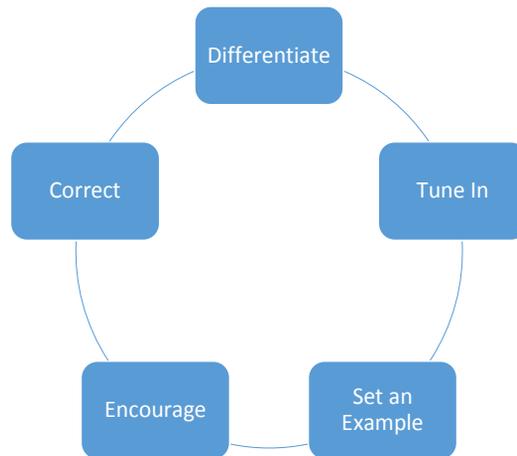
Cognitive Coping



Cognitive Coping

- Children may have a hard time identifying their thoughts and feelings or seeing the connections between the two.
- Children may have a hard time understanding what they are feelings and why.
- Children may not be very good at reading the emotional cues of others.
- Children may have large emotional reactions seemingly minor events and lack awareness or control over what is happening to them.

What Can You Do To Help?



Children Make Meaning From Connections

Who am I?
 What makes me unique?
 Am I lovable?
 What will I be like when I grow up?
 Am I bad?
 Does God love me?
 What do I do well?
 Will I ever be normal?

What else?



Be Your Child's Advocate!

References

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network <http://nctsnet.org/>
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy International <http://www.pcit.org/>
- Nurturing Parenting <http://www.nurturingparenting.com/>