



**southwest
human
development**
Creating a Positive Future for Young Children

Young Children and Trauma: The Importance of Relationships

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Today

- What is Infant Mental Health?
- Brief overview of:
 - Attachment
 - Young Children and Trauma
 - How We Can Help
 - Community Resources



Infant Mental Health Is:

The developing capacity of the infant and toddler to...

- Form close and secure relationships.
- Experience, regulate, and express emotions.
- Explore the environment and learn.

...all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.

(Zero to Three, 2002, pg. 2).
www.zerotothree.org



Infant Mental Health

“There is no such thing
as a baby by itself.”

-D.W. Winnicott

- Babies exist and develop within relationships



The Attachment Relationship Defined:

- Attachment
- Attachment Bonds:
- Attachment Relationships are central and may be a “protective” or “risk” factor depending upon the relationship



Keeping Attachment in Mind

- Important Elements of the Attachment Relationship:
 - John Bowlby- Biologically based
 - Process over the first year of life; not an instantaneous thing
 - Long-lasting, unique and specific relationship



Keeping Attachment in Mind

- Secure Attachment (optimal strategy in dealing with stress)
- Insecure Attachment (sub-optimal strategies in dealing with stress):
 - Avoidant
 - Resistant/Ambivalent
 - Disorganized



Development of Attachment; the 5 phases

- Orientation/limited discrimination (0-2 mos)
- Discrimination/limited preference (2-7 mos)
 - More comfortable with primary caregiver
 - Social with all yet differentiates among interactive partners

Development of Attachment; the 5 phases

- Hierarchy of preferred caregivers (7-12 mos)
 - ~10 mos. begin to assess attachment relationship (focused attachment figure)
 - Stranger wariness
 - Separation protests
 - PTSD possible at 10-12 months

**Development of Attachment;
the 5 phases**

- Secure base (12-20 mos)
 - Safe haven \longleftrightarrow exploration
 - Proximity promotes sense of security
- Goal corrected partnership (20-36 mos)
 - Cooperation
 - Autonomy \longleftrightarrow healthy dependence
 - Recognize that other people have different goals

**Attachment and Relationships
in Thinking about Trauma**

- Why include attachment, relationships, and child development in a training about trauma and young children?
- Potential impact of trauma on the relationship
 - For the child, the loss of the sense of the attachment relationship as protective
 - For the parent, loss of the sense of themselves as adequately protective.



Trauma and Young Children

- For young children, trauma includes directly experiencing or witnessing an event(s) that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to the child or others, or a threat to the psychological or physical integrity of the child or others.

Zero to Three (2005). *Diagnostic Classifications of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: REVISED EDITION (DC:03R)*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three Press.



An Overwhelming Experience

- Young children are especially vulnerable as they have fewer coping strategies than adults
 - Dependent on their caregiver’s ability to help them cope
- Potential resulting feelings include overwhelming terror, horror, and helplessness (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2016)



Potentially Traumatic Experiences for Children

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▪ Neglect | ▪ Discrimination |
| ▪ Physical Abuse | ▪ Community Violence |
| ▪ Sexual Abuse | ▪ Refugee Trauma |
| ▪ Born Drug/Alcohol Addicted | ▪ War |
| ▪ **Witness Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence | ▪ Accidents |
| ▪ Animal Attack | ▪ Natural Disasters |
| ▪ Fire | ▪ Medical Trauma |
| ▪ Terrorism | ▪ Grief/Loss |
| ▪ Immigration | ▪ Separation from/ multiple caregivers |



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Complexity of Recognizing Trauma Reactions in Children

- Trauma derails the normal developmental trajectory
- Trauma in young children can look like other issues
 - The younger a child is, the more challenging it can be to identify what’s happening (i.e., trauma, developmental delay, medical/health issue, parent-child relationship issue, etc.)



Complexity of Recognizing Trauma Reactions in Children

- For young children, trauma symptoms can be especially pervasive
- Pre-verbal children recall events in a sensory manner, not with words.



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Family factors

The best predictor of outcome for children following a traumatic event is the caregiver's ability to cope with the trauma



Supporting Young Children and Families

- Establishing a sense of **safety**
 - Permanency
 - Consistency
 - Predictability
 - An Emotionally Available Caregiver
- Support systems for family members in support of the child
 - Caring about the child means caring about the caregivers



Trauma: Supporting Young Children

- Tune in to the young child's emotional states and needs **rather than focusing on behavior** (fussiness, crying, aggression, etc.)
- Support children in getting their needs met by primary caregivers



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Trauma: Supporting Young Children

- In every situation, “Who is the child’s go-to person? Does the child have access to this person?”
- Anticipatory Guidance/Previewing
 - Particularly within the schedule/routine
 - Identifying new people/what’s happening next



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Trauma: Supporting Young Children

- Behavior is *communication*
- Cues/Miscues
- “She just wants attention”



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The Infant Mental Health Specialist

“Each interaction is an opportunity for you to make children and families feel heard, appreciated, and understood.”

- -Jeree Pawl & Amy L. Dombro, Learning & Growing Together with Families: Partnering With Parents to Support Young Children's Development, 2001



Thank you!

- Birth to Five Helpline
 - 1-877-705-KIDS
- Trauma-Informed Care Class
 - www.swhd.org/traumatraining
- Expulsion Prevention Program
- Good Fit Counseling Center
 - 602-200-0434
- Harris Infant and Early Childhood Training Institute
 - 602-266-5976



Trauma-Informed Care: Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Children Birth to Five

This training for kinship, foster and adoptive families will include an overview of the importance of relationships; trauma; how children are affected by trauma; feelings and behaviors children may exhibit; and how caregivers can help children.

This class is free and offered monthly on the second **Saturday** of each month **from 9am-12pm** through 2019. Child care is not provided.

Additional evening trainings include: January 17th, March 21st, May 16th, July 18th, September 19th, and November 21st (Thursdays, 6pm to 9pm)

Location:
Southwest Human Development
2850 North 24th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85008

SWHD is located south of Thomas Road and on the Westside of 24th Street. Please park in the upper level parking lot.

To register visit www.swhd.org/TraumaTraining


