

# DAWN INSTITUTE | Cultivating Resilient Families

The Simple Way to Understand Trauma

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## Objectives

- Define trauma
- Understand the basic neurobiology of trauma
- Make sense of problem behaviors
- Resourcing
- Questions



## Crystal Krueger, LMFT

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## What gets to you?



# Understanding Trauma

## Highly Intense Environment Activation (Episode)

- Natural Disasters
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- DV
- Neglect
- Witnessing Crime
- Victim of Crime
- Military Actions
- Accidents/Injuries

## Low Intensity, High Frequency Environment Activation

- Chaotic Environments
- Aggressive Environments
- Punitive Environments
- Inconsistent Parenting
- Instability in the family (financial, emotional, etc.)

## Low Intensity, Continual Environmental Activation

- Caregiving for a family member
  - Medical
  - Mental health
  - Behavioral

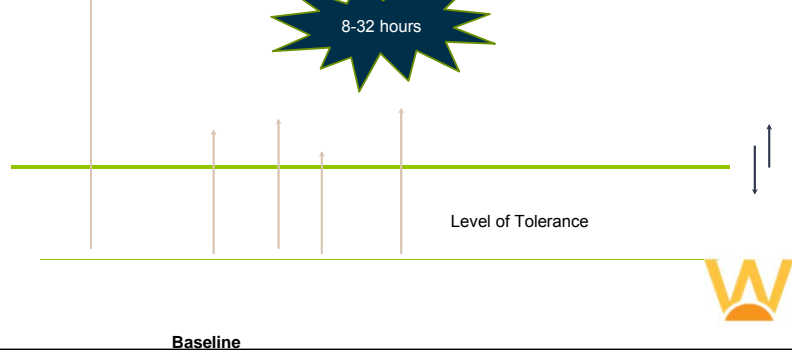


## The Hand Model of the Brain

- Brain Stem: The things we do that we do not have to think about.
- Emotion Center (Limbic System)
  - Smoke Detector (Amygdala)
- Thinking Brain (Neocortex): Thought and planning, relationships



## Level of Tolerance



## Three Levels of Safety

Van der Kolk, B. (2014), *The Body Keeps the Score*.



**These Symptoms Negatively Impact Relationships**



### Social Engagement System (Ventral Vagal System)

"Somebody come help me."

### Aggressive Defense (Sympathetic Nervous System)

"Nobody is protecting me, so I need to protect myself."

### Passive Defense (Dorsal Vagal System)

"I can't stop this, so I'm shutting down."





## The Sunburn



## 100% Reactive

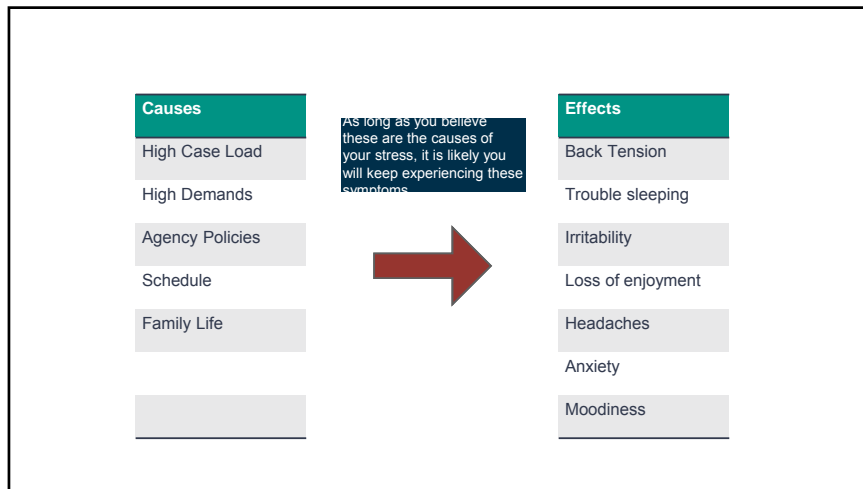
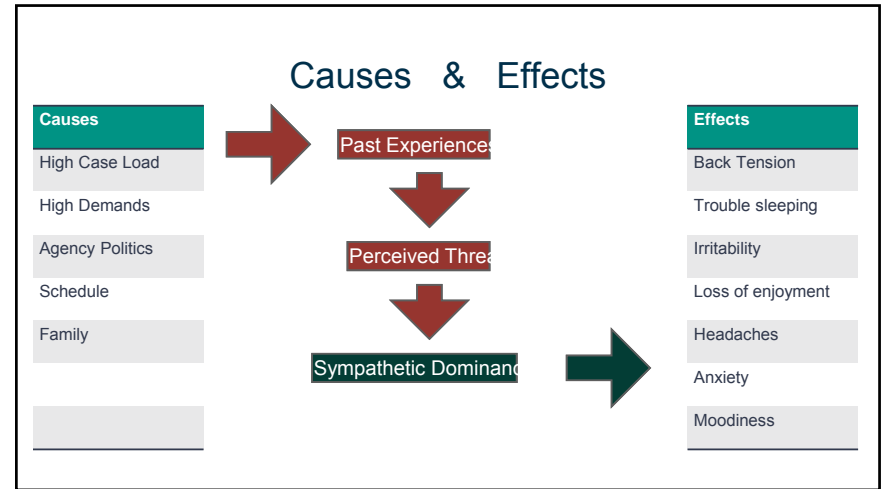
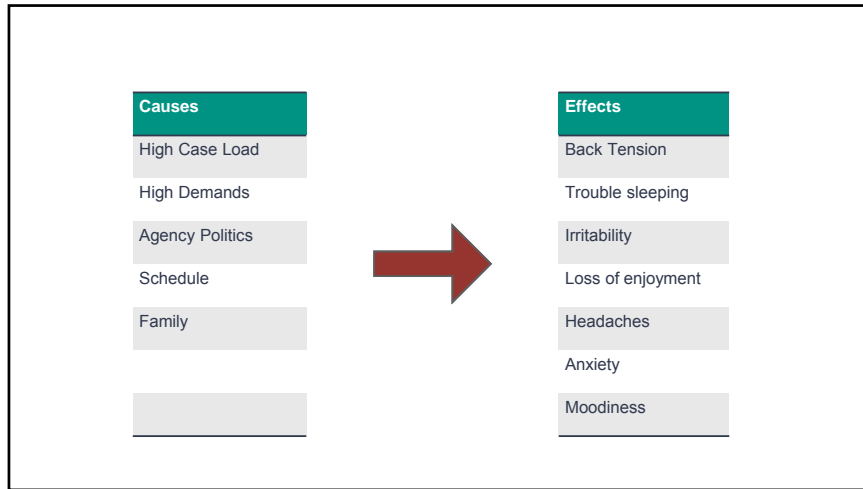
No weighing of right and wrong



## The "Sunburn"- Negative belief system

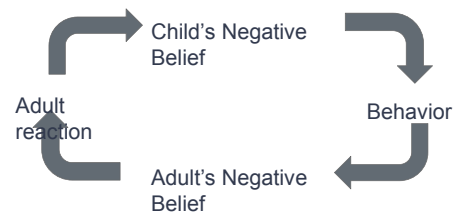
- Not feeling capable
- Not feeling cared for
- No sense of belonging
- No power or influence in environment
- No control in life
- No fun or pleasure
- Not feeling worthwhile/ loveable
- No sense of safety
- No sense of meaning





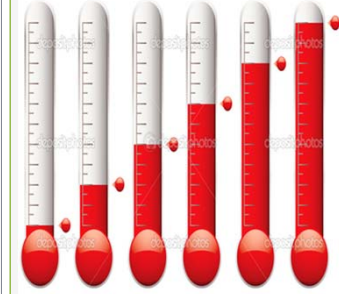
**STRESS =  
PERCEPTION OF  
THREAT**

## The Crazy Cycle



### CALMING THE STORM

Deep Breathing  
Peripheral Vision  
Progressive Muscle  
Pelvic Wall  
Seek Support  
Calm place



## Begin the Process

1. Recognize what your body is saying when you are becoming upset (sad, angry, overwhelmed, etc).
2. Begin to relax these areas or walk away when your body is saying you are feeling upset.
3. Use a relaxation method to calm your body.



## Resilience

- **Self-Regulation** - ability to immediately shift from sympathetic to parasympathetic dominance (especially when perceiving threat); harmonizing ANS for optimization
- **Intentionality** - principled-based vs. demand driven; living the mission
- **Connection/Support** - develop & utilize a support network
- **Self-Care/Revitalization** - aerobic activity, healthy pursuits, refueling

## Skills for Self-Regulation

- Body scan - wet noodle
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Peripheral vision
- Pelvic floor relaxation



## Resilience Safety Net

- Empower 1-2 people to confront us when we:
  - Become symptomatic
  - Consistently divergent from ways in which we normally act
- These persons should know us well, self-possession to withstand our attempts to deflect
- Opacity of denial increases as symptoms increase



## Intentionality

- Do I go where I aim myself?
- Living & working with:
  - Mission/Covenant
  - Code of honor
- Self-regulated
- Internal locus of control
- Principle-based living
- Tolerance of pain for growth
- Self-validation
- Maturation of spirituality



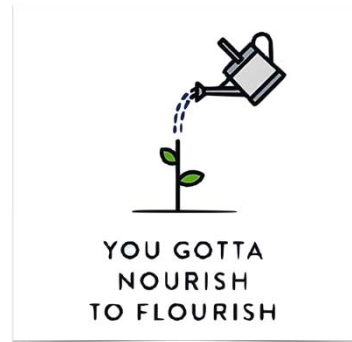
## Self-Care

- Care for yourself
- Connect with peers
- Mature perceptions
- Be intentional
- Self-regulate



## Self-Care

- Regular exercise - 3x's per week
- Balanced nutrition
- Proper sleep hygiene
- Regular social activities
- Creative hobbies or activities
- Spiritual practices
- Professional enrichment



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Let's Grow a plant together!



Questions?





## Resources

- *The Connected Child* by Karyn Purvis
- *Parenting from the Inside Out* by Dan Siegel
- *Theraplay* by Phyllis Booth and Ann Jernberg
- *Attachment in Adoption* by Deborah Gray
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk
- *The Whole Brain Child* by Dan Siegel
- *Mindsight* by Dan Siegel
- *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain* by Dan Siegel
- *No-Drama Discipline* by Dan Siegel
- *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun* by Carol Kranowitz
- *Beyond the Brain: Using Polyvagal Theory to Help Patients "Reset" the Nervous System after Trauma* by Stephen Porges
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk
- Forward Facing Trauma Therapy by Eric Gentry
- Dr. Rhoton at AZ Trauma Institute [info@aztrauma.org](mailto:info@aztrauma.org)

