

CREATING AND SUSTAINING PERMANENCY



Janice Goldwater, LCSW-C
October 4, 2013

Every Child, Every Family,
Every Step of the Way

**ADOPTIONS
TOGETHER**

PERMANENCY

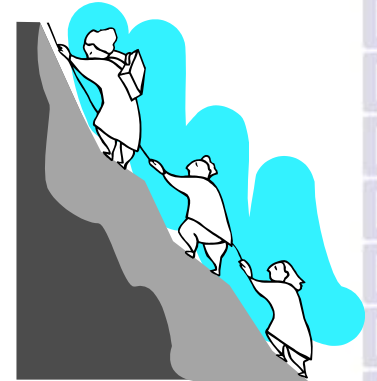
- Permanency is both a **process** and a **result** that includes involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in finding a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides:
- A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship
- Love
- Unconditional **commitment**
- Lifelong support in the context of reunification, a legal adoption, or guardianship, where possible, and in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons including siblings

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Permanency is for everyone!

- Why do we think **only some kids** can achieve permanency?
- Why is so much of our time taken up with a few cases?
- How do we keep parents connected when the behaviors are severe?
- Why should children believe that **this** family is really permanent ?
- How do I stay motivated when my cases are blowing up



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WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT:

- The implications of prenatal environment, attachment and trauma to the developing brain, and the impact of external factors.
- How healing occurs in the context of a relationship.
- How a parents relationship to their child is directly impacted by their “relationship to self”.
- Therapeutic approaches to working with these families.
- Strategies for responding to a struggling family.

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PARENT'S BRAIN MEETS CHILD'S BRAIN



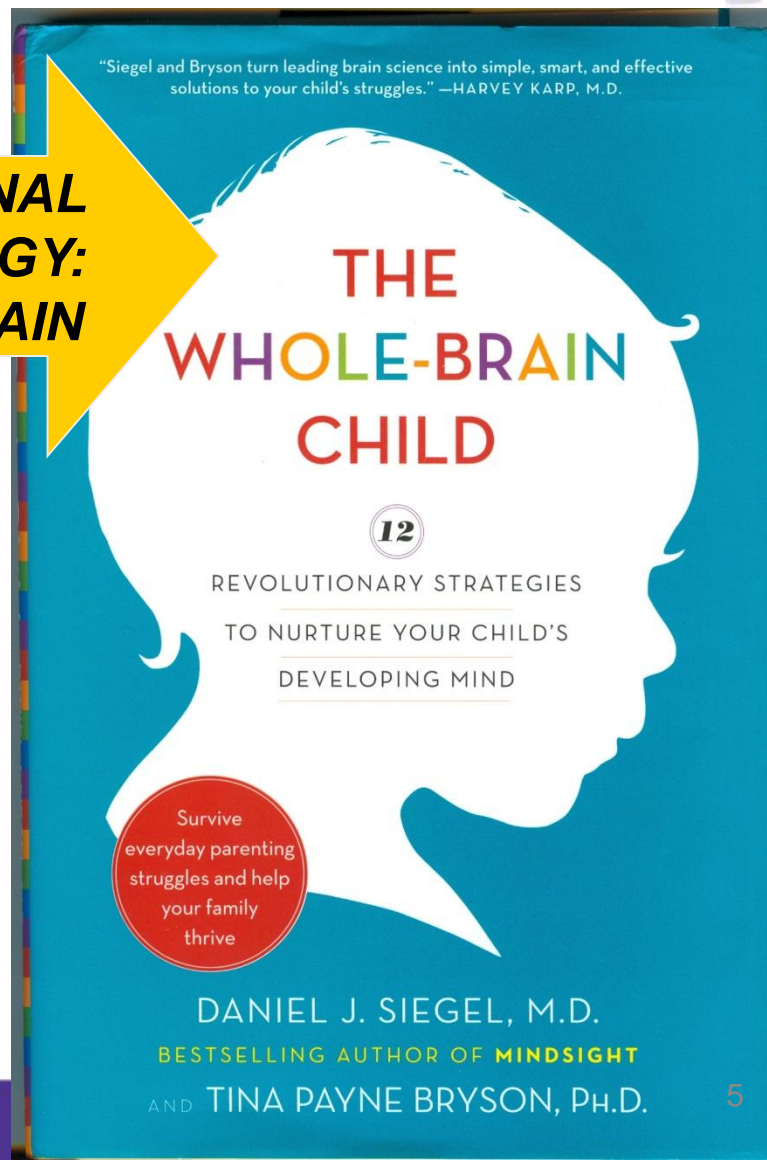
Brain-Based Parenting

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CAREGIVING
FOR HEALTHY ATTACHMENT



Daniel A. Hughes
& Jonathan Baylin

**INTERPERSONAL
NEUROBIOLOGY:
BRAIN-TO-BRAIN**



"Siegel and Bryson turn leading brain science into simple, smart, and effective solutions to your child's struggles." —HARVEY KARP, M.D.

THE WHOLE-BRAIN CHILD

12

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGIES
TO NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S
DEVELOPING MIND

Survive
everyday parenting
struggles and help
your family
thrive

DANIEL J. SIEGEL, M.D.

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF **MINDSIGHT**

AND TINA PAYNE BRYSON, Ph.D.

jbaylin

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Healing in the context of Relationship

- The Human brain can change
- Regulation is relationship dependent.
Our brain's are interconnected to one another
- The body/brain/ mind work in concert.
- Abnormal can mean that we don't yet understand.
- We must understand SELF_before we can understand OTHERS.

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WHY FAMILY THERAPY IS MOST EFFECTIVE

- It increases parents' capacity to help heal their child
- A child's ability to heal is based on the quality of the relationship with his/her caregiver
- The ability to form healthy, secure attachments is the blueprint for all healthy relationships and attachment happens in families
- If parents are supported they will be able to more effectively help their children heal from trauma and successfully attach to them.

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LET'S START WITH THE BRAIN

Open to change throughout the lifespan

**Orbitofrontal
Cortex**

(Social/Emotional
Control Center)

Hippocampus

(Short-term Memory
Cause and effect
cortisol)

Spinal Cord

Brainstem

(Lower Limbic/Reptilian)

Neural Circuitry

Amygdala

(Fight, Flight, or Freeze)

Pituitary Gland

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Dan Siegal, MD

Hand- Brain

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vESKrzvgA40>
- mindfulness
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-IfP1FBFk>
- parents

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THE BRAIN AND BEHAVIOR

- If children have had prenatal exposures, not had a positive attachment relationship and have been exposed to trauma their amygdala will be primed to respond **IMMEDIATELY!!!!**
- They react with fight, flight, freeze in response to stress with greater frequency
- They have less access to their pre-frontal cortex or their “thinking brain”

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Attachment: Why Does it Matter?

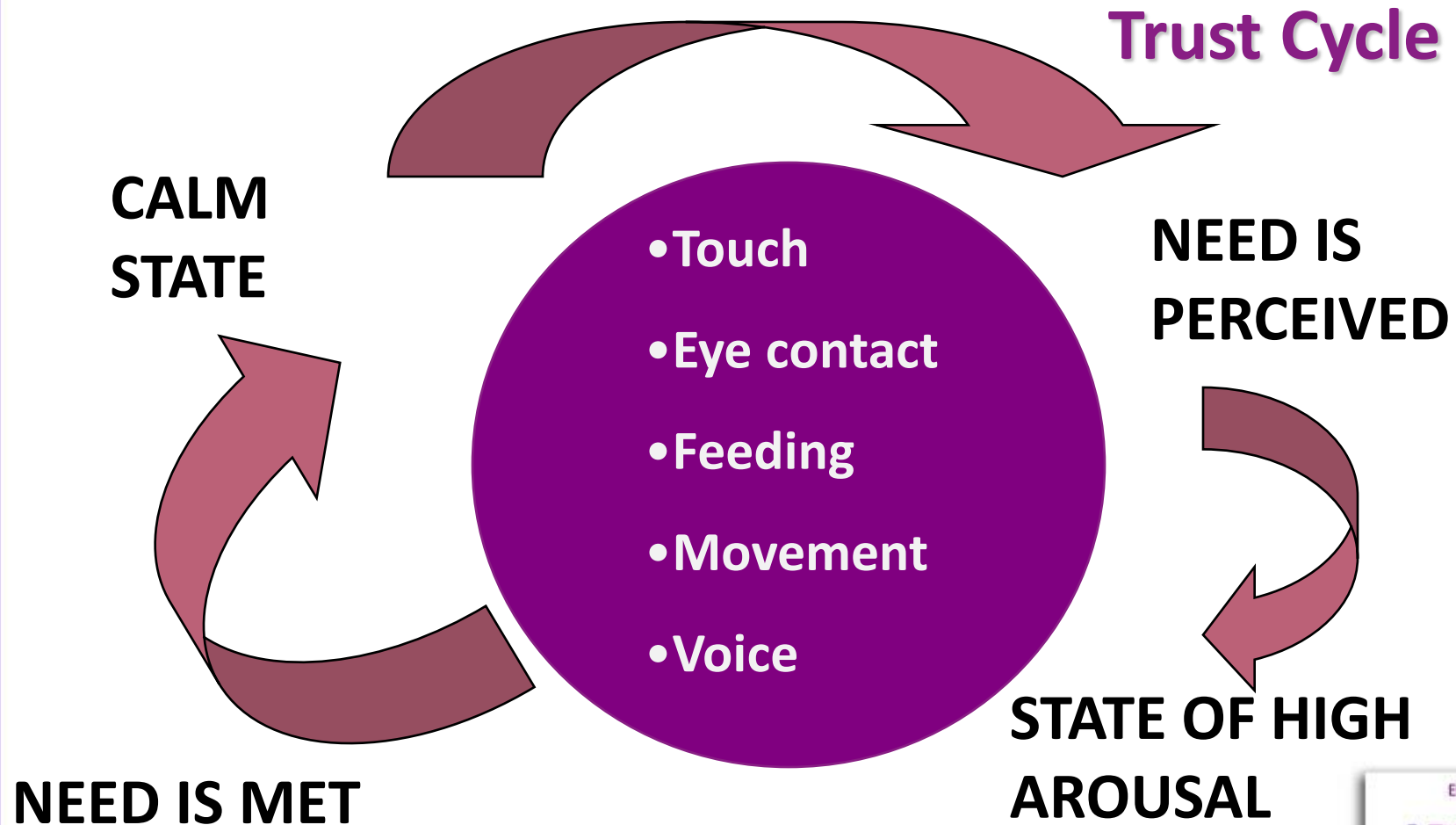
- It is the “fuel” and forms the template for the social - emotional –cognitive brain
- Forms a child’s blue print for relationships
- Has lifetime effects
- Can be adapted and change over time



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How A Child's mindset is Formed Based on Early Attachment: INFANT AROUSAL CYCLE



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WHEN NEEDS ARE MET

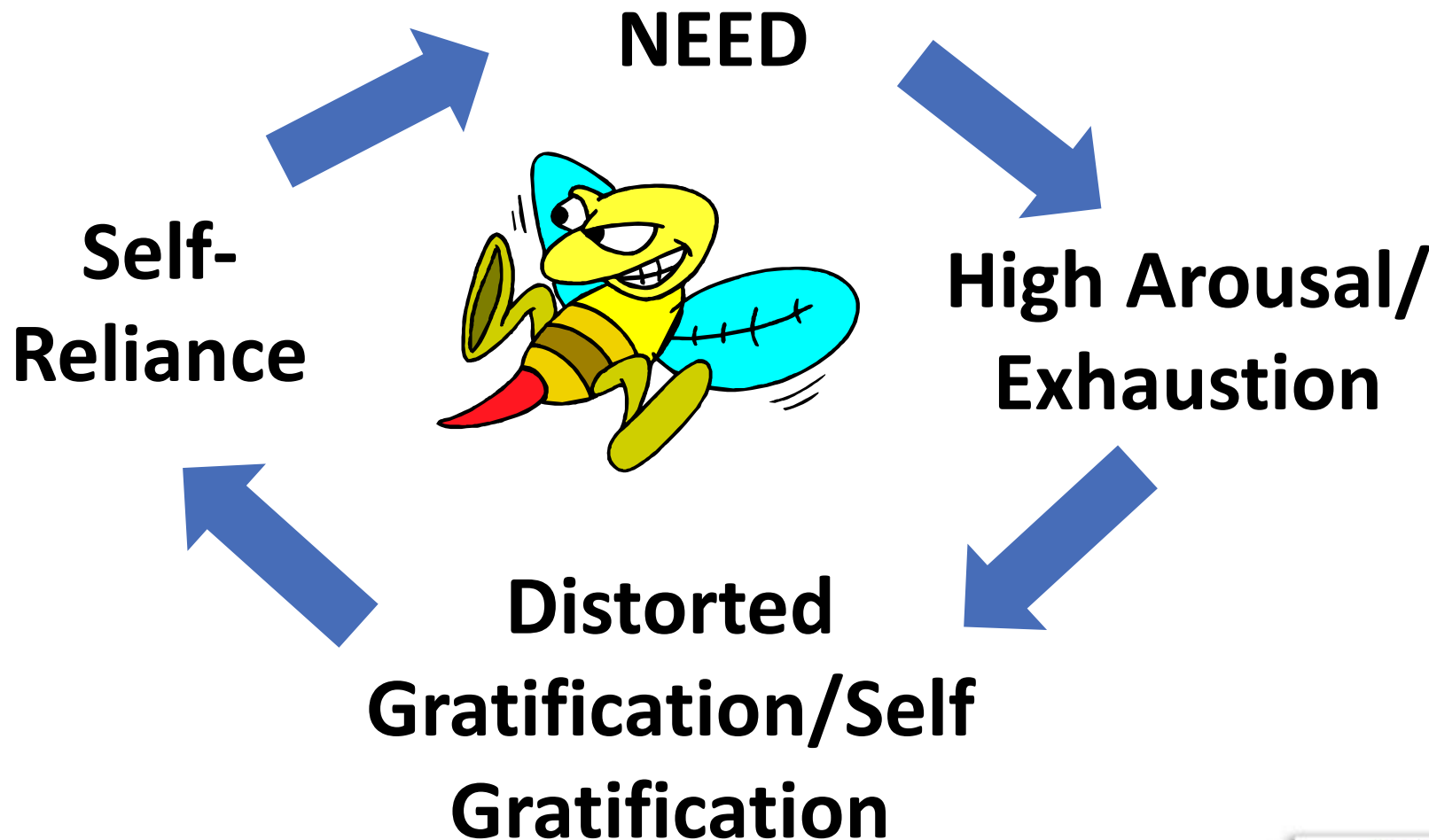
- I exist!
- My needs will be met
- I have an impact on my world
- I can wait...a little
- I am lovable
- I want to please “mom”
- The world makes sense
- The world is safe



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DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT CYCLE

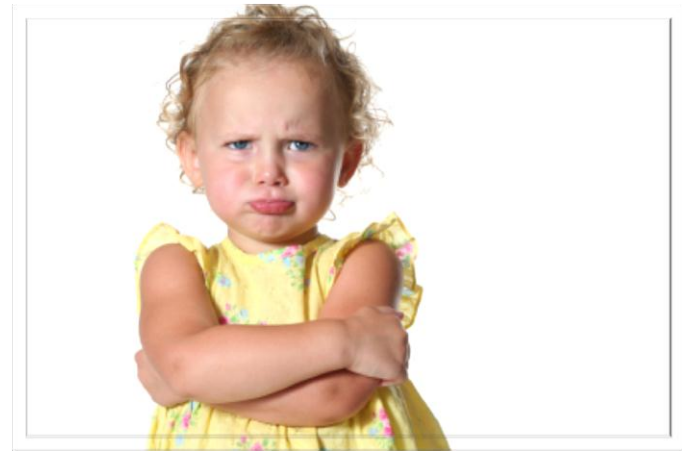


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WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

- I am not important!
- Adults cannot meet my needs!
- I don't matter!
- I am unlovable!
- I deserve to be hurt!
- Adults are unsafe!
- Wants=Needs



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What is Emotional Regulation?

- Ability to soothe the highs and lows and regain homeostasis or regulation
 - Brain Shaped by prenatal environment
 - Shaped by attachment experiences
 - Shaped by nutrition, post natal environment
 - Related to managing emotions and behavior
 - Allows for appropriate social interaction



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What is Executive Function

- A set of cognitive abilities that control and regulate other abilities and behaviors.
- Necessary for goal-directed behavior, to form concepts and think abstractly .
- Ability to initiate and stop actions, to monitor and change behavior, and to plan future behavior; allows us to anticipate outcomes and adapt to changing situations.
- Makes working memory effective by employing strategies that can help them remember information.
- Important for successful adaptation and performance in real-life situations. Allow people to initiate and complete tasks and to persevere in the face of challenges.
- In an unpredictable environment executive functions are vital to human ability to recognize the significance of unexpected situations and to **make alternative plans quickly when unusual events arise and interfere with normal routines.**
- Contributes to success in work and school and allows people to manage the stresses of daily life. Enable people to inhibit inappropriate behaviors.
- Allows for appropriate social interaction; Lack of EF results in expression of urges not suppressed.

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TRAUMA (SAMSHA definition)

- Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual that is physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individuals functioning and physical, social, emotional or spiritual well being.
- EVENT (what happened)
- EXPERIENCE (how was it experienced)
- EFFECT (lasting adverse effects)

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TRAUMA:

Why it affects us each differently:



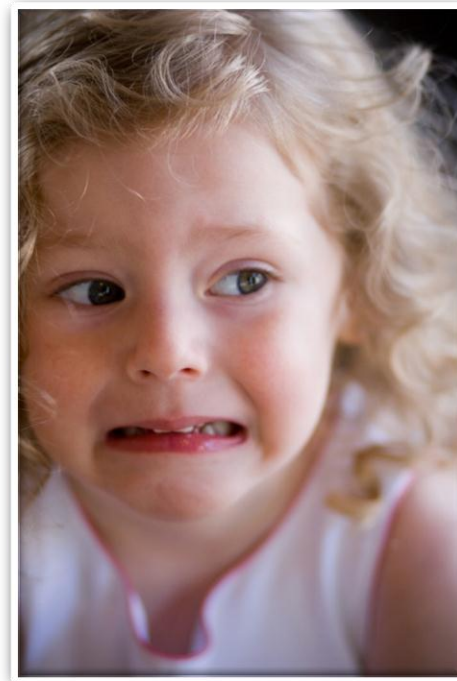
- Age/Developmental level
- Single episode vs. repeat episodes
- Duration of abuse and chronicity
- Who was the perpetrator?
- Temperament, regulatory capacity, resiliency
- History of having a stable adult attachment figure modeling emotional regulation
- How it was processed

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Developmental Impact of Complex Trauma

- Chronic **dysregulation** (calm to excited in a flash)
- Behavioral **impulsivity** and difficulties with affect regulation
- Inability to tolerate distress
- Chronic **anxiety**
- Attention changes – **ALWAYS**
- **WATCHING FOR DANGER**
 - **Hypervigilant**
 - **Inattentive**



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Complex Developmental Trauma May Look Like

- PTSD
- Bi-Polar
- ADHD
- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- ODD/Conduct Disorder



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IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

- Children behave in very different ways from what parents may expect
- Sometimes parents take it personally and get very hurt, upset, angry and triggered
- Parents are highly stressed and often feel isolated.
- Often not understood by family, friends, teachers service providers, and therapists

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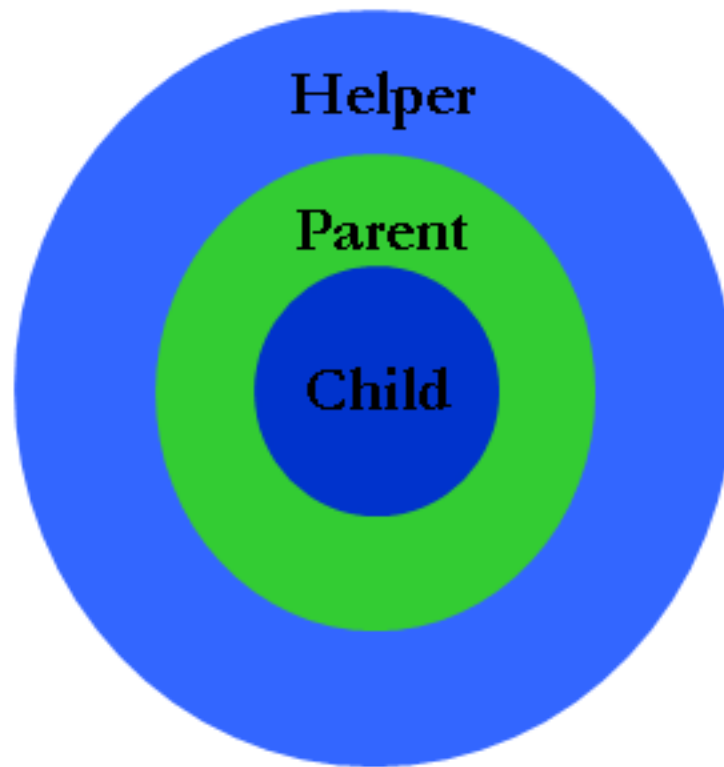
FAMILY THERAPY

- To embrace and strengthen the family system so that parents have the strategies/tools to serve as a healing agent to their child
- To provide psycho-education so that parents can understand attachment, trauma, FASD, executive functioning and what is behind their child's behaviors
- Help parents understand that children may “have” a problem rather than “being” the problem.
- Help parents understand how their own histories may affect their relationships and reactions to their child
- Teach parents to **try differently** rather than harder.

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WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



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PACE

Dan Hughes, Phd (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy)

Therapists

Playful – model for parents

Accepting – of the parent's emotions, feelings, and thoughts without judging

Curiosity – about the parent's & child's behaviors and their reactions so they learn what is triggering them both

Express Empathy – about how hard the parent's job is

Parents

Playful – instead of shaming

Loving – in spite of behaviors & choices

Accepting – of the child's emotions, feelings, and thoughts without judging

Show **Curiosity** – about the child's behaviors and their reactions so the parent learns what is triggering them both

Express Empathy – about past hurts and present challenges

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- Trauma which occurs in the context of relationship can only be healed in the context of relationship.

Regulation is Relationship Dependent

- Children cannot heal alone. We are biologically and neurologically designed to be in relationship.



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HEALING= REGULATION THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

- Two human beings can only experience the richness of “feeling felt” when they are communicating through the social emotional part of the brain.
- The goal is to create and sustain an environment where the child “feels felt” as frequently as possible by the parent.



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CHILDREN FEEL FELT WHEN PARENTS:



- Attune to child's primary emotions
- Align primary emotions and non-verbal communication with the child

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WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO WHEN IT FEELS SO HARD?

Mother Teresa said, "To keep the lamp burning you have to keep putting oil in it."



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WHY LOOK INSIDE?

- ❖ To bear witness to a child's pain and hurts, a parent needs to understand how the legacy of their own childhood experiences impact how they respond today.
- ❖ To be aware of one's own unresolved issues that may trigger "knee jerk" reactions
- ❖ To have a coherent narrative about one's own childhood.
- ❖ To be aware of one's own limits to prevent experiencing "blocked care".

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Parenting with Blocked Care

Jon Baylin Phd.

- ***PARENTING IN SURVIVAL MODE***
- ***APPROACH SYSTEM “OFF”, DEFENSE “ON”***
- ***NARROWING OF THE CHILD READING SYSTEM***
- ***IT’S PERSONAL: THE REJECTION SYSTEM***
- ***POLARIZED NARRATIVES: ME VS YOU***
- ***FLIPPING THE LID: PFC SHUTDOWN,***
 - ***AMYGDALOID PARENTING***

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IT IS NATURAL THAT PARENTS WILL GET TRIGGERED BY THEIR CHILD

- ❖ Taking care of a child is emotionally and physically exhausting.
- ❖ Other life stressors don't stop.
- ❖ It is VERY hard for to stay emotionally regulated in the face of a dysregulated child.
- ❖ WE ARE HUMAN!

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HOW DOES ONE KNOW IF YOU ARE BEING TRIGGERED?

- Your response is really strong.
- You find it hard to understand why the child is acting the way they are.
- You feel disdain toward your child.
- You have no compassion.
- You want to run the other way.
- You feel like you can barely stand it for another second.
- Your heart may be racing and breath shallow.



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WHEN WE GET TRIGGERED TOO OFTEN WE:

- ❖ Feel burned out and emotionally and physically drained.
- ❖ Worry that we are not being as effective as we can be.
- ❖ Feel nothing we do is right and we get “no respect” .
- ❖ Wonder if we are in a healing relationship with our child.
- ❖ Question our own competence as a parent.
- ❖ Begin to dream of the logistics of running away.

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A stylized illustration of a seascape. The background is a bright yellow sky with a few white birds flying. Below the sky are rolling green hills of varying shades. In the foreground, a white sailboat is sailing on a teal-colored sea. The entire illustration is framed by a thin blue border.

- Use principles of Mindfulness to manage your emotional state.
- The goal is to help you to stay in the prefrontal cortex so you can respond with intention and increase your tolerance of what is happening.

WE ARE WHAT WE THINK

Jon Kabat-Zinn, “ *Thoughts dictate the way we perceive and explain our reality including our relationship with self, others and the world.*”

We look at the world through our own lens and oftentimes create our own reality.



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THE STRESS RESPONSE



- ❖ A specific situation triggers the fight/flight response.
- ❖ Negative self-thoughts arise.
- ❖ Leads to emotional reaction – fear, anger.
- ❖ The body takes action-stress symptoms.
- ❖ Unhealthy behavior occurs.

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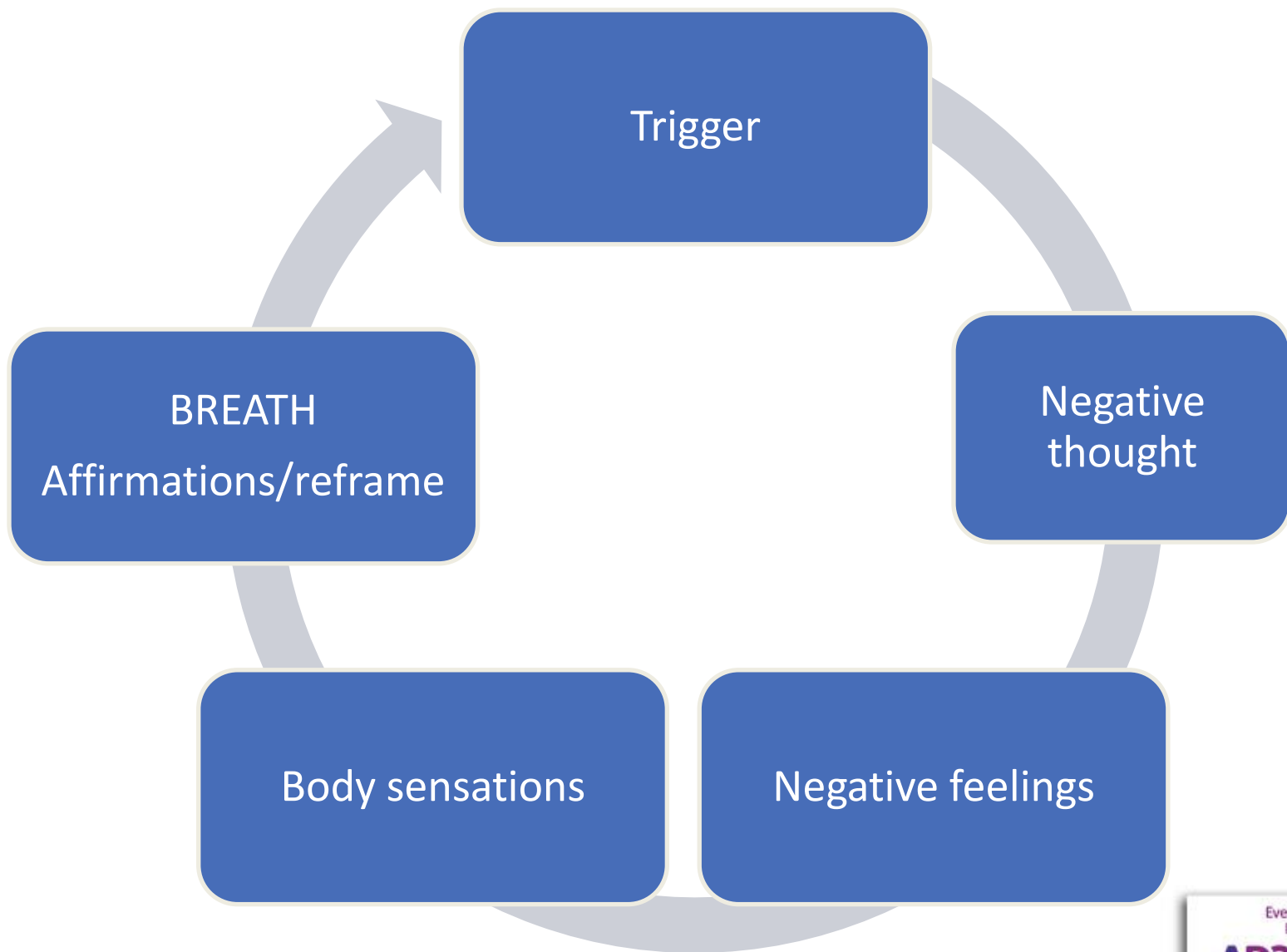
Dan Siegal (hand brain mindfulness)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vESKrzvgA40>



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MINDFULNESS

- ❖ Non-judging, present focused awareness.
- ❖ Making friends with our attention, not beating it up when it drifts from its intended focus.
- ❖ Actively engaging our mind's tendency to fly all over the place – practicing internal attunement.
- ❖ A non-judgmental curiosity about our inner restlessness and a willingness to simply observe it as it happens.

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MINDFULNESS CON'T

- ❖ Paying attention, with awareness and compassion, to whatever is going on.

“Listening to the tape playing inside your mind”

- ❖ Being non-judgmental.
- ❖ Training the mind to observe without reacting.



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MINDFULNESS AND PARENTING

A parent's ability to be fully present with their child, with acceptance and non-judgment creates an environment in which a child can make sense of their feelings, reach out to their parent for help, reassurance and nurturance and have a sense of themselves –through their parents' eyes – as a loveable, worthwhile human being.



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Why it Matters How We Respond

- ❖ Children's brains grow and develop in large part through their relationships with others.
- ❖ Children whose parents display warmth, kindness, empathy, & curiosity about their internal worlds **tend** to develop these same characteristics in relating with themselves and others. (gulp...)
- ❖ Influences how we make sense of painful feelings within ourselves and how well we can self-soothe. It also shapes how safe it feels to reach out to others for help and how comfortable it feels to have close relationships with others.

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What happens when the behavior is so awful that we feel shame and helpless?

- ❖ Such shame and helplessness can elicit feelings of being a “bad parent” or a “not good enough parent.”
- ❖ These feelings can then get in the way of making sense of the child’s behavior and maintaining an empathic yet structured stance towards the child.
- ❖ Use mindfulness to help become aware of your own feelings and tapes playing in your head.



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What happens when their qualities are not what a parent wished for?

- ❖ Parent needs to explore expectations. Sometimes it can just be a matter of a child not exhibiting the qualities we wish they had i.e. smarter, more at ease socially, more motivated to do homework, not talking back so much, etc.
- ❖ The desire for a child who has qualities that we think will make their lives easier in the long run can sometimes make it difficult to accept who they are in the short run. Use mindfulness to explore your own reaction.

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BEING MINDFUL WILL HELP YOU:

- Be aware of thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions in the **present moment** without judging, criticizing yourself or your experience.
- **Have compassion for yourself.**
- Have the awareness to think less about the future or the past.
- Feel less triggered by the child

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BEING MINDFUL WILL HELP YOU:

- ❖ Learn to balance two things that appear very different or even contradictory: change and acceptance.
- ❖ Attempt to **Change** the behavior that causes suffering for parent and child while simultaneously **Accepting** things as they are - with compassion and without judgment for yourself or your child.

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THE CHANGE PART IS ABOUT:

- ❖ Helping the child heal.
- ❖ Creatively problem solving.
- ❖ Looking inside so that you can cultivate

Mindfulness



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THE ACCEPTANCE PART IS ABOUT:

- ❖ Accepting what is happening in the present moment with compassion for yourself and for your child.
- ❖ Realizing that the present moment is all that we have.
- ❖ Understanding that we can't change what has already happened to the child, to yourself or in your family.
-
- ❖ Having patience because the healing process may take a really long time.

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THE SERENITY PRAYER

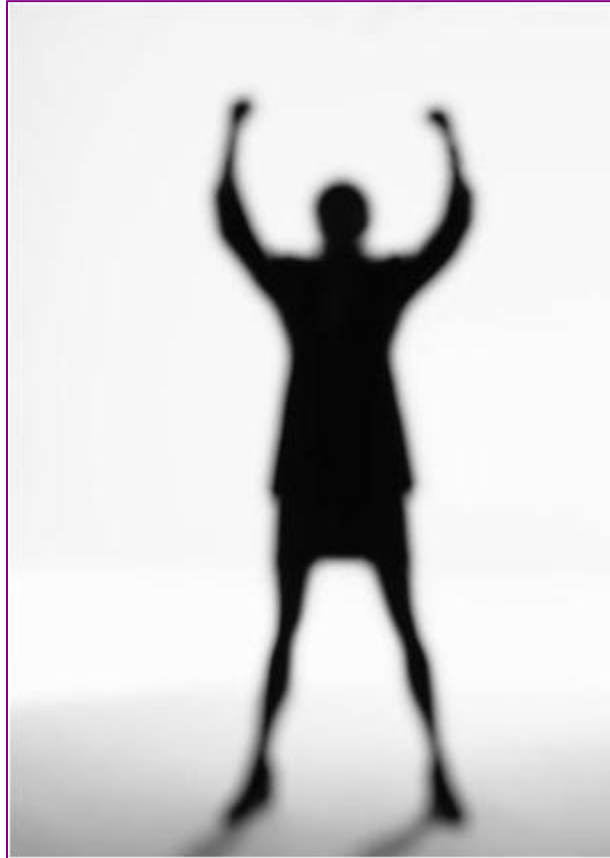
*“Grant me the
serenity to accept
the things I cannot
change, the courage
to change the things
I can, and the
wisdom to know the
difference.”*



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PRACTICING RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES



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Understand Behavior From a Relationship Model

- ❖ Behavior modification does not address a child's underlying stress.
- ❖ Behavior modification may not work if child's pre-frontal cortex is not in charge – stress causes distorted and confused thinking.
- ❖ Traditional parenting techniques do not help a child learn to regulate through the parent-child relationship.
- ❖ When parents are stressed, they are constricted and unable to open up to their child's emotional state.



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Every reaction, physical, intellectual, emotional is a form of memory down to the cellular level. We remember and act from what we have been given to remember.

That the child does not remember it consciously will not diminish the impact of it.

How the word is spoken can have a drastic impact on the spoken word.



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Take one minute at a time and
remember to breathe.



RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

HANG IN THERE



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- Herndon, VA
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