



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness



Trauma, Toxic Stress and Resilience in Early Childhood

27th NIHSDA Management Training Conference

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School readiness begins with health!

Head Start National Center on Early Childhood Health & Wellness

Our Goal:

Fostering a Culture of Health and Wellness for
Children, Families, Staff, and Communities

Our Foundation:

School Readiness Begins with Health!



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National Center on Health Partners

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Education Development Center, Inc.
- Center for Child and Human Development at Georgetown University
- National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center at Georgetown University
- UCLA Health Care Institute at the UCLA Anderson School of Management



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Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

PART 1:

1. Define trauma
2. Describe the potential impact of adverse experiences (toxic stress) on young children
3. Identify signs and symptoms of trauma in infants, toddlers and preschoolers
4. Identify steps to support children and families who have experienced trauma.



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Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

PART 2:

1. Define resilience
2. Identify strategies to build protective factors
for young children and their families



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What is Trauma?



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Trauma occurs...

when frightening events or situations overwhelm a child's ability to cope or deal with what has happened



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Group Discussion:

What kinds of potentially traumatic experiences do children and families face in your programs?



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Toxic Stress

Positive

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems
in the absence of protective relationships.

-experiencing strong, frequent,
and/or prolonged adversity

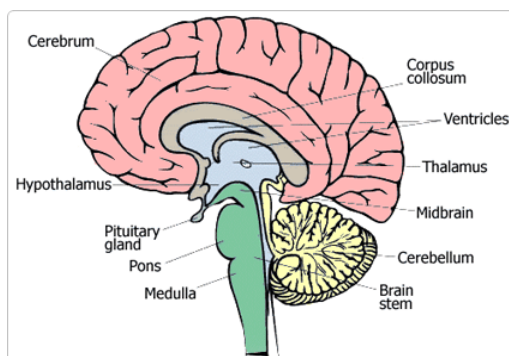
-can disrupt the development
of brain architecture and other
organ systems, and

-increase the risk for stress-
related disease and cognitive
impairment, well into the adult
years

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National Centers

What Happens When We Experience Toxic Stress or Trauma?



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Stress Responses

FIGHT

FLIGHT

FREEZE



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Physiological Adaptation to Stress

- Increase immediate availability of energy
- Increase oxygen intake
- Inhibit growth, digestion, reproductive function, pain perception
- Increase blood flow to important flight/flight areas
- Enhancement of memory/performance
- Boost immune function
- Release of mood stabilizers & endorphins



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The Impact of Adverse Experiences: Years Later

Lessons from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)



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Knowing the Signs & Symptoms



Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Infants and Toddlers

- Eating & Sleeping disturbance
- Clingy/separation anxiety
- Irritable/difficult to soothe
- Repetitive/post-traumatic play
- Developmental regression
- Language delay
- General fearfulness/new fears,
- Easily startled
- Reacting to reminders/trauma triggers
- Difficulty engaging in social interactions through gestures, smiling, cooing
- Persistent self-soothing behaviors, for example, head banging
- Aggression (toddlers)



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Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Preschoolers

- Avoidant, anxious, clingy
- General fearfulness/new fears
- Helplessness, passive
- Restless, impulsive, hyperactive
- Physical symptoms (headache, etc.)
- Inattention, difficulty problem solving
- Irritability
- Aggressive and/ or sexualized behavior
- Sadness
- Repetitive/ post-traumatic play
- Talking about the traumatic event and reacting to trauma triggers
- Developmental regression
- Poor peer relationships and social problems (controlling/over permissive)



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How Can You Help Children Who Have Experienced Trauma?



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Impacts of Trauma on Learning

- Persistent fear states in children can interfere with their ability to learn from educational, social, and emotional experiences
- Exposure to trauma can affect their perception of time, cognitive style, affective tone, problem-solving skills, and ability to respond to and understand rules, regulations, and laws

(Perry, 2001)



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Summary

- Adverse experiences can impact very young children
- Obtaining mental health services for children and families who have experienced potentially traumatic experiences can help reduce the negative impact of these experiences



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Summary

- Understanding signs of trauma helps make sure children who need help receive it
- Help for children who experience trauma includes help for the caregivers and families who care for them



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Part II: Supporting Resilience in Early Childhood



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Learning Objectives

PART 2:

Participants will be able to:

1. Define resilience
2. Identify strategies to support and promote protective factors in young children



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Resilience Defined

- Recovering from or adjusting to misfortune or change
- The ability to bounce back
- Overcoming the odds



Resilience Model



Perfectly Resilient Infant or Toddler



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Watch the Still Face Clip

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>.



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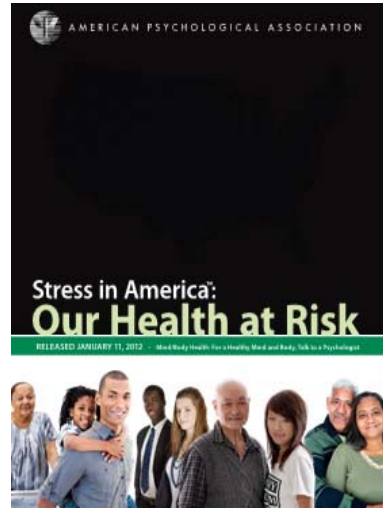
Take Care of Yourself

- One-third of Americans are living with extreme stress and nearly half of Americans (48%) believe that their stress has increased over the past five years.

Report from the American Psychological Association, 2012



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Adults Under Chronic Stress

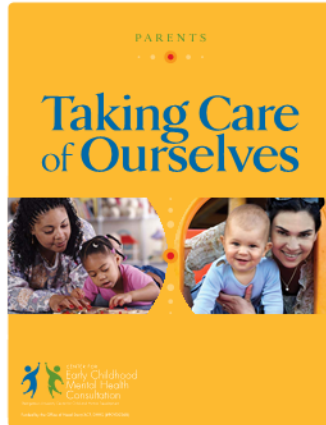
- Are often more irritable
- Are more likely to be inconsistent
- Have less energy
- Lose a feeling of joy of life



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Take Care of Yourself: Tips



www.ecmhc.org

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Trauma, Brain and Relationships: Helping Children Heal



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How Do You Build Protective Factors in Young Children?

Large Group Conversation

- With children?
- With families?



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Provide Consistent, Responsive Caregiving

- Identify a primary caregiver to increase the level of support and encouragement
- Hold, cuddle and rock children
- Respond gently & quickly to cues (smiles, cries, etc.)
- Talk to children about their emotions
- Stay close by as children interact with one another
- Observe each child's skills



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Provide Predictable Routines & A Safe Environment

- Maintain a predictable schedule
- Provide choices
- Provide a safe place for the child to talk or just relax
- Be sensitive to cues the child gives related to the environment- create a soft, nurturing space



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Core Strengths for Children

Developed by Bruce Perry

<http://www.childtrauma.org/>

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| • Attachment | • Awareness |
| • Self Regulation | • Tolerance |
| • Affiliation | • Respect |



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Supporting Families with Immediate Needs

Know your community supports for:

- Housing, Food, & Clothing
- Job Training
- Transportation
- Health Care and Insurance
- Child Care subsidy
- What else?



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Action Plan: How Will You Support Resilience?

List Two Things You Will Do



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NCH Resources

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>



- Newsletters
- Online courses
- Webinars
- Fact sheets
- T/TA tools



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Next Steps...

Action Planning



Evaluation



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Wrap-Up

- What questions do you still have?
- What will you do differently?
- What will you remember?



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To Continue the Discussion, Join MyPeers



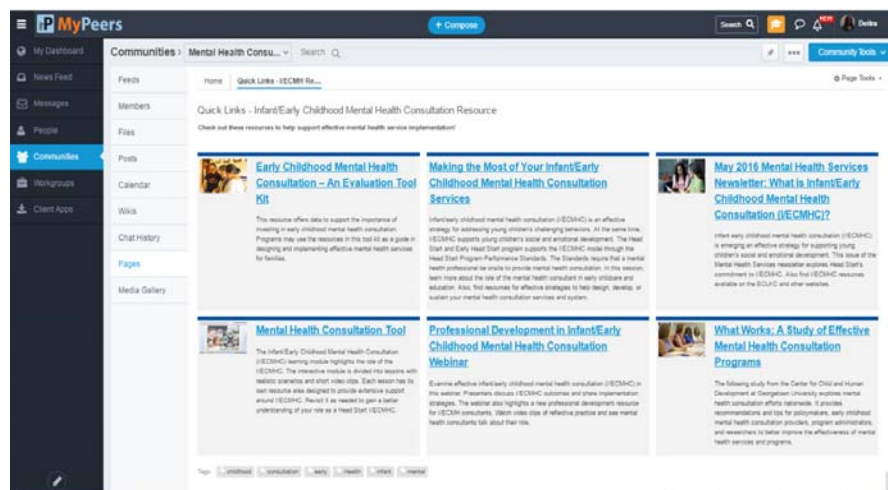
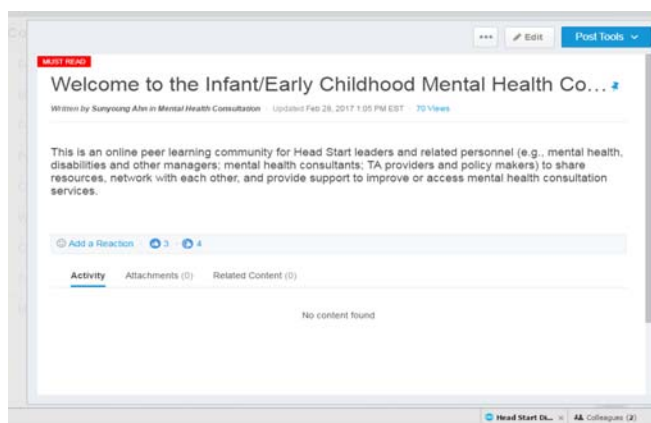
Email health@ecetta.info and say “I’d like to join MyPeers”



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MyPeers Mental Health Consultation Community



For More Information Please Contact:

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National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Toll-Free: 888-227-5125

Email: health@ecetta.info

Website: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/health>



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Handout 1: What Causes Trauma?

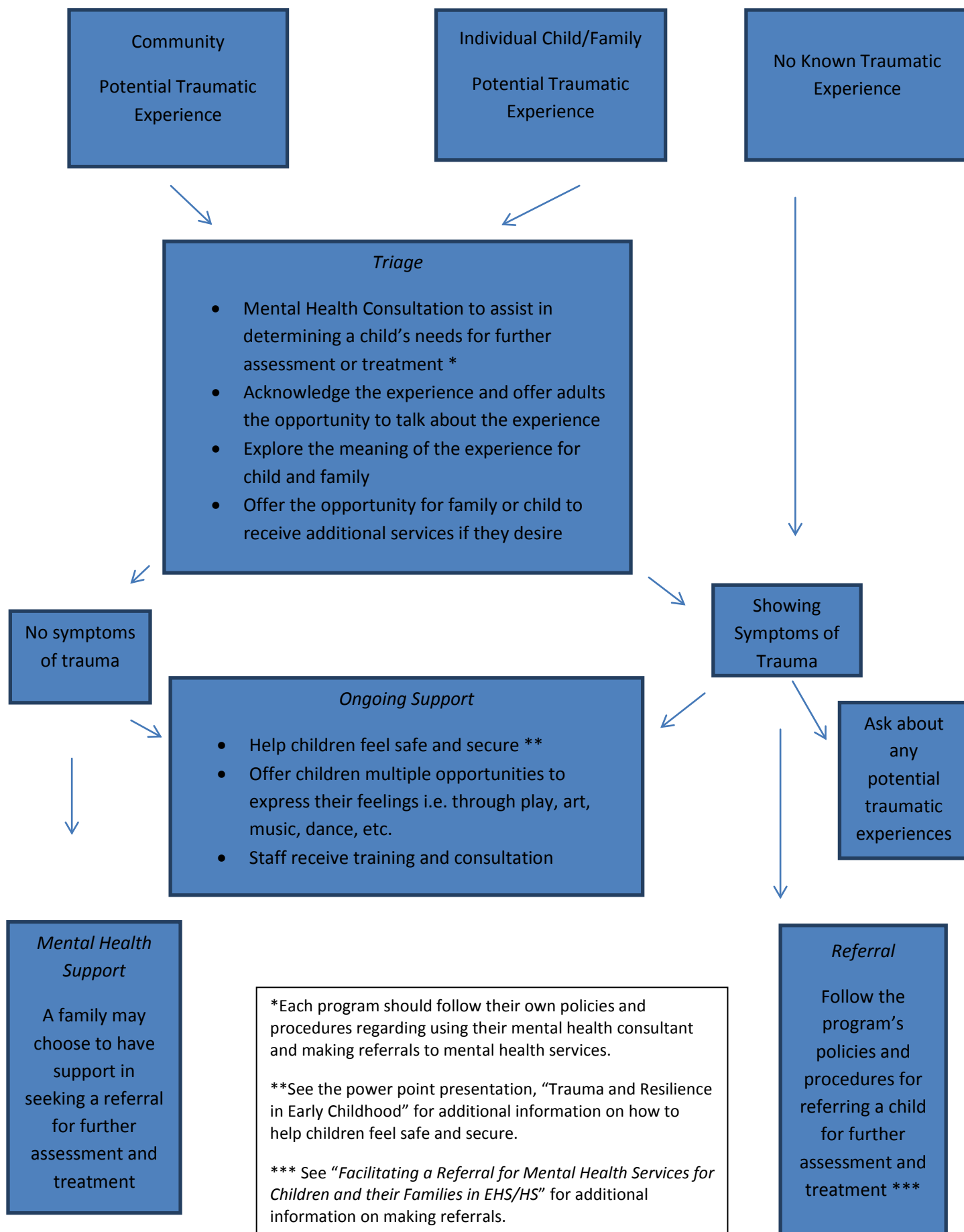
When do children develop mental health problems as a result of a potentially traumatic experience?

- **History of previous trauma:** An individual who had a previous trauma (i.e. death of a family member, victim of violence/abuse, etc.) may be more likely to be traumatized (i.e. develop mental health problems) as a result of this event/experience.
- **History of mental health problems:** Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse may become worse after a traumatic experience.
- **Impact or proximity of the experience:** Individuals with significant loss (i.e. a family member's death, injury to self or others) as a result of the event/experience are more likely to have emotional or social problems after the event. Individuals who had a near death experience as a result of the event are also more likely to develop mental health problems. Individuals who were directly involved in the event (i.e. hurt as a result of the experience) are more likely to develop problems than individuals who witnessed the event and individuals who witnessed the event are more likely to develop problems than individuals who heard the event or were nearby.
- **Family mental health problems:** Individuals who had family members with mental health problems are more likely to develop mental health problems resulting from the experience than individuals with family members without mental health problems.
- **Emotional response:** Emotions such as: extreme fear, guilt, helplessness, and shame negatively impact an individual's ability to recover from a potentially traumatic experience.
- **Dissociation:** A person who experiences the feeling of not being part of the experience (i.e. feels cut off from his body and his surroundings; feels numb to physical and emotional feelings; feels his is floating outside his body; and/or has no memories of the event) is particularly at risk of developing mental problems as a result of the experience.
- **Temperament/outlook on life:** Individuals who are "happy go lucky" or generally optimistic and are rarely phased by things may be less likely to develop problems than individuals who are often negative or frequently perceive themselves as victims in life.

Handout 2: Signs & Symptoms of Trauma in Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

Infants and Toddlers	Preschoolers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating & sleeping disturbance • Clingy/separation anxiety • Irritable/difficult to soothe • Repetitive/post-traumatic play • Developmental regression • Language delay • General fearfulness/new fears, • Easily startled • Reacting to reminders/trauma triggers • Difficulty giving consistent and accurate cues to caregivers • Difficulty engaging in social interactions through gestures, smiling, cooing • Persistent self-soothing behaviors, for example, head banging • Aggression (toddlers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidant, anxious, clingy • General fearfulness/new fears • Helplessness, passive • Restless, impulsive, hyperactive • Physical symptoms (headache, etc.) • Inattention, difficulty problem solving • Irritability • Aggressive and/ or sexualized behavior • Sadness • Loss of developmental milestones • Repetitive/ post-traumatic play • Talking about the traumatic event and reacting to trauma triggers • Poor peer relationships and social problems (controlling/over permissive)

Handout 3: Supporting Young Children Who Have Experienced Trauma





Handout 4: Protective Factor Characteristics and Tips to Support Protective Factors

Child Protective Factors: Developing characteristics and behaviors within a child that can buffer or prevent the likelihood of risk

- Age appropriate social emotional competence (child)
 - can share thoughts and feelings appropriately
 - responsible for actions (age appropriate)
 - can manage impulses
 - shows compassion for others
- Likable/easy temperament (child)
- Developing sense of humor (child)
- Able to solicit support from nurturing caregivers (child)
- Has a positive or optimistic view of the future (child)
- Attempts to solve problems appropriately (child/family/school)

Family/School/Community Protective Factors: Characteristics within the family or family members, within the school environment and the community which buffer or protect children against the impact of risk factors

- Strong family members who provide unconditional love (family)
- Encouragement for positive behavior (family, community, school)
- Access to safe environment (family/ community/school/)
- Role models for behavior (family, schools, community)
- Positive trusting relationships outside of family (community/schools)
- Access to quality early care and education (community/school)
- Positive communication (family, community, school)
- Access to support services and concrete assistance in times of need (community)

Caregiving Tips to Support Protective Factors for Children

With Children:

- Give children individual attention
- Use encouraging comments- refraining from negative or sarcastic comments
- Encourage child's independence and skill development (helping children with self-help skills, problem solve, get what they need)
- Help children develop positive peer relationships
- Encourage children's ability to be responsible in age appropriate ways (i.e. take care of their belongings, have a classroom job, clean up the toys)
- Foster love for learning and curiosity for discovering
- Promote early literacy
- Teach children to solve conflicts
- Help children develop self-regulation skills



- Assist children to feel valued (when you listen and give your undivided attention to a child he feels important)
- Notice a child's strengths each day (comment on their efforts and their attempts to problem solve)

With Families:

- Encourage positive parent child relationships and interactions
- Assist families to develop consistent routines and appropriate limits
- Promote social networks among families
- Provide concrete social support when needed
- Offer information about parenting and child development
- Provide information about activities families can do at home or in the community
- Encourage families to read to their children
- -Develop a trusting respectful relationship with each family (greet each family by name, reach out to each family, persist in getting to know each family)

Provide Consistent, Responsive Caregiving:

- Identify a primary caregiver to increase the level of support and encouragement
- Hold, cuddle and rock children
- Respond gently & quickly to cues (smiles, cries, etc.)
- Talk to children about their emotions
- Stay close by as children interact with one another
- Observe each child's skills

Provide Predictable Routines and a Nurturing Environment:

- Maintain a predictable schedule
- Provide choices
- Provide a safe place for the child to talk or just relax
- Be sensitive to cues the child gives related to the environment- create a soft, nurturing space

Supporting Families with Immediate Needs:

- Be familiar with community supports and services
- Offer onsite food pantries and clothing closets
- Give referrals to specific individuals at service agencies (not just the agencies themselves) and transportation to those agencies, if needed
- Provide immediate assistance and support in the event of an eviction or other emergency
- Support the family throughout a crisis
- Link family members to jobs, job training, transportation, and other means of economic security
- Serve as an access point for health care, child care subsidies, and other services
- Initiate contact or inviting conversation if staff are concerned about a family problem or emergency*

*The strategies in italics are from the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Initiative:
http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/resources/body/staff_handout_-_concrete_support.pdf

Handout 5: Taking Care of Yourself: Managing Your Stress

What causes me stress?

How do I know I am feeling stress (where do I feel it in my body)?

When I begin to feel signs of stress, I will...

Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

by **Mary Mackrain**

Take time to reflect and complete each item on the survey below. There are no right answers. Once you have finished, reflect on your strengths and then start small and plan for one or two things that you feel are important to improve. For fun and practical ideas on how to strengthen your protective factors, use the chapters in this book. For a free copy of the DARS visit www.centerforresilientchildren.org.

Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
Relationships			
1. I have good friends who support me.			
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.			
3. I provide support to others.			
4. I am empathetic to others.			
5. I trust my close friends.			
Internal Beliefs			
1. My role as a caregiver is important.			
2. I have personal strengths.			
3. I am creative.			
4. I have strong beliefs.			
5. I am hopeful about the future.			
6. I am lovable.			
Initiative			
1. I communicate effectively with those around me.			
2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.			
3. I have a hobby that I engage in.			
4. I seek out new knowledge.			
5. I am open to new ideas.			
6. I laugh often.			
7. I am able to say no.			
8. I can ask for help.			
Self-Control			
1. I express my emotions.			
2. I set limits for myself.			
3. I am flexible.			
4. I can calm myself down.			