

Trauma-Informed Practice And Secondary Trauma



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Curriculum

I. Overview of trauma

II. Applying Trauma-Informed Practices

III. Secondary Trauma & Re-traumatization

IV. Trauma Responses

V. Q & A

Why is this issue important for lawyers?

**Are you familiar with trauma-
informed practice?**

Our Primary Focuses Today:

- Defining Complex Trauma
- Defining Trauma-Impacted Populations
- Exploring Trauma-Informed Practices
- Defining Secondary Trauma
- Defining Re-Traumatization

Navigating resources on Trauma can be an exhaustive process on its own.

We're here to help!

I. Overview of Trauma

What is Trauma? How Common is it?

- Traumatic experiences lead to unbearable or intolerable emotions
 - Trauma: damage resulting from an experience; an injury
- Historically: Physical Trauma & Psychological Trauma
 - A fractured skull, a broken arm, gunshot wound
 - Child sexual abuse, verbal harassment, witnessing death

What is Trauma? How Common is it?

- Now: Trauma as biopsychosocial (BPS)
 - Bio - the biology and physiology of trauma
 - Psycho - psychological aspects of trauma
 - Social – sociological aspects of trauma
 - All three interact constantly to create what we see ("Mind-body connection")
- Additionally: Trauma as BPS-Spiritual-Historical-Cultural
 - Spiritual – spiritual aspects of navigating trauma
 - Historical – historical contexts and their impact on trauma
 - Cultural – cultural impacts on understanding of trauma

Types of Trauma: 3 & 2 Categories

- Acute
 - Single-Incident
- Chronic
 - Repeated & Prolonged
- Complex*
Invasive
 - Exposure to Varied/Multiple Traumatic Events; Usually
- “Big T”
- “Little T”

Types of Trauma: 7 Categories

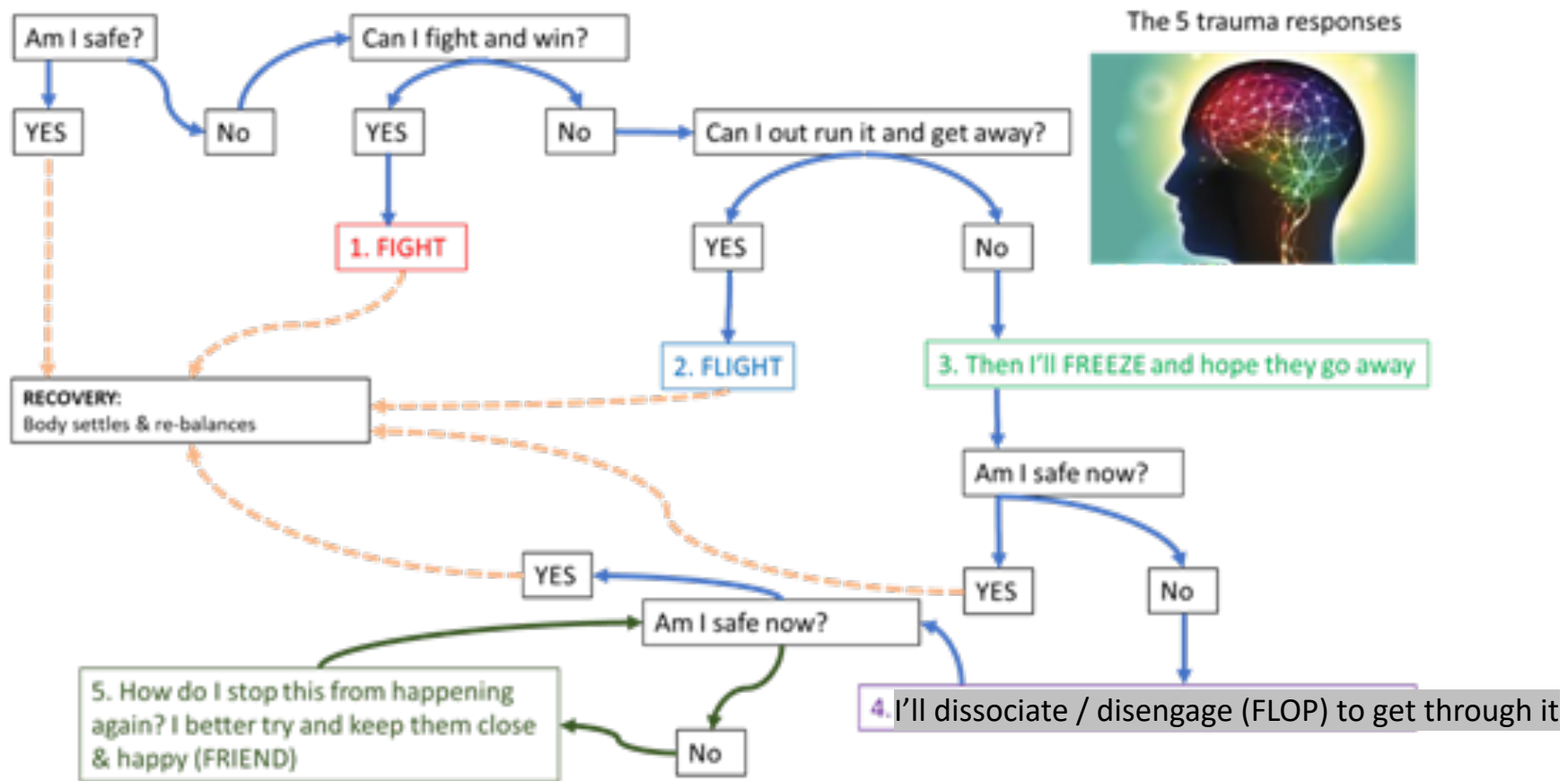
- Intergenerational
- Vicarious (Secondary)
- Life Transitions
- Historical
- Collective
- Acute
- Complex



Types of Trauma: Additional Considerations

- PTSD / C-PTSD – [technical] Psychiatric Disorders
- Triggers & Flashbacks

- The famous “Fight, Flight, Freeze (Fawn, Flop)” ...



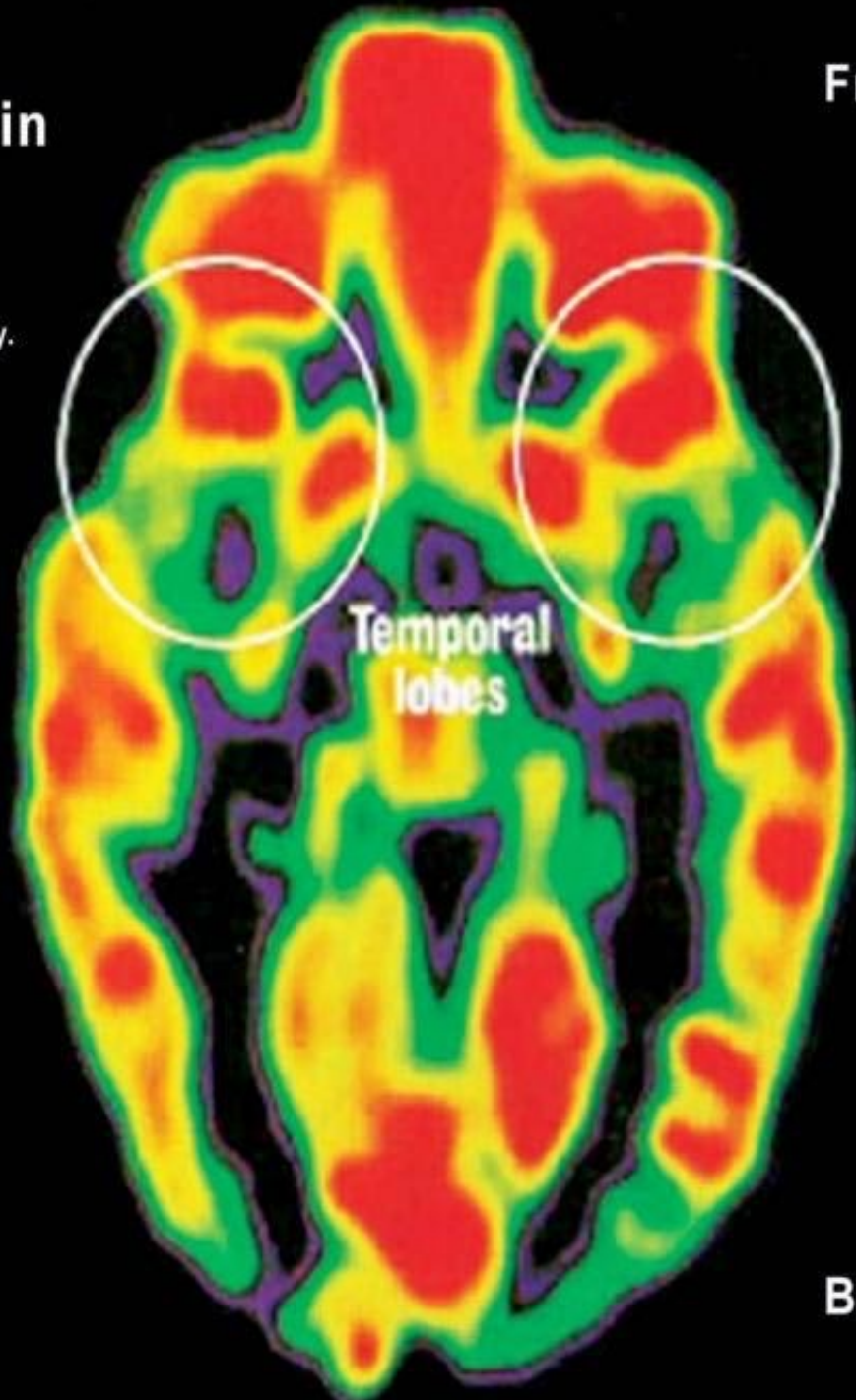
Complex Trauma

- Repeated exposure to abuse at the hands of a trusted adult
- Brain and body adapt as a survival mechanism
- These responses to chronic stress become maladaptive and adversely affect relationships, behavior, and mental health



Healthy Brain

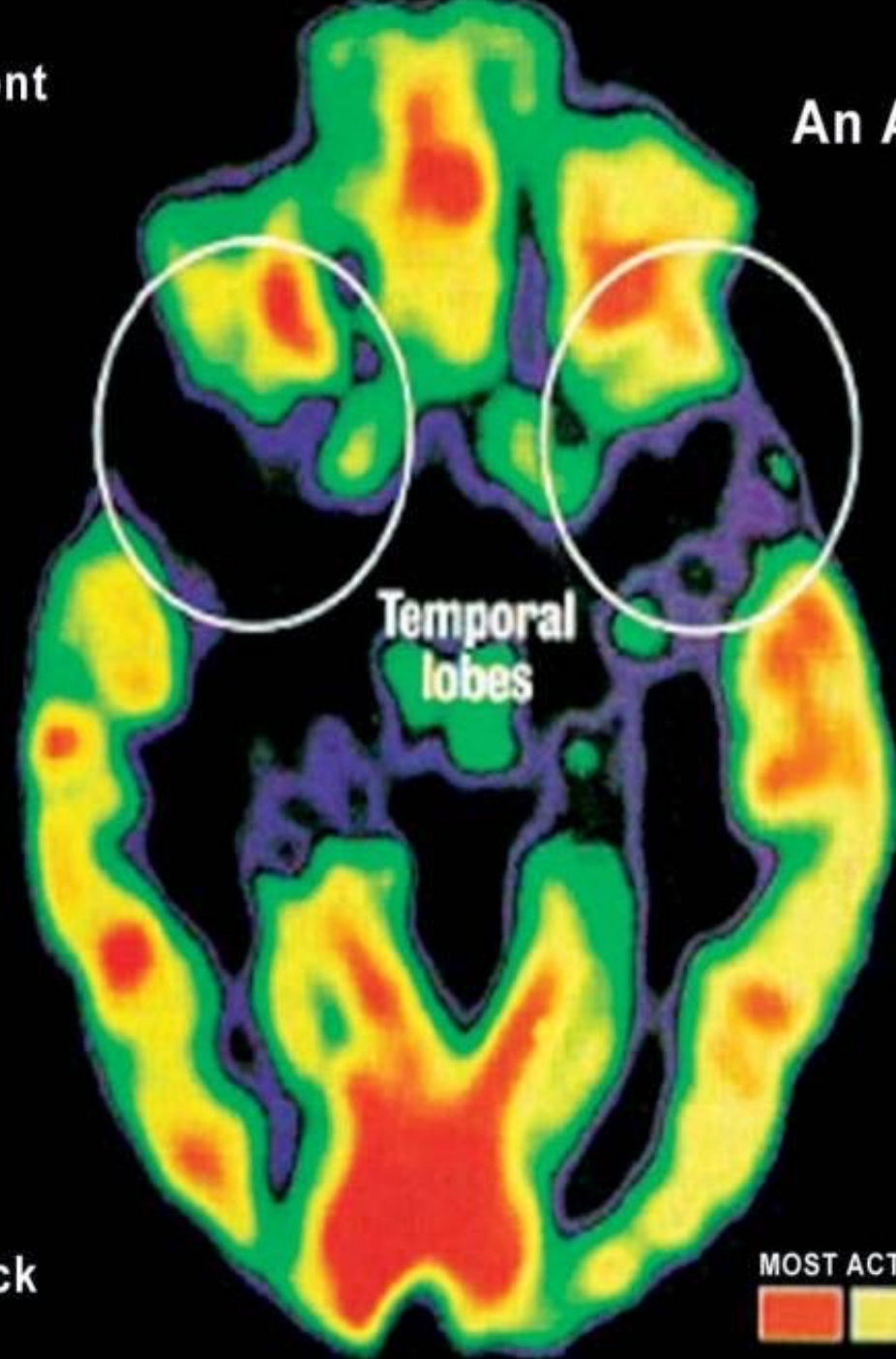
This PET scan of the brain of a normal child shows regions of high (red) and low (blue and black) activity. At birth, only primitive structures such as the brain stem (center) are fully functional; in regions like the temporal lobes (top), early childhood experiences wire the circuits.



Front

An Abused Brain

This PET scan of the brain of a Romanian Orphan, who was institutionalized shortly after birth, shows the effect of extreme deprivation in infancy. The temporal lobes (top), which regulate emotions and receive input from the senses, are nearly quiescent. Such children suffer emotional and cognitive problems.



Back



II. Applying Trauma-Informed Practices

Benefits to Using Trauma-Informed Practices

- Positive client interactions
 - Mitigates potential harm; can counteract current/ongoing harms
 - Increases client's trust & outlook
- Healthier environment for everyone involved
- Increases ease of legal process on those experiencing trauma
 - Ease of legal process translates to testimonies, etc.
 - Client reliability (regarding cross-examination and counterarguments)
- Ethics-wise: prioritizes client safety and helps prepare individuals for unfavorable verdicts

Defining Trauma-Impacted Populations

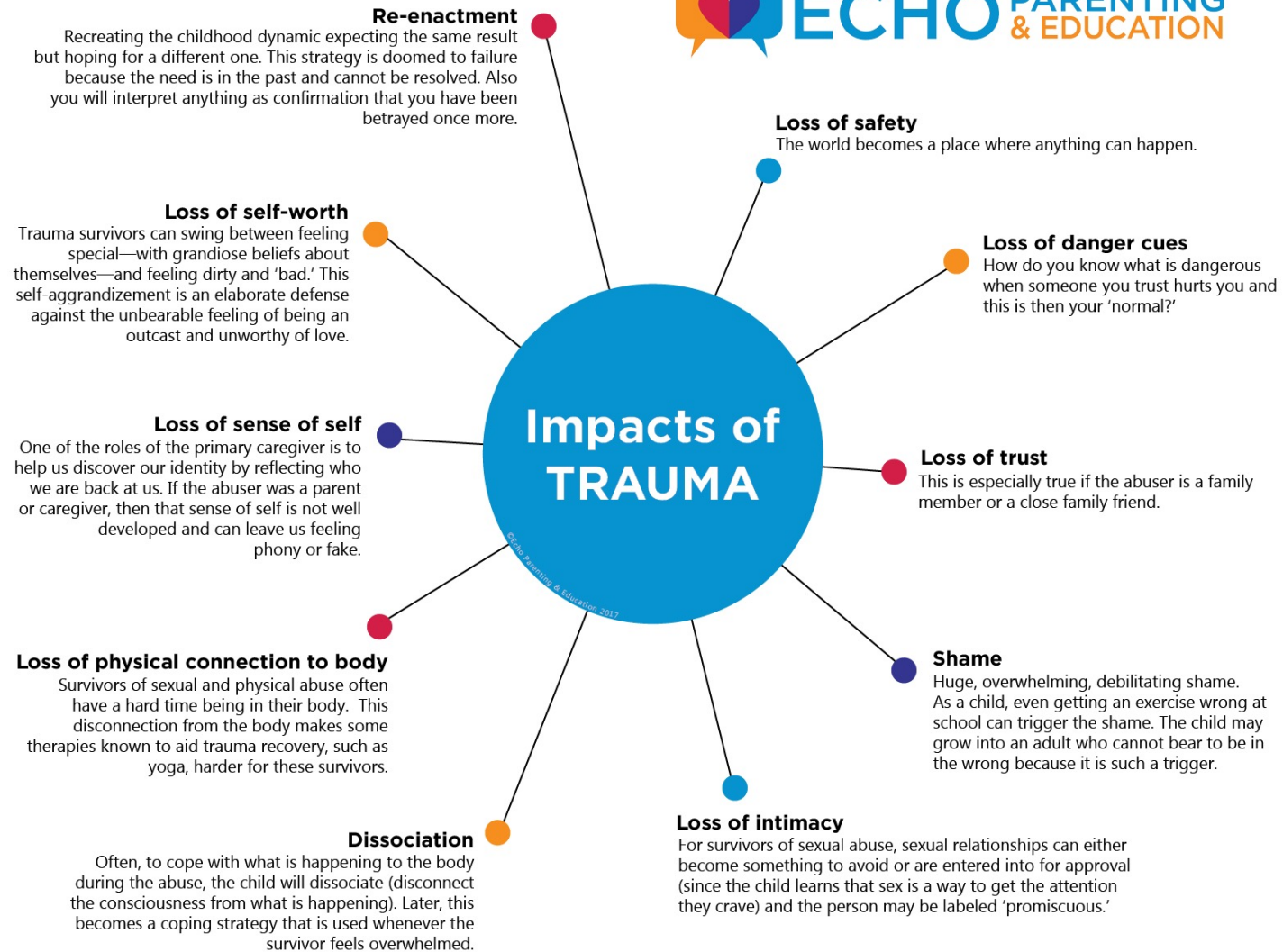
- Trauma is, unfortunately, common and complex!
- The simple answer: "you may never know until something happens"
- The nuanced answer...

Defining Trauma-Impacted Populations

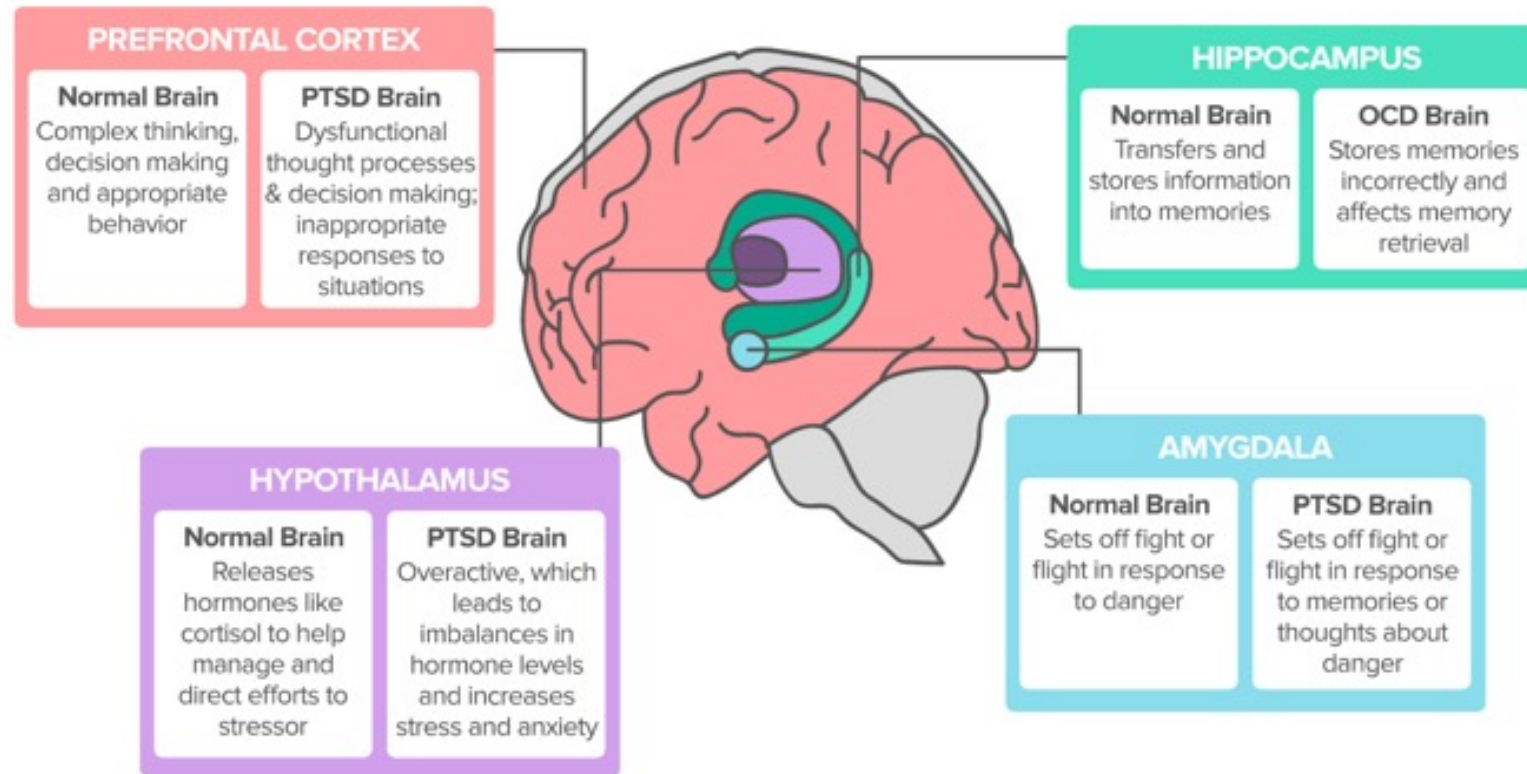
A traumatic experience can inform behavior, emotions, perspective, and more, whether it's been processed or not. It also may go completely undetected or be unnoticeable, even to a trained professional. Growth, time, and healthy processing also do not guarantee reduction of symptoms; progress should be thought of as non-linear.

As we've seen, any and every aspect of a person's life, behavior, and psyche may be impacted by trauma. While an individual's experiences will be unique to them, there are some overarching ideas to consider:





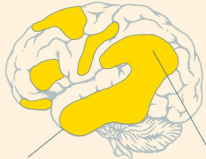

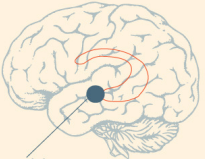
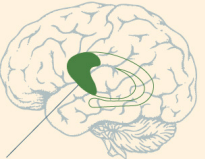
- Epigenetics – Physiology, Memory, Psychology, etc.
- ACEs (let's rethink of them as potential indicators instead of prescriptive, absolute ones)
- Trauma can happen at any life stage; the same goes for processing it



NORMAL INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PTSD MALFUNCTIONS IN THE BRAIN



How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

EXPLICIT MEMORY		IMPLICIT MEMORY	
SEMANTIC MEMORY	EPISODIC MEMORY	EMOTIONAL MEMORY	PROCEDURAL MEMORY
<p>What It Is The memory of general knowledge and facts.</p> <p>Example You remember what a bicycle is.</p> 	<p>What It Is The autobiographical memory of an event or experience – including the who, what, and where.</p> <p>Example You remember who was there and what street you were on when you fell off your bicycle in front of a crowd.</p> 	<p>What It Is The memory of the emotions you felt during an experience.</p> <p>Example When a wave of shame or anxiety grabs you the next time you see your bicycle after the big fall.</p> 	<p>What It Is The memory of how to perform a common task without actively thinking.</p> <p>Example You can ride a bicycle automatically, without having to stop and recall how it's done.</p> 
<p>How Trauma Can Affect It Trauma can prevent information (like words, images, sounds, etc.) from different parts of the brain from combining to make a semantic memory.</p> <p>Related Brain Area The temporal lobe and inferior parietal cortex collect information from different brain areas to create semantic memory.</p>  <p>Temporal lobe Inferior parietal lobe</p>	<p>How Trauma Can Affect It Trauma can shutdown episodic memory and fragment the sequence of events.</p> <p>Related Brain Area The hippocampus is responsible for creating and recalling episodic memory.</p>  <p>Hippocampus</p>	<p>How Trauma Can Affect It After trauma, a person may get triggered and experience painful emotions, often without context.</p> <p>Related Brain Area The amygdala plays a key role in supporting memory for emotionally charged experiences.</p>  <p>Amygdala</p>	<p>How Trauma Can Affect It Trauma can change patterns of procedural memory. For example, a person might tense up and unconsciously alter their posture, which could lead to pain or even numbness.</p> <p>Related Brain Area The striatum is associated with producing procedural memory and creating new habits.</p>  <p>Striatum</p>

(NICABM, 2017).

So, What *Are* Trauma-Informed Practices for Law?

In many ways trauma-informed practices are simpler than we often think they are, at least on the surface. Refining one's ability to utilize them takes time and repetition.

- Language Choice & Design
- Reading Body Language & Tone
- Patience; Procedural Modifications may prove useful (*are there other ways to reach the necessary outcome?*)
- "Bedside Manner"; Hospitable, Adaptable Environments & Behaviors
- Transparency & Clear Communication of Procedure, Expectations, etc.
- Maintaining Clients' Agency
- Consulting & coordinating with affiliated professionals (e.g. psychologists, therapists, self-care routines, etc.)

Know who you're working with!



Just as every client's case is unique, so too are their behaviors.

Even between individuals with similar experiences, expressions of trauma can – and *will* – look different!

Trauma-Informed Practice is critical,
but it doesn't *promise* an impact.

Instead, it *increases* the likelihood of positive affect.

III. Secondary Trauma & Re-traumatization

Understanding Secondary Trauma

- Secondary trauma is caused by an individual hearing about the firsthand trauma experiences of someone else.
- Clients are not the only ones who can experience secondary trauma!
- **Often mischaracterized as Burnout!**

Common Opportunities for Secondary Trauma:

- Hearing experiences of others / clients
- Sharing spaces with others experiencing trauma
- Working with clients experiencing trauma
- Unfavorable outcomes of cases involving traumatic events
- Frequent, intensive practice of empathy

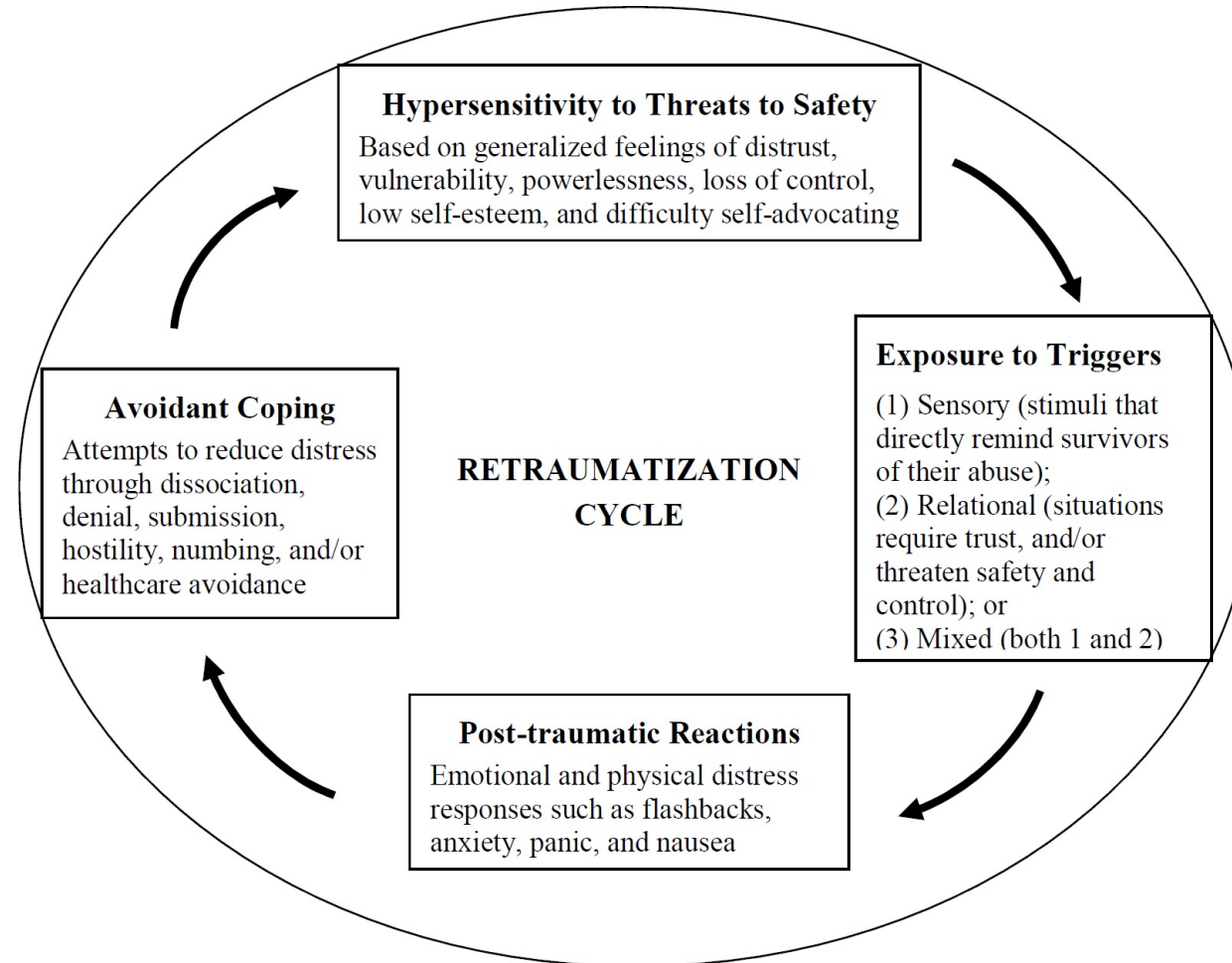
Understanding Re-Traumatization

- Similar to, yet different from, Secondary Trauma.
- Any experience, interaction, or cognitive process which re-exposes an individual to, or revisits, their trauma. These have variable effects on the individual.
- Clients are not the only ones who can be re-traumatized!

Common moments for Re-Traumatization:

- Testimony
- Cross-Examination
- Sharing Space with Perpetrator
- Revisiting experiences
- *CSA-specific: Delayed Disclosure*

The Re-Traumatization Process



(Dallam, 2010).

Trauma is both objective and subjective, and, therefore, is regularly at risk of being invalidated or misunderstood.

Protective Factors Against Secondary Trauma:

- Distance and Time
- Self-Care Techniques
- Social Connection
- Movement! (Physical Activity)
- Professional Help & Supervision
- Work-Life Balance



Recognizing mental health symptoms of secondary trauma



HYPO AROUSAL:

WATCH FOR THESE EARLY CUES:

- delayed responses
- "shutting down"
- emotional withdrawal



EXTREME DISTRESS:

- slowed breathing
- flat affect
- dissociation

The **Window of Tolerance** is an individual's unique, contextual capacity for how "much" they can take.

Just as there is a Window of Regulation for folks experiencing Primary Trauma, there's also one for Secondary Trauma!

HYPER AROUSAL:

WATCH FOR THESE EARLY CUES:

- heightened anxiety
- difficulty focusing
- tears
- rapid speech



EXTREME DISTRESS:

- hyperventilating
- extreme emotion
- panic attack

IV. Trauma Responses

Examples of trauma response?

Examples of trauma response:

"Ever since being robbed, I find myself looking over my shoulder when walking alone."

"Ever since being robbed, I find myself looking over my shoulder when walking alone. My chest feels tight, and I find myself walking faster than I usually would."

"I don't trust the judge to believe me."

"I am afraid of seeing my former boss in the courtroom."

"My former boss will say it was consensual, but it wasn't. I didn't resist because I was afraid."

"I am worried that I won't be able to say what happened because my old boss will be there."

"I no longer let others into my house."

"I do not see a future where I am romantically involved with anyone."

"I can't bring myself to drive since the accident."

"Since the accident, I clench the steering wheel and feel anxious whenever I drive."

"I don't remember much from my childhood."

Some Additional Post-Traumatic Reactions:

- Hypervigilance
- Difficulties with memory
- Dysregulation / strong emotions
- Defensive Behaviors
- Behavioral Pattern Modification
- Depression / Anxiety / etc.
- Codependency
- Dependency
- Stockholm Syndrome
- Expressions from Re-Traumatization Cycle

Q & A



Further Reading + Resources

- <https://childusa.org/toolkits/>
- <https://childusa.org/library/legal/>
- Forthcoming resources from CHILD USA
- Game Over Commission

- Our Handouts from Today

- *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma and Adversity*, by Nadine Burke Harris
- *It Didn't Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle*, by Mark Wolynn

For more information, visit www.childusa.org

Contact Us: info@childusa.org

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