TRAUMA 101:

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND EDUCATION

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Joe was a Kindergartner and was struggling with peer interactions, was easily frustrated, had difficulty paying attention, and could not sit still. Parents and Joe noticed his acting out happened more when he is “bored”. He had multiple office referrals and often required one-on-one help from the paraprofessional.
Fundamentals of Trauma

Impacts of Trauma

Responding to Trauma
Fundamentals of Trauma
WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is an overwhelming event that causes intense feelings of fear, helplessness, and horror.
One Time Traumatic Event

- Serious accident
- Painful medical Treatment
- Community Violence
- Natural disaster
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Physical or sexual assault

Acute Trauma
Multiple Traumatic Events Over Time

- Serious accident
- Painful medical Treatment
- Community Violence
- Natural disaster
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Physical or sexual assault

CHRONIC TRAUMA
Chronic Trauma Caused By a Trusting Adult

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Neglect

COMPLEX TRAUMA
WHAT IS TRAUMATIC STRESS?

This occurs when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or situations which overwhelm their ability to cope.
COMMON SIGNS OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

- Change in mood - irritability, moody, whiny
- Worry about safety
- Change in behavior
- Somatic complaints
- Hyperarousal
- Sleep disturbances
- Re-experiencing traumatic event
- Avoidance Behaviors
- Emotional numbing
For the first three years of his life Joe lived with his mom who had a serious drug problem. During this time Joe moved frequently and was often left with a neighbor or mom's friend. At age 3 he went to live with his grandmother who provided some stability. The summer before he started kindergarten Joe witnessed a violent assault of a neighbor in front of his house.
Impacts of Trauma
IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

- Difficulty managing fears, anxieties, and aggression
- Difficulty sustaining attention and problem-solving
- Difficulty with impulse control
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulties with learning
- Difficulties controlling startle response
- Behavioral shifts between overly fearful and aggressive
IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON ADOLESCENTS

- Difficulty managing fears, anxieties, and aggression
- Difficulty sustaining attention and problem-solving
- Difficulty with impulse control
- Risk-taking behavior
- Underachievement and school failure
- Poor decision-making
- Aggressive and delinquent activity
REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

- Aggressive or disruptive behavior
- Sleep problems
- Drug and Alcohol use
- Self Harm
- Over or under estimating danger
- Expecting to be treated poorly
- Difficulty with trust
- Increased risk of being revictimization
Family problems

Domestic violence
- History of suicidal ideation student/family
- History of physical/sexual abuse
- Incarceration of student/family member

Lack of caregiver involvement/support

Frequent daydreaming

Substance abuse student/family member

Physical health issues

Victim of bullying

Extreme mood fluctuations
Withdrawn/Isolated/Decrease in social interactions

High activity/Lack of concentration

Other

Anger management problems

Unexpected or exaggerated response when told 'no'
Divorce/separation

Attendance issues

Academic performance concerns

Inappropriate emotional response

Grief/loss issues

Self-esteem issues

Inappropriate sexual boundaries

Perpetrator of bullying

High levels of anxiety/Intense fear/Hypervigilance

Emotional detachment/Unresponsiveness/Numbness

Sleeping, eating, or elimination issues

History of self-harming behaviors

Emotional detachment, unresponsiveness, numbness

Extreme sadness

Depressive symptoms

Suspected drug/alcohol problems
LONG TERM IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES)

- Decades long study to understand the long-term impacts of trauma

- Began in 1995, with over 17,000 study participants answering surveys about their childhood
2/3 of those surveyed had at least 1 adverse childhood experience

The higher the ACES score the higher likelihood number of health problems in adulthood

ACES RESULTS
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
SECONDARY TRAUMA

Hearing someone's traumatic experience is difficult and can result in a trauma response in the listener.

Being around someone experiencing trauma stress can result in a trauma response in the parent, helper, teacher, etc.
Responding to Trauma
WE ARE ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION....

Medical Model

What is wrong with this person?

Injury Model

What happened to this person?
RESPONDING TO TRAUMA

First Step: Know Yourself

- Be aware of your own trauma history
- Watch for signs of secondary traumatic stress
- Self care
RESPONDING TO TRAUMATIC STRESS IN STUDENT

- Provide predictable routines
- Offer Choices when possible
- Recognize behavior may be related to trauma
- Be sensitive to environmental triggers
- Anticipate difficult times and provide additional support
- Avoid getting drawn into trauma re-enactment
- Set clear, firm limits
- Increase level of support and encouragement
- Make referral for additional support
RESPONDING TO TRAUMATIC STRESS IN STUDENT

Administrators:

- Create trauma sensitive policies and procedures
- Provide trauma training
- Collaborate with trauma specialists
Through a combination of changes at school and community supports, Joe was able to improve his behaviors in school (and home) and finished kindergarten. His interactions with peers improved and he had fewer office referrals. Joe was particularly proud to be able to have a birthday party at his house with some of his school friends and is looking forward to first grade.
RESO URC ES

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
www.nctsn.org
THANK YOU

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