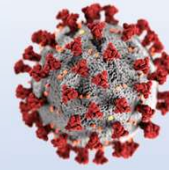


Trauma Informed Care in the COVID-19 Era



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Speaker Brief Biographies

- **Jennifer Takagishi, MD**—Professor of Pediatrics, University of South Florida (USF). Early Childhood Champion for the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
- **Susan Aronson, MD**—Retired Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania. Past member of the AAP Board of Directors.
- **Elaine Donoghue, MD**—Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, USF. Past co-chair of the AAP Council on Early Childhood.



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- Define “trauma” and list some of the impacts of trauma on young children.
- Define “adverse childhood events” (ACE) and “trauma informed care.” Explain how they are related.
- Explain how childhood trauma may be associated with “challenging behavior.” Suggest management strategies to mitigate these behaviors.
- Discuss resilience building for children and staff.
- Provide examples of how COVID-19 can revive the effects of prior trauma or create new trauma. Suggest ways to help with this trauma.
- List action steps you could take to help children, families, staff and others cope with trauma associated with COVID-19.

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Definition of Childhood Trauma

“The experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects.”

National Institute of Mental Health--<https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Trauma occurs when **frightening events or situations overwhelm** a child or adult's ability to cope or deal with what has happened.

Office of Head Start

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



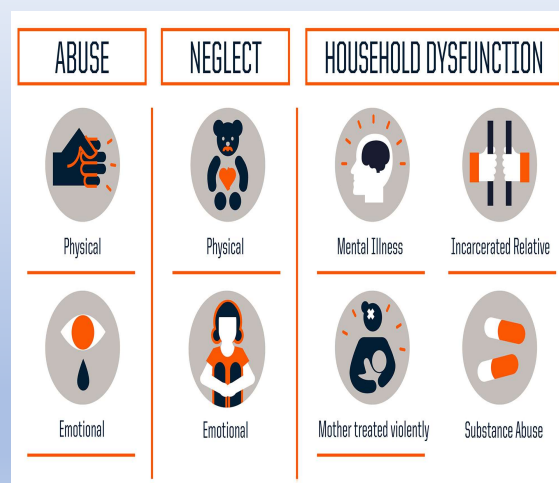
- Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood.
- Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress.

- CDC website <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>
- Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. V J Felitti, R F Anda, D Nordenberg, D F Williamson, A M Spitz, V Edwards, M P Koss, J S Marks. Am J Prev Med. 1998 May; 14(4):245-58

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Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member



https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/ttb_aces_consequences.pdf

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Other Proposed ACEs

- Involvement in the foster care system
- Bullying
- Loss of parent or guardian due to death, deportation or migration
- Medical trauma
- Exposure to community violence
- Discrimination due to race, sexual orientation, place of birth, disability or religion
- Poverty

Source (for first 6 bullets): The Center for Youth Wellness Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CYW ACE-Q) developed through the Bayview Child Health Center partnership.

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Most Common Symptoms of Trauma in Children



FRAYED (and at the end of your rope)

- F–Fits, Frets and Fear
- R –Regulation disorders
- A–Attachment disorders
- Y–Yelling and yawning
- E–Educational delays
- D–Defeated

Source: AAP Trauma and Resilience ECHO,
Heather Forkey, MD, FAAP

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Resiliency Skills – the THREADS of Childhood

- T–Thinking and learning brain
- H–Hope
- R–Regulation or self control
- E–Efficacy
- A–Attachment
- D–Developmental skill mastery
- S–Social connectedness



Source: AAP Trauma and Resilience ECHO, Heather Forkey, MD, FAAP

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What Happens with Childhood Trauma

- T**-Thinking and learning brain – *shuts down*
- H**-Hope –to deal with present danger, looking ahead-- *shut down*
- R**-Regulation or self control – *shuts down* -need impulses to deal with threat
- E**-Efficacy – *lost* – reacting to situation, not controlling it
- A**-Attachment – acting alone, *not available in toxic stress*
- D**-Developmental skill mastery – *learning shut down*
- S**-Social connectedness – *alone with threat*

Source: AAP Trauma and Resilience ECHO, Heather Forkey, MD, FAAP

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Trauma-Informed Approach

The 4 R's:

Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and pathways to recovery

Recognizes trauma signs and symptoms


Responds by integrating awareness about trauma into all facets of the system

Resists re-traumatization of trauma impacted individuals by decreasing the occurrence of unnecessary triggers

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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How Early Educators are Key Players



The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.

Bruce D Perry

PICTUREQUOTES.COM

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How Are Trauma and Challenging Behaviors Linked?

- Dr. Susan Aronson will discuss how trauma can lead to challenging behaviors.
- These challenging behaviors require a unique skill set to manage.



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Masks

- Wearing masks is difficult for young children.
- It is recommended for children older than two years.

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Frequent Hand Washing



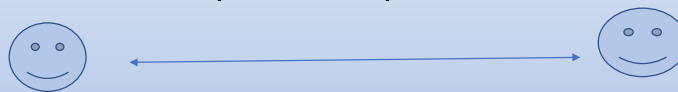
- Lather with soap and water
- Use a 20 second rub (Count “bubble one, bubble two, bubble 3 bubble 19, bubble 20)



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Physical (NOT Social) Distancing

- Stay 3-6 feet apart = Physical Distance for travel of airborne droplets that spread COVID-19 virus.



- Social Engagement is **IMPORTANT!!**
- Keeping physical separation of 3-6 feet requires more active supervision. Monitor closely.

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Traumatic Drop-Off and Pick-Up Protocol

Staff less able to meet the socio-emotional needs of individual children in transitions to/from family



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Examples: How COVID-19 Affects Management of Challenging Behavior

Before COVID-19

- Consistency achievable
- Developmentally appropriate expectations
- Hugs OK – no need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Since COVID-19

- Lots of new rules/cues and developmentally challenging routines
 - ✓ Need for more (& better) hand washing
 - ✓ Children >2 wearing masks
- Restrictions on physical comforting of children and colleagues

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How to Approach Challenging Behavior



A child who can succeed will succeed - unless the child is being asked to do something that is too hard.

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Support Success

Provide sufficient support for a child to be successful in situations that tend to be difficult.

- Encourage frequent interaction of staff with parents
- Facilitate child's successful interactions with peers
- Reward (don't bribe) for success

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Most Behavior is Learned

- Imitation (Modeling)
- Young children repeat behaviors that get them attention
- Positive attention for desired behavior is best way to prevent/correct problem behaviors



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Tools for Successful Behavior Management

Environment

- Spaces for large, small, group or individual activities
- Arrange furniture to discourage running and offer cues for places to do desired activities

Systematic Use of Adult Attention

- Do not give children attention for misbehavior
- Increase predictability, schedules, routines
- Limit number & use of rules (no more than 5). Encourage children to help make rules & reminders of rules
- Offer only OK choices

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Tools to Manage Challenging Behavior from COVID-19 Trauma

- Visual clues for expected behaviors
- More large muscle activities
- Help toddlers and older children wear masks
- Children and staff practice good hand washing together
- Use words for feelings: “sad”; “mad”; “happy”; “glad”



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Managing Challenging Behavior

- Briefly offer praise for desired behavior as often as 4-5 times per hour
- Ignore mildly inappropriate behavior
- Continue positive response to appropriate behavior
(Persist despite any increased inappropriate behavior = testing for 2-4 weeks)
- Seek same approach at home, child care & other settings

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What If Misbehavior Still Occurs?

Take Time to Check:

- Is child getting 5x attention for desired vs inappropriate behavior?
- Are rules clear and consistently reinforced?
- Are expectations too high or too low?
- Is staff/family catching & rewarding good behavior with attention, or visible recognition (e.g. stars on a chart; no bribe)?
- Address psychosocial stressors – Refer for child/family help

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Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to recover mentally and emotionally to baseline after a stressful experience.



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Factors Associated with Resilience in Children

- Caring adult(s)
- Role models of self-regulation
 - Evidence shows that our response to stressors can be more important than the stressor itself
- Child's ability to self-regulate
- Child's capabilities- social-emotional, developmental, and problem-solving

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Self-Care

- Know your triggers and prepare yourself for them
- Sleeping well, eating healthy, physical activity
- Breathing
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Journaling
- Find a circle of support
 - In work
 - Outside of work
 - Professional help if needed



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Example 1 - Daniel

- Daniel is a four year old who had a grandparent who died recently from COVID-19. He is now showing fearful and clinging behaviors.
- What can you do to help him?

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Supportive Actions for Daniel

- Help children understand and name their emotions
- Help children express their needs
- Create as much stability as possible
- Create quiet space if possible
- Reinforce behaviors

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Daniel - Part 2

- Daniel later tells his teacher that he is afraid that he will die too.
- What can you say or do to help him?

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Supportive Actions for Daniel - Part 2

- Gather yourself
- Reassure him and state that you are glad that he shared that concern
- Tell him about all the things that the school is doing to help him stay safe
- Check in periodically later to see how he's doing
- Debrief with others, especially if the question brought up emotions in you
- Debrief with his parent/caregivers and offer resources

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Example 2 - Family Challenges

- Sofia is a 3 year old and her mother recently lost her job due to COVID-19. You have noticed that Sofia's mother is tearful and distracted. Sofia is also now more withdrawn.
- What can you do to help?



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Example 2 - Supporting Sofia

- Utilize mental health resources available to you-
 - Behavioral health consultants if available to your program.
 - Community mental health resources for parents
 - Family counseling
 - Pediatricians and health care providers
 - Home visitation resources
- Other resources- food banks, housing, transportation
- Coordinate resources if possible

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Example 3 - Chris

Four year old Chris just returned to school after his family experienced a “rough time.” He is refusing to wash his hands or wear a mask, and he has been pushing other children.



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Supportive Actions for Chris

- Extra reminders to respect personal space at the beginning of the day
- Increased attention to catch him being good
- Have some 1:1 talking time if possible
- Explore and name his emotions
- Increase visual clues to reinforce new behaviors like masks and hand washing
- Decide on the most important rules, make them clear and reinforce them

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More Actions for Chris

- Encourage joint problem-solving
- Help him develop a sense of mastery
- Patience as routines are re-established
- Express your own challenges and talk out loud about how you are going to problem-solve them
- Continue to reach out to the family to provide resources and support

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Wrap Up

- Trauma can manifest in multiple ways in children and can be triggered by events such as the COVID epidemic and its effects on themselves and their caregivers.
- A trauma-informed perspective can build resilience in our children and families, as well as ourselves as caregivers.
- COVID-19 can cause trauma which can lead to challenging behavior.
- We can use effective tools in early education settings to manage behavior related to trauma caused by COVID-19.

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Wrap Up

- We can encourage resilience in children by
 - Providing safe, nurturing relationships
 - Creating a stable environment
 - Building children’s capacity for self-regulation
 - Helping children to know and name their emotions
 - Helping children to respond to their emotions in healthy ways
- Self-care includes
 - Building self-awareness
 - Practicing healthy habits
 - Creating circles of support

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Resources

- NCECHW and ECLKC-
 - Understanding Stress and Resilience in Young Children
 - Mental Health Resources-
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/trauma-adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-understanding-basics>
- My211florida.org
- <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/ECMHC.html>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network - www.nctsn.org
- Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – www.ECMHC.org
- National Center Pyramid Model Innovations- <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Informed-Care-Checklist.pdf>

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Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - Vital Signs handout <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/ACEs/>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/fastfact.html>
 - COVID-19 guidance for child care - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>
 - CDC Hand washing posters (English and Spanish) - <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>
 - FL Department of Health - <http://www.floridahealth.gov/>
 - Videos- Breaking Through-<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-stress-resilience-young-children-video-series>
 - ECELS (includes a Webinar module on Managing Challenging Behaviors) - <http://ecels-healthychildcarepa.org>

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Additional Resources

- Healthychildren.org (also available in Spanish)
 - How Children Understand Death and What You Should Say
 - Childhood Grief- When To Seek Additional Help
- AAP materials and policy statements
 - *Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Lifelong Consequences of Trauma* (Healthy Foster Care America) <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Pages/Trauma-Guide.aspx>
 - *Early Childhood Adversity, Toxic Stress and the Role of the Pediatrician and The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress* (policy statement)
 - *Addressing Early Childhood Emotional and Behavioral Problems* (policy statement and technical report)
 - *Managing Chronic Health Needs in Child Care and Schools, 2nd Edition*

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Contact Information

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