

Special Education and Children with Attachment Trauma – Part 2: Interventions & Strategies

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www.attachmenttraumanetwork.org





Julie Beem



Melissa Sadin

Attachment & Trauma Network

- 20 years old (1995)
- Support – Education – Advocacy
- The **VOICE** of traumatized children & their families
 - Therapeutic parenting
 - Trauma sensitive schools
 - Trauma-informed; Attachment-focused therapies and supports
 - Public awareness
- **Trauma Sensitive Schools Initiative**
 - TSS Think Tank
 - Training
 - Advocacy for Safe, Supportive Schools

ATN

Learning Center

- www.attachu.org
- Educating Traumatized Children Summit recordings
- Essentials of Therapeutic Parenting Webinars





Developmental/Complex/Attachment Trauma

Prolonged exposure to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, witnessing violence and/or substance abuse, and/or separation from primary caregiver or biological mother.

-Dr. Bessel van der Kolk



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)



The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

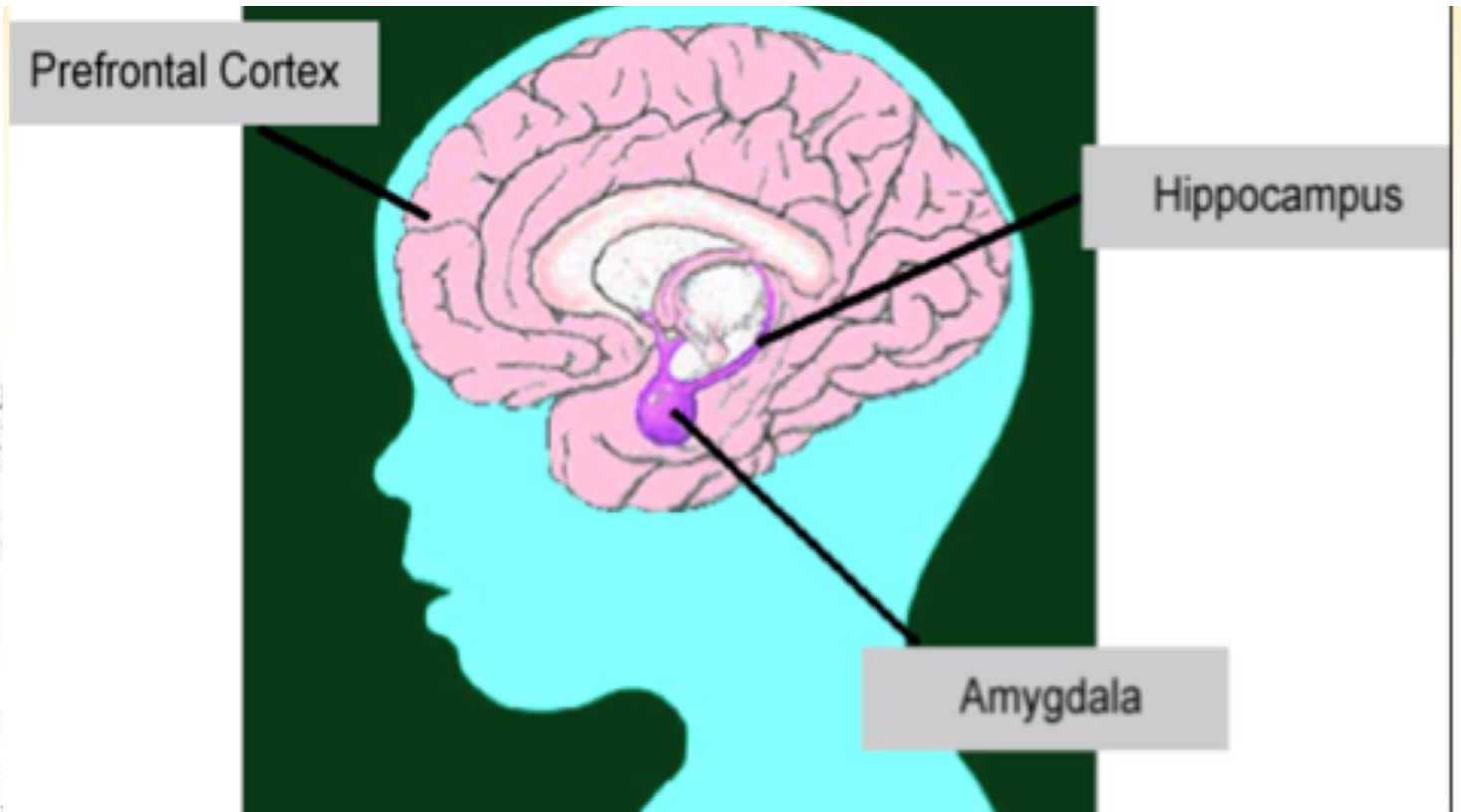
- Over 64% of the population has at least one ACE.
- Dose Response Relationship

Types of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Image courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Neurological Impact



Interested in more about trauma's impact to developing brains?
ATN's **Essential Conversations Webinar Series** includes **"What's Going on in There?"** a conversation with **Dr. Ken Huey and Julie Beem** about how early trauma impacts our children's brains, and their behaviors.



Impact of Trauma on Ability to Learn

- Processing speed – learning to read
 - Visual
 - Auditory
 - Language
- Memory
- Executive function
 - One vs multi-step directions
 - Organizing belongings and/or approach to a task.
- Receptive and expressive language delays
 - Abstract and Pragmatic Language difficulties
 - Sarcasm
 - Insinuations
- Object Constancy



Impact on Social/Emotional Development

- Struggle to regulate emotions
- Feel unsafe...respond with
 - *Fight*
 - *Flight*
 - *Freeze*
 - *Tend and Befriend*
- Misinterpret social cues...to the negative
- Lack empathy/compassion
- Pervasively negative self view and world view



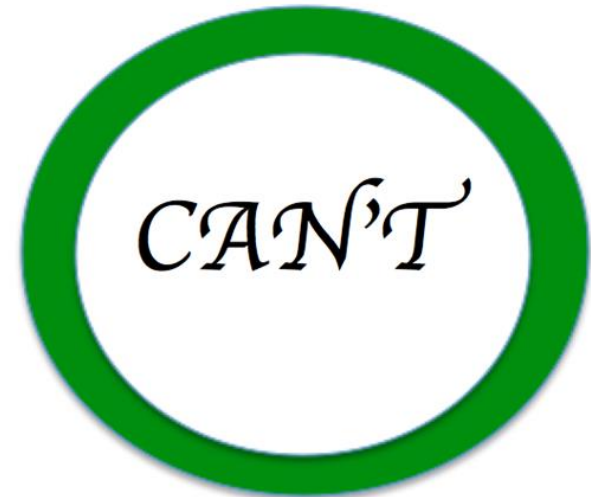
Impact on Sensory Development

- Over or Under Response to:
 - *Sounds*
 - *Lights*
 - *Touch*
 - *Pain*
- Inability to express what body is feeling:
 - *Hunger*
 - *Exhaustion*
- Hyper or hypo arousal to both sensory stimuli and trauma triggers





Paradigm Shift





Inside Out Thinking





Thinking of your child as
behaving badly
disposes you to think
of punishment.

Thinking of your child as
*struggling to handle
something difficult*
encourages you to help
them through their
distress



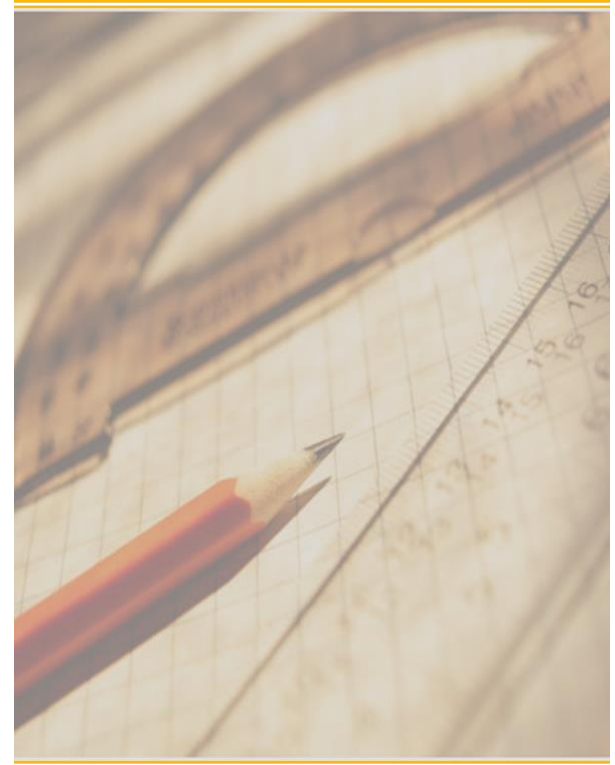
Remember...

- Behavior is communication
- Early childhood trauma impairs
 - *Ability to regulate*
 - *Ability to connect*
 - *Ability to trust/feel safe*
- Discipline is about teaching. Our children need to learn:
 - *To regulate their emotions*
 - *To connect and stay connected by learning to repair a relationship*
 - *That making a mistake doesn't make them "bad" –
REDUCE SHAME*

Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA)



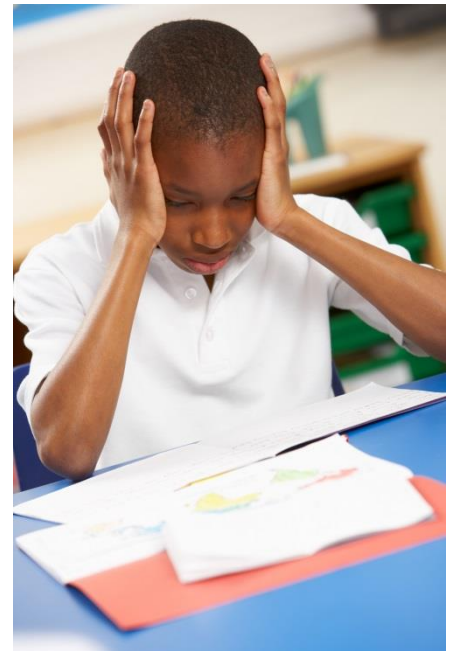
- Observations should take place over time - Days, times, weeks
- Analysis of behaviors should be trauma informed
- Look for can't vs Won't behavior
- Everytime ask: **How do you know this?**





"Child is Attention-Seeking/Hyper Active..."

- Triggered and is in FLIGHT
- Hypervigilant
- Anxious
- Not able to process
- Sensory overload
- Seeking adult to help co-regulate





"Child is Avoiding the Task – Trying to Escape doing Work"

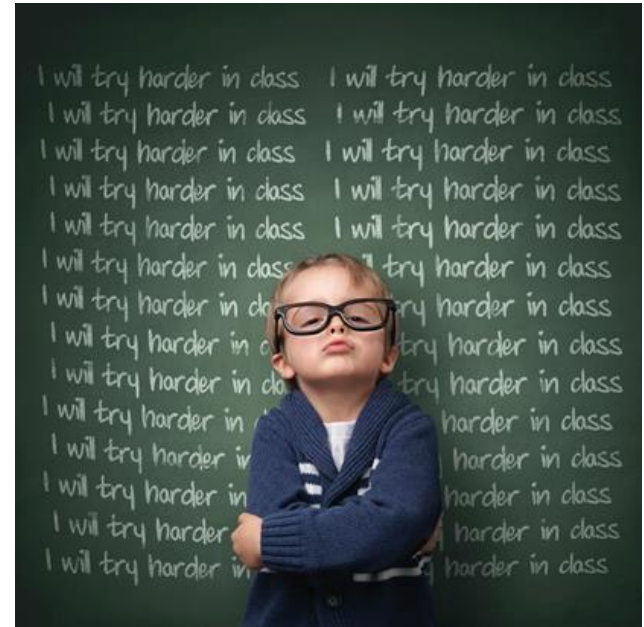
- Triggered and is in FREEZE
- Hypervigilant
- Anxious
- Not able to process
- Misperceives the situation...to the negative
- Sensory overload
- Filled with shame about making a mistake



"Child Challenges Authority – is Disrespectful"



- Triggered and is in FIGHT
- Dysregulated and is STUCK
- Anxious
- Not able to process
- Sensory overload
- Filled with shame about making a mistake





"Child is Manipulative"

"Child has Few Friends/Hyper-Social"

"Child is Just Fine at School"

- Tend & Befriend – RAD/Borderline
- Holds it together as long as she can – then dysregulates at home

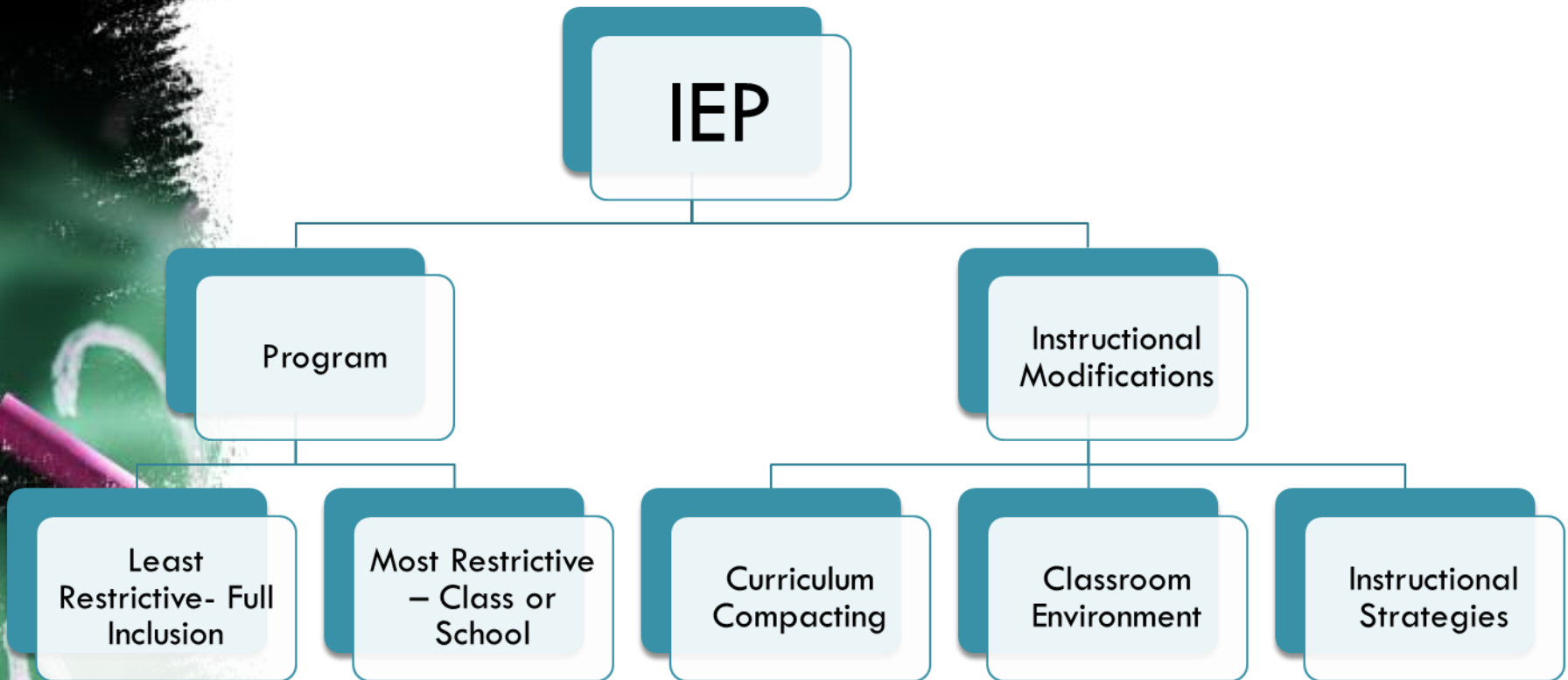




504 Plans for Children of Trauma

- Typical Accommodations
 - ▣ Seating
 - ▣ Prompting
 - ▣ Extended Time
 - ▣ Use of the computer
 - ▣ Modified HW
 - ▣ Behavior Plans (Avoid Behavior Modification)
- *Make sure the modification fits the child
- *Monitor effectiveness of each modification
- *Watch for fidelity to the plan

IEPs for Children of Trauma





What is Curriculum Compacting?

- Goals in the IEP should capture the essential questions in the curriculum.
- Essential Questions are the over arching questions that guide the activities of a unit.
- Credit for a course or unit can be based on the most important rather than all of the activities.
- Objectives are from a computer generated list. Make sure they make sense for your child.
- Understand the developmental age of the child and align the goals accordingly. (ie., inference and/or pragmatic language)



Trauma Sensitive Instruction

- Safety – Provide activities that are achievable and can be completed with success. Watch for pragmatic or abstract language in directions and activities.
- Trustworthiness – Consistent tone, behavior, and routine. Prepare them for change / transition.
- Collaboration - accept approximation, meet them half way, modify length and/or content, “How can we work together to....”
- Choice – Weighted choice,
- Empowerment – “Look at what you have done!”, “I noticed that you...”, Identify cause and effect relationships

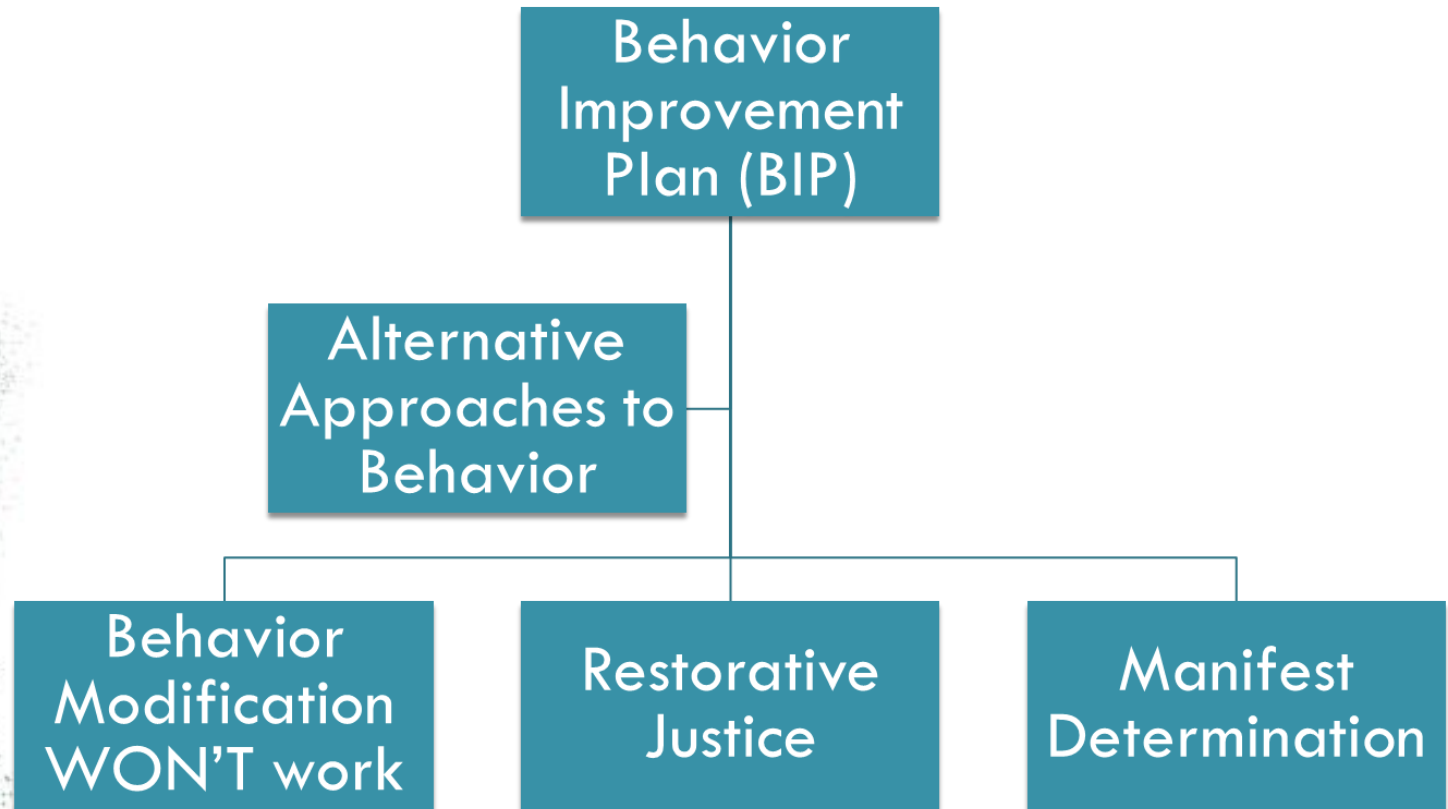
Trauma Sensitive Classroom Environment



- Sensory impact
 - *Lighting*
 - *Seating*
 - *Sounds*
- Physical changes to quell hypervigilance
- Guiding social time
- No unstructured time
- Everyone knows the plan – consistency
- Understand the role of shame (threatening)
- FELT Safety at all costs



IEPs and Behavior



Let's Review...Why doesn't Behavior Mod work?



- Trust cycle
- Triggers amygdala driven freeze/fright/flight response.
- For TTB, it may appear to work initially, but will not improve behavior over time.
- Requires self-regulation
- Implies won't, not can't
- False sense of empowerment can cause more harm than good.



What Does Work?

- Planning ahead for what the school will do if the child becomes dysregulated
 - *Where's the safe place (practice getting back into the classroom)*
- Connecting and co-regulating
- Providing consistent structure & routine
- Safety, Trustworthiness, Cooperation, Collaboration, Empowerment



Resources

- Educating Traumatized Children Summit – www.attachu.org/resources/summit/
- Compassionate Schools
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- Oil & Water: The Attachment Disordered Child in School – Lawrence Smith, LCSW-C, www.attachmentdisordermaryland.com
- Trauma Smart Preschool program @ Crittenton Center in Kansas City - <http://traumasmart.org/>
- Mind UP <http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>
- *The Whole Brain Child*– Dr. Dan Siegel & Tina Bryson
- *Reaching and Teaching Children who Hurt* – Susan Craig, Ph.D.
- *The Explosive Child & Lost in School* – Ross Greene, Ph.D.
- *Help for Billy* – Heather Forbes, LCSW



ATN Happenings

- Members Only Chat nights – 2nd Tuesdays @ 8:30 -10 pm eastern (5:30 – 7 pm pacific)

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/643465677>

➤ November 10

➤ December 8

- Board Elections & Annual Meeting – Tues, October 27 @ 9 pm eastern (6 pm pacific)
- Hosting “Is it Attachment Disorder or Not?” – Forrest Lien of Institute for Attachment and Child Development – Thurs, Nov 5 @ 12:30 pm eastern

<https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/3763088811658694402>

- December issue of ***Therapeutic Parenting Journal*** – Topic: Educating the Traumatized Child



Questions

