



## HEALING THE INSIDE CHILD

Brain Based and Wellness  
Approaches with Challenging  
Children

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## AGENDA

- Effects of Stress and Adverse Child Experience on the Brain/Body system
- Creating “Still Waters” through Relationship and Positive Environment
- Video Case Study: Traumatized Child in Adoptive Care
- Regulation, Resiliency and Healing Strategies
- Charismatic and Conscious Caregiving

## Stress Response Sequence

1. Arrest / Startle Response
2. Scanning /Evaluating
3. Mobilization
4. Completion of Self-Protective Response
5. Discharge of Energy
6. Relaxation Response Returns.
7. Sense of Mastery



REGULATION



DYSREGULATION



# PRONKING !



## POLY VAGAL THEORY

### **Safe and Non-Threatening Environment » Social Communication & Engagement** **CRUISE CONTROL**

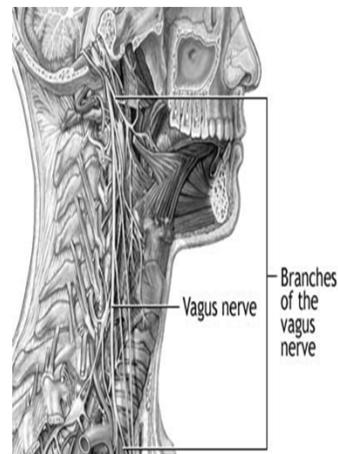
Phylogenetically youngest myelinated vagus nerve  
Engages parasympathetic long term survival Returns normative restorative action and fosters calm- Maintains ongoing homeostasis - Supports social communication and engagement activities- Promotes growth

### **Dangerous Environment » Mobilization** **GAS PEDAL**

Phylogenetically older sympathetic-adrenal circuits  
Engages sympathetic first line of defense subsystem  
Defensive fight and flight mechanisms necessary

### **Life-Threatening Environment » Immobilization** **EMERGENCY BRAKE**

Phylogenetically oldest unmyelinated vagus nerve  
Engages last line of defense subsystem - Feigns death - Behavioral shut-down/ or freeze



### **Hypo-Arousal**



**Depression**  
**Resistance**  
**Defiance**  
**Withdrawal**  
**Numbness**  
**Isolation**

## **Traumatic Stress**

### **Hyper - Arousal**



**Anger/Aggression**  
**Hyperactivity**  
**Fidgety/Anxious**  
**Flight- Panic**  
**Fight- Terror**  
**Hyper vigilance**

**Thirty five of the best  
developmental scientists in  
the US studied why we  
haven't been able to  
improve school trajectories  
since the 1960's.**



➤ **What do you think was the number one  
reason they came up?**

## **Shock Trauma**

**War/Genocide/Acts of  
Terrorism**

**Natural Disasters**

**Homicide/Suicide**

**Debilitating Injury or Illness**

**Rape or Personal Assault**

**Car Accidents/Fires/Sudden  
Loss**





## TRAUMA THEMES

I feel numb  
I miss all the time  
It was all my fault  
The world is against me  
I feel no one loves me  
I have to watch my back  
Nothing seems to happen  
Nobody will protect me



Healing isn't focused on behavior: It is focused on the underlying themes and sensations at a body level

I am all alone  
I can't sleep  
I feel hopeless and helpless  
I feel a lot of pain and hurt  
I am angry and want revenge  
I can't concentrate in school  
I feel nervous all the time  
I can't trust anyone  
I have a lot of nightmares

**A.C.E.S (Adverse Child Events)**  
**Events indicated in Developmental Trauma Disorder**

- ⊗ Abuse and Neglect
- ⊗ Fear-Based Parenting
- ⊗ Out of Home Systems
- ⊗ Frequent Moves
- ⊗ Illness/Death/Hospital Experiences
- ⊗ Birth Complications
- ⊗ Humiliating or deeply disturbing experience
- ⊗ Media and Techno Stress
- ⊗ Divorce/ Blended Families
- ⊗ The 3 Year Blueprint
- ⊗ Microwave Society



- ⊗ Parental Depression
- ⊗ Needs Left Unmet
- ⊗ Separation w/ Caregiver
- ⊗ Childhood Illness/Surgery
- ⊗ Peer to Peer Aggression
- ⊗ Emotional Violence/ Alienation
- ⊗ Birth order
- ⊗ School Pressure/Competition
- ⊗ Gang Related Activity
- ⊗ Poverty
- ⊗ Villages on Fire
- ⊗ Environmental toxins

**THE THREE YEAR BLUEPRINT**

**Attention:** Spending time with the child, displaying age appropriate interaction. Singing songs, talking in a soothing and reciprocal voice, eye contact.

**Affection:** Holding the child gently, soothing tactile stimulation, rocking, kissing, carrying, hugging. loving gestures and mirroring.

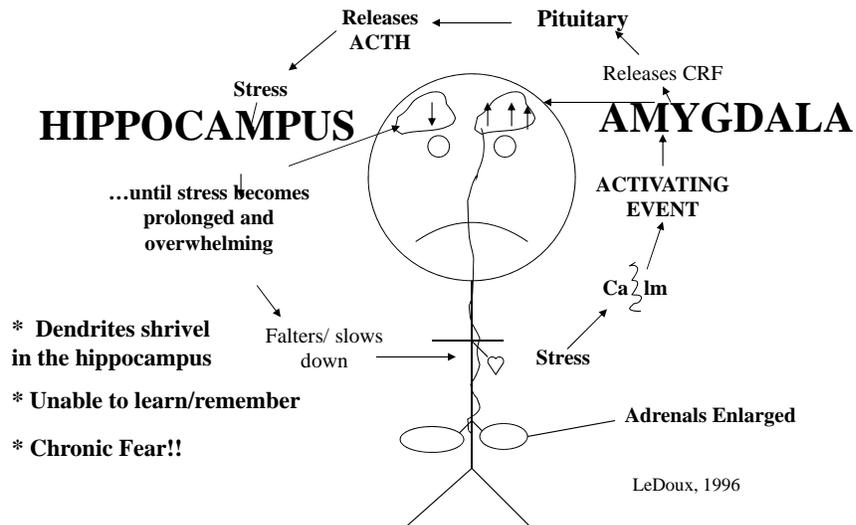
**Attunement-** aligning our internal states with the child's state. Being aware and responsive to internal cues.



# Oxytocin

- Anti-stress hormone
- Creates trust and calms the brain.
- Calms aggression associated with testosterone
- Bonds humans at a chemical level
- Pre-cursor to regulation
- Regulation is the pre-cursor to attachment
- Eye contact, laughter, a song, a caring touch

## The Terrified Child





## *Regulatory Capacity*

- Foundation of resiliency
- Ability to modulate internal stress

## *Regulatory Incapacity or Delay*



## **BRAIN PLASTICITY**

Plasticity, or neuroplasticity, is the lifelong ability of the brain to reorganize neural pathways based on new experiences

## NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL FEEDBACK LOOP

**Mirror Neurons** “the human brain creates representations of other’s mind”

**Limbic Resonance-** energy flow between emotional states. feeling felt by another person

### Loving Presences

Profound biological impact

Harnesses the brain-to-brain link to help kids learn to regulate

How? Relationships that nullify the stress response.

## Symptoms of Un-Discharged *Traumatic Stress*



**Stuck on “ON”**

- Chronic Fear and Anxiety
- Aggression, Rage, Tantrums.
- Sense of Urgency
- Fight or Flight Sensations
- Hyper Active / Hyper Vigilant



**The Zone  
SELF-REGULATION**

- Calm Body and Mind State
- Contentment and Joy
- Focus and Concentration
- High Performance
- Connection and Empathy



**Stuck on ‘OFF’**

- Chronic Fear and Anxiety
- Depression and Sadness
- Withdrawal and Isolation
- Concentration/ Attention Problems
- Sleep and Eating Disorders.

**Neo Cortex- Thinking Brain**

abstract reasoning, creativity, respect, cause and effect thinking

Activities- social exploration, complex conversation, storytelling, performing arts, formal education, cognitive behavioral interventions, goal formulation, academic achievement, cause and effect learning



**Limbic Region- Emotional Brain**

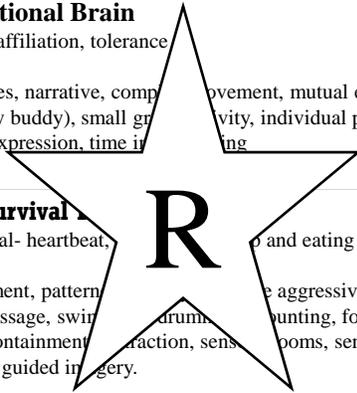
affect regulation, empathy, affiliation, tolerance

Activities- social experiences, narrative, complex movement, mutual engagement, creative arts, parallel play, friends (mature steady buddy), small group play, individual play therapy, psychotherapy, feelings charts, emotional expression, time in nature

**Brain Stem Region- Survival**

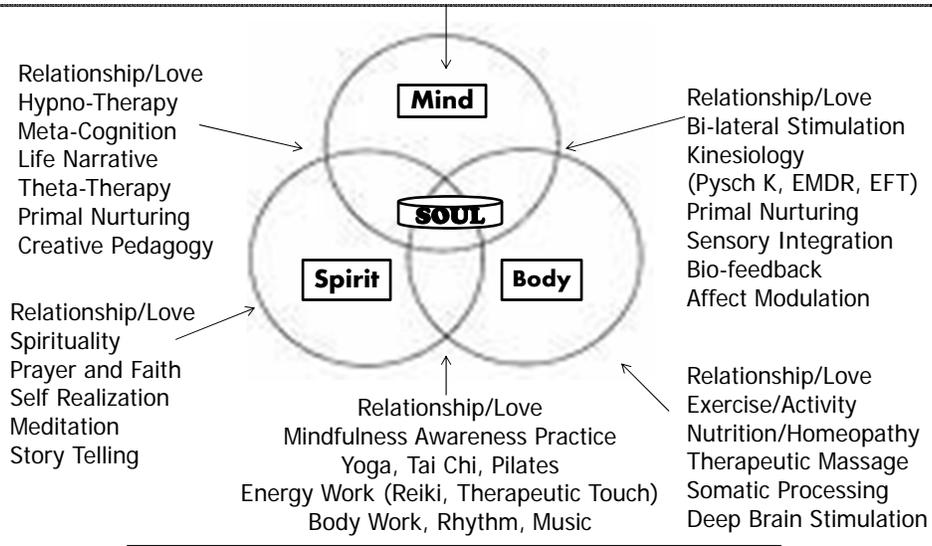
freeze fight and flight, arousal- heartbeat, breathing and eating states, reactive

Activities- rhythmic movement, patterned movement, (e.g. drumming, counting, focusing, belly breathing, replacement experiences, containment, interaction, sensory rooms, sensory boxes. music, relaxation practices, guided imagery.



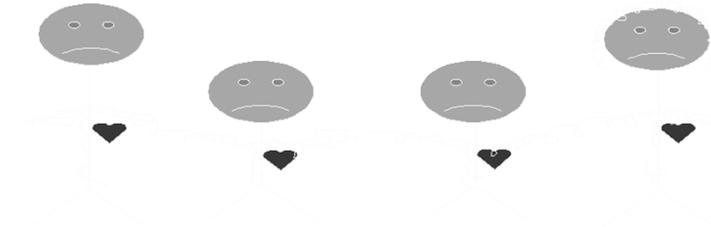
**Traditional Cortical Bias Approach**

Talk Therapy/Cognitive Behavioral/Behavior Management  
 Psycho Education/ Symptom Focused/Left Brain School Curriculum



**SUBCORTICAL INTEGRATIVE APPROACH  
 FOCUS IS ON THE CORE ISSUE OF REGULATION**

*If mom ain't happy, nobody's happy!*



*"If one member of the family is dysregulated,  
everybody in the family is dysregulated."*

### **SELF EXPLORATION**

Powerful predictor "the coherence of the care gives life narrative"

Making sense of our own childhood experiences

If you can't understand the source of your own pain, how can you understand the pain of your students

Mindfulness: conscious choices vs. automatic pilot.

"The dynamic of engagement" How a child experiences the adult





### Safe Place

- ❖ Space and solitude, relaxes the nervous system.
- ❖ A safe haven that provides space and solitude
- ❖ Quite, clean and clutter free
- ❖ Home like vs. institutional like.
- ❖ Keep sensory tools available
- ❖ Psychological Space



### Safe Face

- ❖ Your smile, your voice, and your touch make a student feel safe.
- ❖ Allows a student to express their vulnerabilities and fears
- ❖ Face-to-face, "on the floor time," LISTENS to the student.
- ❖ Predictable/ Intervenes early
- ❖ Attuned to the immediate needs
- ❖ Has a strong yet calming presence

#### Why is a safe face and safe place crucial?

*They disengage the fight or flight reaction*

## TIME IN

- ❖ The adult invites the child to a time-in place or brings the child closer to them for positive neuro-physiological feedback.
- ❖ Promotes partnership between adult & child, during which communication is open
- ❖ Focuses on regaining regulatory capacity, between all concerned rather than on right or wrong.
- ❖ Connects vs. Disconnect
- ❖ Helps to strengthen a fragile or disorganized stress response system.



## Transitional Time Ins



## Alpha/ Theta Conditioning

### **Beta 15- 3 HZ**

Awake, normal alert, busy, short term memory being used consciousness

### **Alpha 9-14 Hz**

Relaxed calm meditation, long term memory activated, visualization, right brain enters

### **Theta 4-8 Hz**

Deep relaxation and meditation, high creativity and insight, accessibility to sub conscious

### **Delta 1-3 Hz**

Deep, dreamless sleep. minimum brain activity



## *Restorative Time-In*

- Modulating Hypo and Hyper Arousal*
- Anchoring: The Relaxation Response*
- Build Adult Alliances: Mutual engagement*
- Equip: Self-Regulation skills*
- Meaningful participation/plan- do - review goals*
- Wellness Cards*
- Parental/ Care Giver Follow up*
- Key: Skilled and Trained Facilitator/s*

## **CONTAINMENT**

Decreasing the stimuli in the environment  
that could be threatening for a child and  
beyond their regulatory capacity

Predictability and Structure  
Safety Zones

## *Bilateral Stimulation*

Left and right brain integration

- ⊗ When brains are stimulated bilaterally, a redistribution of energy occurs creating regulation
- ⊗ Schools generally emphasis left-hemisphere over right.
- ⊗ Remember the right brain is important for self regulation, a sense of self, and empathic connections with others
- ⊗ Right brain development and integration with the left is crucial for the well-being of at-risk children

## *Affect Tolerance*

*“Entering the Pain Pathway”*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⊗ Locating internal feeling state</li><li>⊗ Emotional communication</li><li>⊗ Sorrow shared is cut in half</li><li>⊗ Focusing and modulating</li><li>⊗ Resonant regulation</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⊗ Look at the big picture</li><li>⊗ Know your sore spots</li><li>⊗ Keep mindful of your tolerance levels.</li><li>⊗ Personal wellness plan</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## **MOVEMENT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

- Free movement opportunities
- Movement to music
- Walk or jog on pre-arranged course
- Brief walk every 90 minutes accompanied.
- Help with A/V equip, chairs, maintenance supplies/school office helper/run errands
- Adventure Therapy
- Tai Chi, Pilates, Yoga, Martial Arts

## **PLAY**

**(Crucial for healthy brain development)**

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.

Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.

When play is child driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, learn to work in groups and resolve conflicts.

Outside play has been reduced by 50% over the last 25 years (hurried life styles, educational changes, passive entertainment, lack of safe communities).



### Mindfulness Techniques

- ❖ Belly breathing
- ❖ Progressive muscle relaxation
- ❖ Music
- ❖ Rhythm movement
- ❖ Walking meditation
- ❖ Nature meditation
- ❖ Imagery
- ❖ Massage
- ❖ Sensory items
- ❖ Body scan
- ❖ Heart to heart pulse

## Peaceful Mind Program

### ❑ **Unit I: Creating Safety and Connection**

Acceptance and Bonding  
 Sharing /Building Trust  
 Grounding Activities  
 Thera-play  
 Adventure Activity (Joy and Fun)

### ❑ **UNIT II: Focusing and Calming**

Learning How Our Brains Work  
 Understanding Mindful Attention Focusing  
 Awareness: The Core Practice  
 Practicing the Relaxation Response  
 Resources for nervous system balance

### ❑ **UNIT III: Sensory Work**

Sensory Inventories  
 Calming Audio Experiences  
 Peaceful Visuals and Visualization  
 Mindful Tasting and Smelling  
 Rhythm and Movement



### ❑ **UNIT IV: Healthy Expression**

Story Telling/Listening Skills  
 Dance and Theatre  
 Creative Art and Drawing  
 Expressive Literature  
 Savoring Happy Experiences

### ❑ **UNIT V: Taking Action Mindfully**

Healthy Thinking  
 Choosing Happy Thoughts  
 Acting with Gratitude  
 Celebrating Differences  
 Performing Acts of Kindness  
 Taking Mindful Action in Our Community

## *Acknowledge the Humanity Of a Child*

Stop Diverting your eyes. Greet them every day

They have a first name and it's not "You"

Notice the little things they do

Quick gestures of friendliness/random acts of  
kindness

Respect even when their dis-respecting

Imagine yourself as a father or a mother to the child

## *MICRO -CONNECTORS*

**Self-determination:** "You go right ahead if that is what you want"

**Self impact:** "How did you get that done!"

**Material impact:** "You can build a lot of things with your new tool kit" "

**Acknowledge effort:** "I can see a lot of work went in this"

**Describe the act:** "You clean your room"

**Emphasize strength** "This is easier for you now"

**Uniqueness:** "Blue is a good color for you, it makes your eyes light up."

**Gratitude-** "I am grateful for what you did, thank you"

**Sharing a skill:** "Are there any other students whom you can help in math"

**Empathy-** "You really enjoy doing that, don't you"

**Interpersonal impact;** "When you did that it allowed me to rest"

**Reciprocal favor:.** I enjoy the time we have to play catch, son.

## Flip the Script

- Parents and Providers with a positive mindset- recognize that something you have said or done for a reasonable time is not effective: you might want to change your script.



Sandwich Script



Relational Script

## HEALTHY PHYSICAL TOUCH

Largest Sensory Pathway

Touch hungry or touch aversive

Healing Brain Regions

Non-physical affection

Boundaries

## The Healing Power of Co-Regulation Rescuing Hug



In the first week of life a set of twins where in their respective incubator, and one was not expected to live. A hospital nurse fought against the hospital rules and placed the babies in one incubator. When they were placed together, the healthier of the two threw an arm over her sister in an endearing embrace. The smaller baby heart rate stabilized and her temperature rose

Lets not forget to embrace those whom we love to normal

*Curious George*  
February 2006



## **CURIOUSITY**

Wide open eyes w/ raised eye brows, puzzled tone of voice, show and feel no anger, express confusion

Lets then know they have value and that someone cares about them



## Playfulness

- ❖ Warm up to the child be harmlessly mischievous and silly
- ❖ Helps child to relax, to see you as someone who could bring some relief
- ❖ Helps child feel safe and bring down defenses
- ❖ Humor, laughter and connection
- ❖ Releases endorphins and stimulates positive resonance

Caution: Non-playful teasing is cruel, hurtful and damages fun and trust.



## *“Island of Competency”*

Stressed kids have self doubt in a plethora of situations

If they judge these situation to be important to significant others their overall sense of accomplishment suffers greatly

Counteract this despair with assisting them in an area that is (or have the potential to be ) a source of pride and accomplishment.

Teachers, caregivers and adults have the duty to identify and reinforce at least one “Island of Competency”

Ripple effect – provides the child with courage, strength and motivation to tackle other tasks.



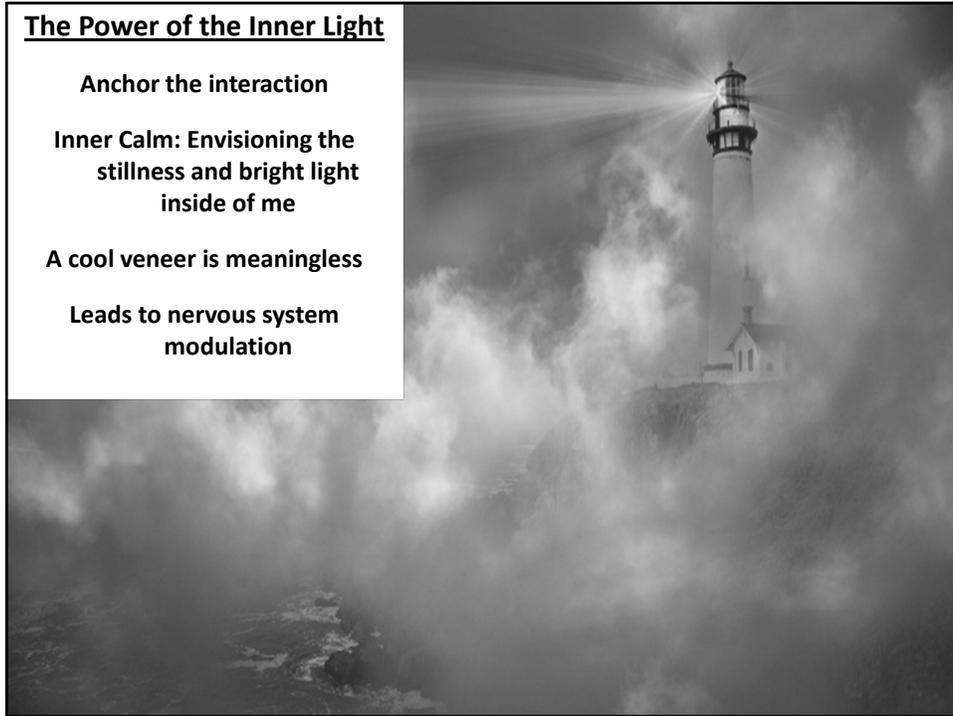
## **The Power of the Inner Light**

**Anchor the interaction**

**Inner Calm: Envisioning the  
stillness and bright light  
inside of me**

**A cool veneer is meaningless**

**Leads to nervous system  
modulation**



## **LOOKING PAST BEHAVIOR: *CREATING SENSORY ADAPTABLE ENVIRONMENTS***

**Sensory Integration Dysfunction** is the inability to process information received through the senses. Basically the central nervous system cannot process the information it receives to allow a person to function correctly.

**Sensory Diet-** Diet of activity and sensory input for your body & neurological system

### **Proper sensory integration:**

- \*Helps to keeps us organize*
- \*Provides a foundation for many of our behaviors*
- \*Allows our body to adapt better*
- \*Helps us maintain attention and manage tasks and challenges*
- \*Allows positive relationships and interactions with others*

**CLOSE TO HOME**

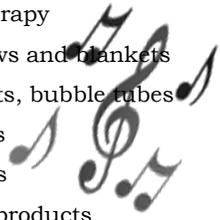
**BY JOHN MCPHERSON**



# Sensory Room Ideas

## FOR PURE RELAXATION

- ⊗ Nature sound machines
- ⊗ Aromatherapy
- ⊗ Soft pillows and blankets
- ⊗ Rope lights, bubble tubes
- ⊗ Fountains
- ⊗ Bean bags
- ⊗ Massage products
- ⊗ Relaxing music
- ⊗ Guided imagery/relaxation CD's
- ⊗ Light and sound machines
- ⊗ Lava lamps, metronomes
- ⊗ Soft colors
- ⊗ Pets



## FOR MORE FEARFUL CHILDREN

- ⊗ Tactile mats and balls and toys
- ⊗ Hammocks, or swing chairs
- ⊗ Vibrating recliners/pillows/chairs/toys
- ⊗ Fiber Optics
- ⊗ Liquid light projector
- ⊗ Bubble machines
- ⊗ Weighted blankets and animals
- ⊗ Whistle/blow toys and oral motor products
- ⊗ Mats, cushions or chairs (vibration and music)
- ⊗ Suspended equipment, swings, ladder, bouncy balls, gliders
- ⊗ Rock walls

# Sensory Pathways





## What makes you feel upset & scared?

|   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Time of the year  | Loud noises   | Thunderstorms   | Big people   | Door opening  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Lots of people  | Bright lights   | Strangers   | Feeling trapped  | Surprises   |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Peer groups   | Night time  | Yelling   | Touch  | dinner table  |

## How do you know when you are upset?



Crying



clenched teeth



rocking



pacing



racing heart



clenched fist



breathing heavy



tantrum



laughing



swearing



red hot face



stomachache

## How to help myself



Visualize



Feed My passion



Positive Self Talk.



Find a sensory soother



Belly Breath



Nourish Myself



Run



Listen to my Music



Ask for help



Weight lifting



Do my yoga



Go ask for a hug

| DEONTAE'S WELLNESS CARD  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <u>TRIGGERS/SIGNS</u>  | <u>WHAT CAN I DO</u>  | <u>HOW CAN YOU HELP ME</u>   |
| have no friends<br>Automatic Negative Thoughts<br>• This will never work.<br>• I will never succeed<br>• I wish I were dead.<br>• I feel like a failure<br><br>Lack of Exercise<br><br>A stressed adult around me<br><br>Monday mornings<br><br>Math class<br><br>Too much sugar<br><br>Mr. Johnson (math teacher)<br><br>Bright lights/Crowded hallways<br><br><u>FEELINGS</u><br>Embarrassed<br>Scared<br>Helpless<br>Worthless<br><br>Argument at Home<br><br>James when he intimidates me<br><br>Getting on the bus<br><br>Walking with my head down<br><br>Isolating myself | Practice Belly Breathing<br><br>Practice positive self-talk<br><br>Find something to be grateful about<br><br>Go for a walk<br><br>Find my sensory soother<br><br>Talk with Ms. Smith<br><br>Journal my feelings and experiences<br><br>Drink lots of water<br><br>Talk to my advocate<br><br>Get up and get moving<br><br>Take out my sunshine sheet.<br><br>Listen to calming music<br><br>Run on the track<br><br>Do some pushups and sit-ups<br><br>Listen to my self calming tapes<br><br>Use the rocking chair.<br><br>Spend time with Chance (the pet dog) | Smile<br><br>Check in with me<br><br>Use a soft voice<br><br>Rub my head<br><br>Leave me alone for a minute<br><br>Walk with me<br><br>Don't judge or label me<br><br>Be playful<br><br>Accept my feelings<br><br>Help me get started<br><br>Find a distraction for me<br><br>Let me tell my story<br><br>Sit with me.<br><br>Help my to understand my negative thoughts<br><br>Believe in me and never give up on me.<br><br>Tell me something funny<br><br>Help me to relax first before we figure things out. |

**SHUT UP AND LISTEN TO A CHILD!!!**

- ⚙ Emotional vs. Cognitive Communication
- ⚙ Listen to what were not saying!
- ⚙ Non Verbal Communication
- ⚙ Don't Stage Jump

## To Be a Witness

- ⊗ How am I feeling
- ⊗ Shut up and Listen
- ⊗ Hear the child, without formulating or preparing a response
- ⊗ Be curious, but don't interrogate
- ⊗ Reflect on internal processes
- ⊗ Verbal and non verbal reflection
- ⊗ Be compassionate
- ⊗ Stay regulated
- ⊗ Don't jump to problem solving .

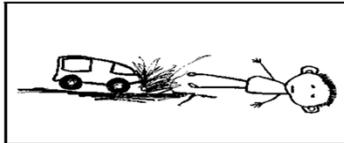


Figure 6: "What My Dad Looked Like After the Accident"  
Drawing by a 6 year old of his father who died in a car accident.

## Why Drawing?

- ⊗ Psychomotor activity moves child from passive to active
- ⊗ Safe and non threatening vehicle of communication
- ⊗ Sense of control and empowerment
- ⊗ Simulates for story telling
- ⊗ Provides a manage container
- ⊗ Makes us a living witness
- ⊗ Helps to externalize
- ⊗ Allows child to re-connect to the adult world
- ⊗ Provides a way to tell what he or she may not have words for
- ⊗ Allows creation of new, positive memories

## *Each Child has a Story*

- ⊗ Let the other parts of the brain (left hemisphere) join the process
- ⊗ What is sharable is bearable
- ⊗ Filling in the blanks. Help them sort out
- ⊗ Testimonial literature, poetry, rap, music, drama, drawing
- ⊗ Language Arts, Social Studies
- ⊗ Honor their pain

## *Titration and Pendulation*

Titration- Attending (bit by bit) to the felt sense and/or discharge in manageable amounts

Pendulation - The movement between a state of dysregulation and a state of calm arousal or regulation.

Resources-anything that helps a child return to a regulated state.

## LIZARD TO LIZARD CONFLICT

*#1 Reason for power struggles:  
Not attuned to brain sequencing*

### Five Questions to Ask

1. How am I feeling?
2. What does the young person feel, need or want?
3. How is the environment impacting (sensory assaults, triggers) the child?
4. How can I deepened my relationship in this moment?
5. How do I best respond?

## Attachment Teams Safe Faces

- Advocacy and re-parenting
- Trained in trauma sensitive work
- Greet youth/ micro-connectors
- Triple A
- Listen and support
- Time – in
- High Energy Vibration





## Dr. Robert Farris Trauma to Triumph



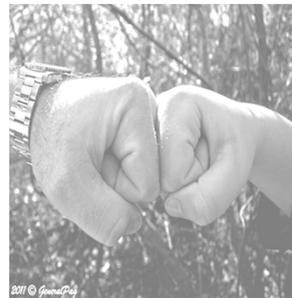
### HCCS Thomas House Integration of Trauma Informed Program

Adjudicated Adolescent males 12- 17

79 % w/ Child Psychiatric Diagnosis

On grounds school

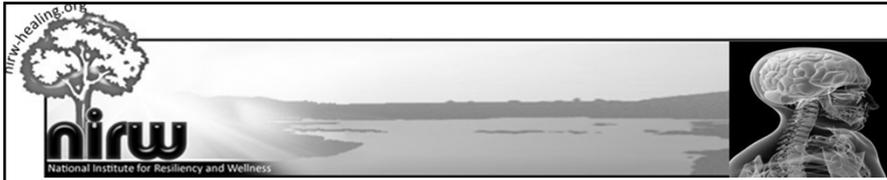
Residential placement (6- 9 month placement)



**Decrease in:** truancy, critical incident reports, restraints, failed placements, respite care, school discipline problems, symptoms arousal, avoidance and re-experiencing



**Increase in:** academic achievement, regulatory capacity, completion of treatment goals, strength and skill assessments, parent satisfaction surveys and positive releases



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