Supporting American-born, Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Children: Understanding Complex Trauma

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Agenda

1. Types of trauma
2. Sources of trauma for U.S.-origin, immigrant, refugee, and migrant children
3. Effects of trauma on the brain, body, and daily functioning
4. Supports and resources for families and school-based professionals
Alana

- 5 years old
- Rarely smiles or laughs
- Is reluctant to participate in group activities
- Newly-arrived immigrant
- Struggles with most academic tasks

Thomas

- 8 years old
- Frequently absent from school
- Rarely makes eye contact with adults
- Mood swings, inconsistent behavior
- Distracted, difficulty with most academic tasks
What is Trauma?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

Maltreatment
Neglect

Early Life Stress (ELS)

Abuse
Physical
Psychological
Sexual

Environmental: Household Stress
Violence in Society

Chronic Stress
Toxic Stress
CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study

- One of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life and well-being
- Original study: 1995-1997 with two waves of data collection
- 7,000 Health Maintenance Organization members from Southern California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors
- CDC continues ongoing surveillance of ACEs by assessing the medical status of the study participants via periodic updates of morbidity and mortality data

https://www.cdc.gov
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are categorized into three groups: abuse, neglect, and family/household challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
<th>Family Household Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Mother treated violently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Household substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental illness in household</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parental separation or divorce</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Criminal household member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Neuro-developmental Stages & Brain Functioning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newborn to 6 years</th>
<th>Ages 7 to 10 years</th>
<th>Ages 11-17 years</th>
<th>Ages 18-21+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rapid brain growth, all regions of the brain -frontal executive visuospatial and visuoauditory functions</td>
<td>-sensory and motor systems continue to mature up to about age seven and a half -begin to perform simple operational functions such as determining weight and logical-mathematical reasoning</td>
<td>-elaboration of the visuospatial functions, but it also includes maturation of the visuoauditory regions Youth in this age range are able to review formal operations, find flaws with them and create new ones.</td>
<td>-starting around 17-18 years, the region governing the frontal executive functions matures and continues into the mid-twenties Young adults begin to question information they are given, reconsider it and form new hypotheses incorporating ideas of their own, and developing a sense of self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children perfect such skills as the ability to form images, use words and place things in serial order. They also begin to develop tactics for solving problems.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(Savage, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
U.S.-origin Children

Trauma

Abuse:
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Cyberbullying
- Sex Trafficking

Neglect

Poverty

Environmental
- Natural Disasters
- Community Violence
- Social Discord
- Terrorism
- Drug use in family

Family
- Abandonment
- Moving
- Changes in family dynamics

Homelessness
• Total Latino population exceeds 50 million
• 47% -immigrants or foreign-born
• Over 4 million Latino children have at least one undocumented parent
  (Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon & Rey, 2015), most are U.S.-born citizens (Murphy, 2016)
• Recent years- almost one million children have had at least one parent deported with California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida having the most children of undocumented parents
Immigrant, Refugee, & Migrant Experience

- The Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA)
  - El Salvador
  - Guatemala
  - Honduras
- Mexico

(Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2017b)
# Trauma & The Journey

## Pre-migration
- Separated from parents

## Migration
- Language barriers
- Inconsistent or interrupted schooling
- Physical and sexual abuse

## Post-migration
- Neglect

## Settlement in U.S. Communities
- Shelter insecurity
- Poor physical and mental health

Griffin, & Shapiro, 2017
The Pre-Migration Experience

• NTCA- gangs or *maras*- powerful influences on children and families (International Crisis Group, 2017)

• Other reasons
  ▫ reunification with family
  ▫ economic opportunity
  ▫ physical and sexual abuse
  ▫ limited educational resources

(UNHCR, 2014).
The Migration Journey

• Continued abuse and violence by authorities and drug cartels in Mexico (Linton, Kennedy, Shapiro, & Griffin, 2018)

• *Doctors without Borders* (Medicins San Frontieres (MSF)) - medical care services in Mexico and Honduras to thousands of migrants (Linton, Kennedy, Shapiro, & Griffin, 2018)
  ▫ 68% - victims of violence from gang members
  ▫ 38% - more than one violent incident
  ▫ More than 11% - greater than three such incidents
The Migration Journey

- Abductions, theft, extortion, torture and death (MSF, 2017)
- targeted for
  - kidnapping and killing by drug cartels in Mexico;
  - others are victims of human trafficking which includes labor and sex trafficking
  - specifically, women and children are exploited by traffickers where females are forced to work in deplorable conditions (Acer, Shaw, Drake, 2017)
Settlement in The U.S.

- “authorized Ports of Entry”
- Transported to the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Processing Centers
- After a designated period of time, released into the community

Medical system

Educational system

Explore employment opportunities
Trauma (Stress)

Brain/Body

Academic Performance

Social-Emotional Functioning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain/Body</th>
<th>Emotional Development</th>
<th>Academic Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Response across entire body</td>
<td>-Impaired social skills</td>
<td>-Learning disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Increased blood pressure and heart rate</td>
<td>-Lowered self-esteem</td>
<td>-Delayed speech, reading ability, and school readiness (Chamberlain, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Hippocampus is unable to classify and organize information properly</td>
<td>-Attention, focus, concentration</td>
<td>-Correlation between childhood abuse and neglect and altered brain functioning appears significant in brain imaging studies (Nemeroff, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Amygdala—when aroused, stress hormones are released, causing the individual to go into “fight”, “flight”, or “freeze” states of arousal</td>
<td>-Depression</td>
<td>-increased rates of academic failure as compare to children who are victimized later in childhood (Fantuzzo, Perlman, &amp; Dobbins, 2011; Kim &amp; Cicchetti, 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Nemeroff, 2016)
## Poverty Related Factors and Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prenatal maternal health</th>
<th>Perinatal health</th>
<th>Home Environmental stressors</th>
<th>School Environmental Stressors</th>
<th>Other Environmental Stressors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Exposure to environmental toxic agents and drugs Environmental stressors</td>
<td>Prematurity birth weight quality of early attachment developmental disorders lack of social mobility</td>
<td>Parenting and care quality and styles Early cognitive and learning stimulation Parents’ mental health Family financial stress Access to social security and health systems, and community resources</td>
<td>Teachers’ mental health</td>
<td>Natural disasters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bornstein et al. 2015; Dornan and Woodhead 2015; Weeks et al. 2015; Moffitt et al. 2011; Yoshikawa, Aber, and Beardslee 2012)
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

A psychiatric disorder

May result from one traumatic experience or more

Cumulative trauma exposure rendering an individual at increased risk of developing the disorder

(Wilker et al., 2015)

Intrusive memories, flashbacks or nightmares

Marked alterations in reactivity post trauma

Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli

Negative alternations in cognition and mood post-trauma

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
## Child’s Response to Trauma: Misunderstood Causes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>More Common in</th>
<th>Misunderstood Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>• Females</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Young children</td>
<td>• ADHD inattentive type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children with ongoing trauma/pain</td>
<td>• Developmental delay</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Children unable to defend themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hypervigilance</td>
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<td>• Aggression</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exaggerated response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young children</td>
<td>Older children</td>
<td>• ODD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with ongoing</td>
<td>Witnesses to violence</td>
<td>• Conduct disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trauma/pain</td>
<td>People able to fight or flee</td>
<td>• Bipolar disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children unable to</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Anger management difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>defend themselves</td>
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American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014  
www.aap.org/traumaguide
Trauma & Brain Development

Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education
# Sources of Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>Assault/rape</td>
<td>Serious accident</td>
<td>Natural Disaster</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Undocumented status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Witnessing or learning of a traumatic event</td>
<td>Sex trafficking</td>
<td>Hostage/torture</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying</td>
<td>Serious medical diagnosis</td>
<td>Serious accident</td>
<td>War-combat experience</td>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>Migrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International and domestic terrorism</td>
<td>Serious medical diagnosis</td>
<td>Hostage/torture</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>Change in family dynamics</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Serious accident</td>
<td>Witnessing domestic violence</td>
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<td>Drug use in the home</td>
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<td>Social discord</td>
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## What to Look for in Children

### Birth-2 Years
- Demonstrate poor verbal skills
- Display excessive temper tantrums
- Act withdrawn
- Experience sleep difficulties or nightmares
- Show irritability, anxiety or sadness
- Cry excessively
- Startle easily

### 3-6 Years
- Engage in avoidance behavior
- Be verbally abusive
- Experience headaches or stomach pain
- Be anxious about school
- Be socially withdrawn
- May not trust others
- May develop fear of being separated from parent or caregiver
- May experience difficulty concentrating in school
Intervention & Services

- Assessment
- Family therapy
- School services
- Home visits
- Social emotional screenings
- Support groups
- Crisis counseling
- Referrals
- Residential services
- Parent support groups
- Play groups
- Supervised parent-child visits

- Foster care
- Residential services
- Case management
- Parent and professional consultation for challenging behaviors
- Transitional and independent living
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Counseling
- Family support and advocacy
- Mental health consultation to service providers

(Cummings, Addante, Swindell, & Meadan, 2017)
Parent- and Child-Centered Considerations

- effective parent education
- helping parents
- develop positive ways of parenting
- caring and meaningful activities such as reading, playing, and
Factors That Affect Impact

- Age
- Severity and type (i.e., physical, emotional) of trauma
- Past trauma and duration
- Mental health status
- Coping style
- Family support system
- Resiliency
- Overwhelmed with own reactions to trauma and loss
- Compromised relationship with child
- Inadequate parenting skills
- Financial situation
Assessment: Factors to Consider

- Misdiagnosis
- Cognitive functioning
- Underlying reasons for behavior
- Perception of family
- Extent of traumatic experiences
- On-going trauma
- Development of intervention plan
Building Trauma Sensitive Classrooms

- Building on students’ strengths
- Providing positive behavior supports
- Providing positive peer supports
- Universal design for learning
- Building social competence
American Academy of Pediatrics

- [www.aap.org/traumaguide](http://www.aap.org/traumaguide)
- The Medical Home Approach to Identifying and Responding to Exposure to Trauma
  - Symptoms of trauma
  - Child’s Response to trauma
  - Behavior Response
  - After Exposure to Trauma is Identified
  - Trauma-informed Practices for Family and School
  - Helping Parents to Cope & Self-Care
Child Trauma Academy

• (http://childtrauma.org/), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping high-risk children in therapeutic, child protection, and educational settings through direct service, research, and education.

• Translates emerging findings about the human brain and child development into practical implications for the ways we nurture, protect, enrich, educate and heal children. The “translational neuroscience” work of the CTA has resulted in a range of innovative programs in therapeutic, child protection and educational systems.
National Child Traumatic Stress Network

- (http://www.nctsn.net)
- established by Congress in 2000, a collaboration of academic and community-based service centers whose mission is to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for traumatized children and their families across the United States.
- combining knowledge of child development, expertise in the full range of child traumatic experiences, and attention to cultural perspectives, the NCTSN serves as a national resource for developing and disseminating evidence-based interventions, trauma-informed services, and public and professional education. It includes resources (in English and Spanish) for parents and caregivers, military children and families, and educators.
EMPOWER Project

- [wp.towson.edu/empower](http://wp.towson.edu/empower)
- Family & Community Engagement Resources
- Teacher Resources
- Intentional Practices for CLD Learners
- Empower Jumpstart: English Language Learners in Your Classroom
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Human Trafficking:


Centers for Disease Control

Resource: *Compassion, Resiliency & Academic Success*

- Trauma, Compassion & Resiliency
- Self-Care
- Specific Strategies for Classrooms
- Building School-Community Partnerships that Work
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

• The Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators provides school administrators, teachers, staff, and parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.

• Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S), jointly created by the NCTSN and the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD, is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event.

• Identification and Assessment of Traumatic Stress
• Prevention and Interventions Related to Traumatic Stress
• Trauma Education and Awareness
• Partnerships with Students and Families
• Creation of a Trauma-Informed Learning Environment
• Cultural Responsiveness
Books

- **The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success** – Ray Wolpow, Ph.D.; Mona M. Johnson, Ed.D., CDP; Ron Hertel, B.S.; Susan O. Kincaid, Ph.D. (FREE link to entire book in .pdf form)
- **Reaching & Teaching Children who Hurt: Strategies for Your Classroom** – Susan E. Craig, Ph.D.
- **Lost at School** – Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.
- **Helping Traumatized Children Learn** – Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- **Help for Billy** – book by Heather Forbes, LCSW, of Beyond Consequences Institute
Trauma-Sensitive Classroom Strategies

- **MindUP** – a research-based training program that teaches social and emotional learning skills that link cognitive neuroscience, positive psychology and mindful awareness training utilizing a brain centric approach.
- **Sound Discipline** – a website for both parents and educators about the practice of Positive Discipline. Free newsletter articles and resources.
- **FuelEd Schools** – training in social/emotional competency and teaching empathy, as well as exploring teachers’ attachment styles.
- **MeMoves** – a patented system for teaching self-regulation using music, images and movement. Both home versions and school versions are available.
Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University

- https://developingchild.harvard.edu/

- the Center on the Developing Child’s diverse activities align around building an R&D (research and development) platform for science-based innovation, and transforming the policy and practice landscape that supports and even demands change. We do this because society pays a huge price when children do not reach their potential, because half a century of policies and programs have not produced breakthrough outcomes, and because dramatic advances in science are ready to be used to achieve a promising future for every child.
Journals

- Beyond Behavior
- Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health
- Child Maltreatment
- Child Psychiatry & Human Development
- Early Childhood Research Quarterly
- Early Child Development
- Infant & Child Development
- Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma
- Journal of Child Sexual Abuse
- Journal of Child Psychotherapy
- Journal of Child Sexual Abuse
- Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry
- Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology
- Journal of Clinical Psychology
- Journal of Early Childhood Education
Journals

- Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders
- Journal of Loss & Trauma
- Journal of Mental Health Counseling
- Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development
- Journal of Pediatric Psychology
- Journal of Personality Disorders
- Maltreatment & Trauma
- Teaching Young Children
- Trauma-Informed Care for Children and Families
- Topics in Early Childhood Special Education
- Young Children
- Young Exceptional Children
- Zero to Three


References


References


