

Trauma & Attachment



Raising awareness of how early trauma influences a young person's attachment style and exploring practical strategies to best support young people who display attachment difficulties

Trauma is defined as an “event outside normal human experience”. These events are generally emotionally painful and distressing, and overwhelm a person's ability to cope, leaving him/her powerless. Feeling powerless is an important concept when trying to understand trauma - especially as you apply it to trauma in children.

Adverse Child Experiences (ACEs) are reasonably common - 18% of children are exposed to at least one. ACEs in children (0-17) can include; violence, sudden death, substance misuse, mental health or instability. The majority of children will develop attachment difficulties.

Abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Verbal

Household where:

- Drug use problems
- Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Adults have been in prison
- Parents have separated

Neglect:

- Emotional
- Physical

- As well as these 10 ACEs there are a range of other types of childhood adversity that can have similar negative long term effects. These include bereavement, bullying, poverty and community adversities such as living in a deprived area, neighbourhood violence etc.

Why ACE's matter:

- Childhood adversity can create harmful levels of stress which impact healthy brain development. This can result in long-term effects on learning, behaviour and health. ACEs have been found to be associated with a range of poorer health and social outcomes in adulthood.

“Our aim is not to diagnose but notice patterns and behaviours which can be supported using specific strategies”



Insecure Attachment styles:

Avoidant
Ambivalent/resistant (Ainsworth 1970)
Disorganised (Main & Solomon 1990)



What can help?

Understanding functions of behaviour
Considering the Arousal Cycle
Recognising 'Windows of Tolerance' and appropriate responses
Be able to identify 'Energetic states'

Look at developing a Proactive plan which includes:

Proactive & Reactive strategies
Zones of Regulation
Scripted response
Emotional coaching

TCARE

Tune in: Notice or become aware of your own and the child's emotions.

Make sure you are calm enough to practice emotion coaching

Connect: Use this situation as an opportunity for you to practice and for the child to learn. State objectively (This is important!) what emotions you think the child is experiencing to help them connect their emotions to their behaviour

Accept and Listen: Practice empathy. Put yourself in the child's shoes, think about a situation when you felt a similar emotion, and try to remember what it felt like

Reflect: Once everyone is calm, go back over what the child said or did, mentioning only what you saw, heard, or understand of the situation. Reflect on what happened and why it happened

End with Problem Solving/Choices/Setting Limits: Whenever possible, try to end the situation by guiding or involving the child in problem-solving
(Somerset Children & Young People, n.d.)

Useful Websites & Resources:

Beacon House

Hertfordshire Virtual Schools

Louise Michelle Bomber - 'Inside I'm hurting'

National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014

Ainsworth 1970, Main & Solomon 1990, Bowlby - Model of Attachment

Supporting the pupil who has experienced significant relational trauma and losses workshop by 'Touch Base' training

Leah M. Kuypers - www.socialthinking.com

Brain power

'Chimp Management' & The Hidden Chimp - Professor Steve Peters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKuoH8CkFc>

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