

# How Trauma/Loss Impacts Children and Development

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## Overview

- Children becoming trauma-informed
- Trauma/loss and development
- Children are always working to self-regulate
- Healing in relationship - ruptures and repairs

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## Principles of Being Trauma-Informed

- Safety
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Cultural, historical, and gender issues

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### When a child's trauma is unresolved

- They often:
  - Feel unsafe
  - Feel disconnected from self, family, friends, community, spirituality
  - Are unable to regulate mood, emotions, or behavior
  - Live in freeze, flight and fight survival responses
  - Are on guard, hyper-vigilant
  - Feel helpless – A loss of choice and voice

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### Trauma and Development

- Impact of trauma on children depends on their developmental stage
  - From infants to teenagers
- Trauma can impact development
- Our response to a trauma impacts a child
  - Sometimes children end up caring for a parent
  - Who else can support the child when a parent is not able to

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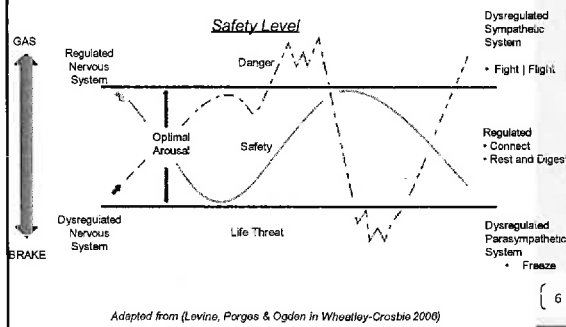
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### Window of Tolerance – Self Regulation



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## Ways of helping children cope

- Using our own nervous system to help regulate another nervous system
- Importance of our own self-regulation
- Inviting in friends or other people as support
  - Sometimes this is when a playdate can be an intervention
  - Eventually leads to children practicing self-regulation
- Routine as a way to regulate

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## How We Heal Is In Relationship

- Ruptures occur in all relationships
  - We are not always going to get it right when helping children with their grief
- Repair is a choice we all make – either offering a gesture of repair or accepting one
  - Children often make small gestures of repair that are overlooked e.g. can you play with me
  - Offering repair teaches children how to build and maintain healthy relationships

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## Creating safety to grieve

- It is important to create space, time and rituals to enable a child to grieve
  - Be present – invite others to be present for you and the child
  - Remember what developmental stage they are in
  - Acknowledging the child's sadness/anger can be the first step
  - Helping them recognize that the waves of emotion/sensation can pass
  - Teach them to settle themselves
  - Help them to honor who or what they are grieving

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## Making Room for Play

- Play enables children to try to make sense of their world
  - It is okay that they may play about the trauma/loss
    - If that is the only thing they play over a prolonged period of time then reach out for help
- Play helps children to:
  - To connect with their thoughts and feelings
  - To self-regulate
  - To connect to hope and possibility

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Thank You

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