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**Being Trauma-Informed**

- Provides a new paradigm that views trauma as an injury
- The shift is from "***What is wrong with you?***" to "***What has happened to you?***"
- Understands freeze, flight and fight as survival responses
- Recognizes that trauma is pervasive
- ACE Study - Adverse Childhood Experiences
  - Trauma in childhood can impact adult physical and mental health (1998)
  - [www.acestoohigh](http://www.acestoohigh)

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## What Is Trauma?

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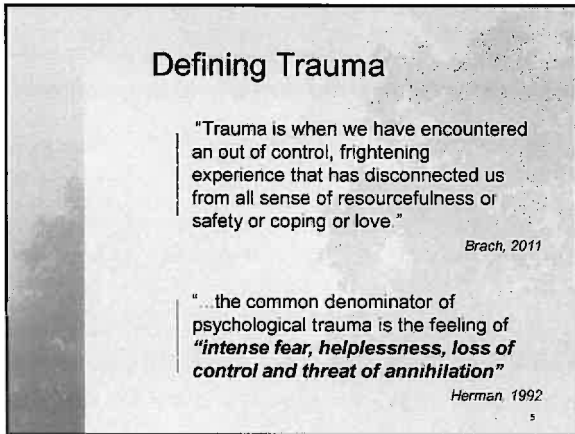
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## Defining Trauma

"Trauma is when we have encountered an out of control, frightening experience that has disconnected us from all sense of resourcefulness or safety or coping or love."

*Brach, 2011*

"... the common denominator of psychological trauma is the feeling of ***intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation***"

*Herman, 1992*

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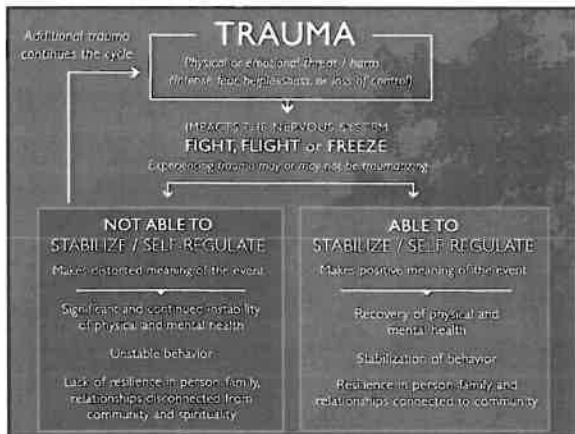
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### When A Child Or Adult's Trauma Is Unresolved

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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### History: How We Have Thought About Trauma

- We used to **not talk** about trauma
- **Then** we focused on telling your whole story
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD diagnosis added in 1980)
- **Now we talk** about the impact of trauma on the nervous system and how to regulate it
- **Now we are beginning to recognize** the impact of historical trauma
- **Now we are beginning** to acknowledge cultural differences in healing
- **Now we focus** on the importance of how we tell our stories in order to make meaning in our lives

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### Making Sense of Trauma

- Trauma is in the responses of the nervous system (*Levine, 1997*)
- What is traumatic for one child or youth (adult) may not be for another
  - Frequency, duration and severity of the traumatic event and their developmental stage
  - Moving from a mixed up story to a coherent narrative

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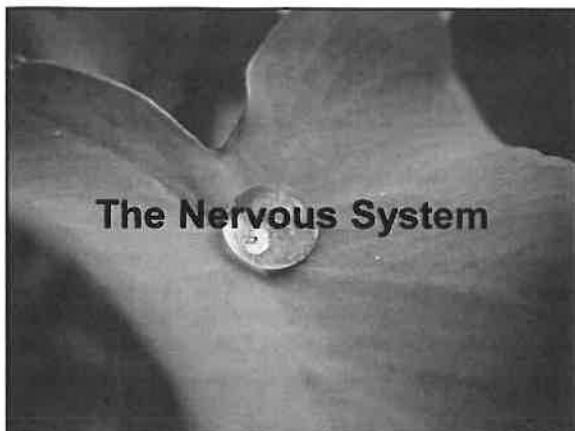
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### The Nervous System

**Definition:** Brain and all the nerves in the body

- Neuroplasticity **“What fires together wires together”** (Hebb, 1994)
- Sympathetic Nervous System
  - Think of it like the gas pedal on a car
- Parasympathetic Nervous System
  - Think of it like the brake pedal
- Genetics and temperament shapes children's responses

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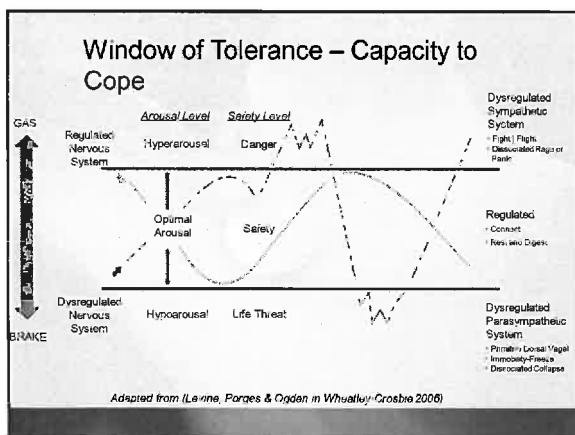
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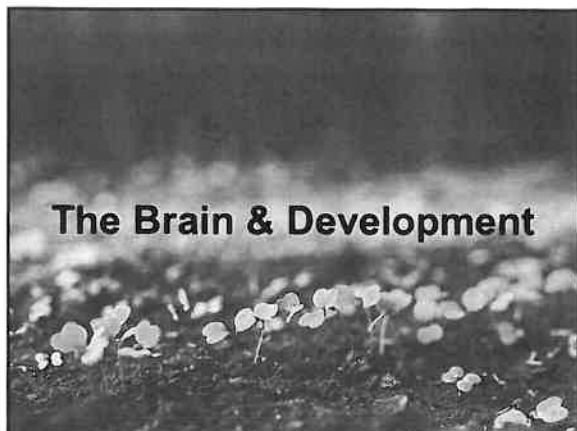
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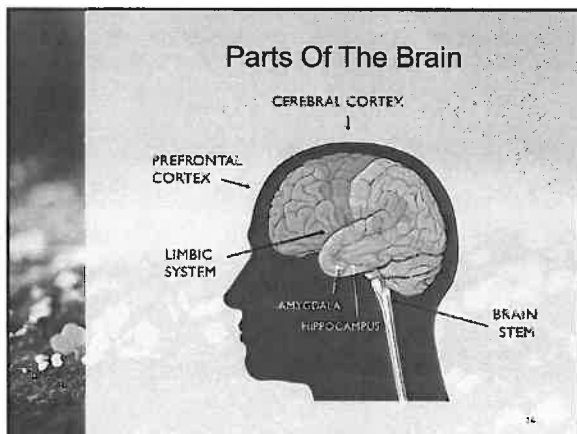
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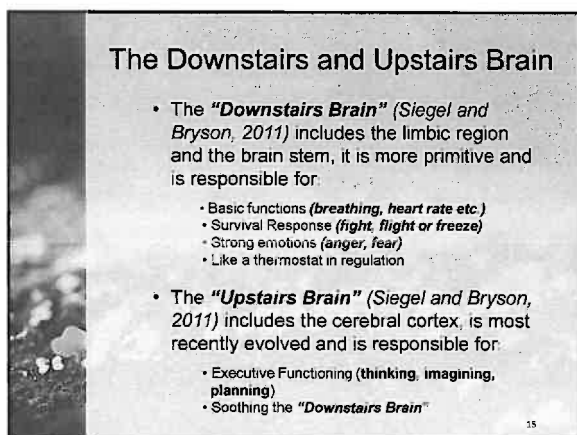
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### The Downstairs and Upstairs Brain and Self-Regulation

- **Upstairs Brain – Under Construction**
  - Comes online more fully at age 2 and is fully developed by mid 20's
- Activated amygdala is like an alarm – blocks access to the Upstairs Brain
- Developmentally children need another nervous system to help settle themselves
- During development the pathways in our brain are created for the survival responses of fight, flight, and freeze, as well as soothing

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### Trauma and Development

- Children do not understand their nervous system, their body and how it responds to trauma
- Children's understanding is shaped by the developmental stage they are in
  - Children's traumatizing experiences, particularly when chronic, can compromise all areas of childhood development . . ."

James, 1994

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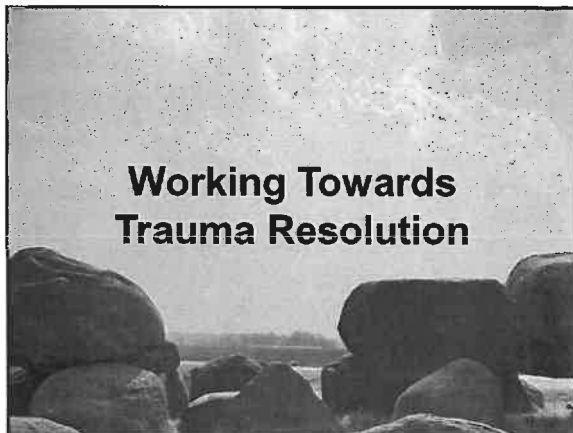
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### Working Towards Trauma Resolution

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### Importance of Co-Regulation

- Using our own nervous system to help regulate another nervous system
  - Eventually leads to children practicing self-regulation
- Children and youth also respond to the adults reactions to the traumatic event
  - Positive and negative responses and reactions

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### Stages of Healing

- Creating Safety and Stabilization
  - Developing resources
- Being empowered, having a voice, real choice and being able to collaborate
  - Working with/integrating memories (*or not*) is optional
- Developing Safe and Healthy Relationships
  - Developing a coherent story about the child, the trauma and their capacity to grow

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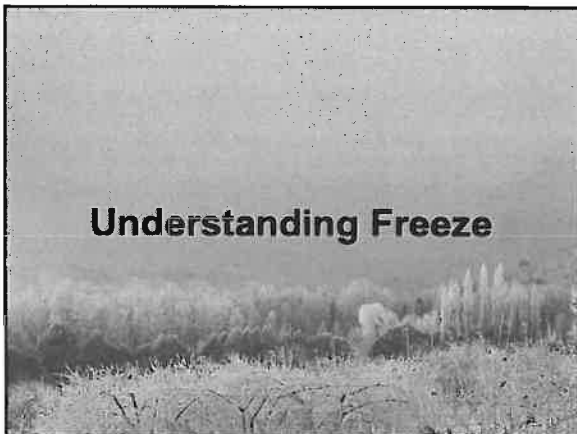
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### Understanding Freeze



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### Examples of Freeze

- Spacey, **"not here"**
- Disconnected from yourself
- Frozen, numb, can't move
- Stuck in some part of the body
- **"I don't know"** – and they don't
- No voice

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### Dissociation Continuum

- Dissociation is adaptive and exists on a continuum (*Braun, 1988*)
  - Daydreaming | Freeze | Shock
- A neurobiological event that occurs under extreme stress can result in blocked memory and emotions, bodily numbness (*Rothschild, 2000*)
- To split consciousness in some way resulting in distortions of experience and memory (*Rothschild, 2000, 2010*)

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### Tools For Responding To Freeze

- Settle your body, engage your upstairs brain, use your curiosity (*Siegel and Bryson, 2011*)
- Notice their bodily sensations – feet on the floor, seat on the chair, take a deep breath
- Connect to the present – ask them to name something in the room they see - a neutral object (**not you**) 5-4-3-2-1 exercise
- Remind them they are going to be ok – how can they notice this
- Understanding freeze helps develop a sense of control

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**Readiness – Try This**

- Imagine a small child is running towards you, full speed, wanting to give you a hug
- How would you stand so as not to be tipped over when you catch them
  - Place one foot a little ahead of the other
  - Bend your knees, tightening your muscles
  - Hold your arms open, tightening your muscles preparing to catch the child
  - Remember to breathe
- Notice what it is like to hold this position

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### Examples of Flight

- Restless, fidgety
- Jumpy legs
- Big or darting eyes
- Feeling trapped, **“gotta’ get out of here”**
- Wanting to get away
- Rapid breathing
- Pounding heart

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### Tools For Flight

- Settle your body, engage your upstairs brain, use your curiosity
- Name it to tame it
  - Validating the impulse to get away and helping them to understand this is survival response
  - Listening for, acknowledging where they would want to be
- Encourage Movement - squirming, fidgeting, pacing
  - Engage them in moving their bodies, this promotes self regulation
- Regulating exercise for legs

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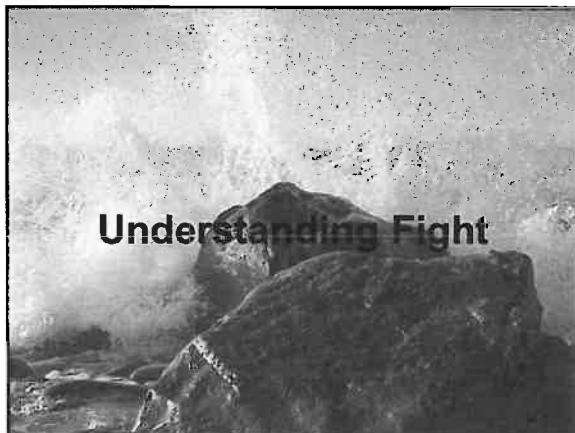
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### Understanding Fight

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### Examples of Fight

- Snarl, glare
- Raised voice, **"I hate you"**
- Argumentative **"You don't understand"**
- Move towards you
- Desire to stomp, kick
- Muscles tighten, clenched hands

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### Tools For Fight

- Settle your body, engage your brain, use your curiosity (Bryson and Siegel, 2011)
- Name it to tame it (Bryson and Siegel, 2011)
- Help them settle their bodies – then talk about consequences
  - Containment exercise using large muscles of the arms
- Safety planning – home and workplace
- Non-negotiable soothing

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### We're Stuck – Adults and Kids Caught in Fight

- Getting stuck is inevitable for both adults and kids
- Your acknowledging **"being stuck"** helps kids (and adults) recognize their pattern
- **"Stuck"** is a discussion you can share separate from the argument
- The two sides are often saying **"don't yell"** or **"you're not listening to me"**
- Allows you to reassure and repair the rupture after a fight or getting stuck
- **"We will find a way to get through this, we will get unstuck."**

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### How To Listen To Trauma Stories

- Co-regulation
  - Keeping yourself regulated
- Helping them self-regulate
  - Connect to the present, notice their breath and heart rate - managing your own response
- Listening to the story and staying within the window of tolerance
  - Start at the end of the story (*if possible*)
  - Interrupting gently, taking a break, hearing a little bit of the story at a time if possible
- What's helping them get through
  - If you can, start by helping them know they will get through the current challenge

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### Laughing Baby

What regulation of a nervous system looks like...

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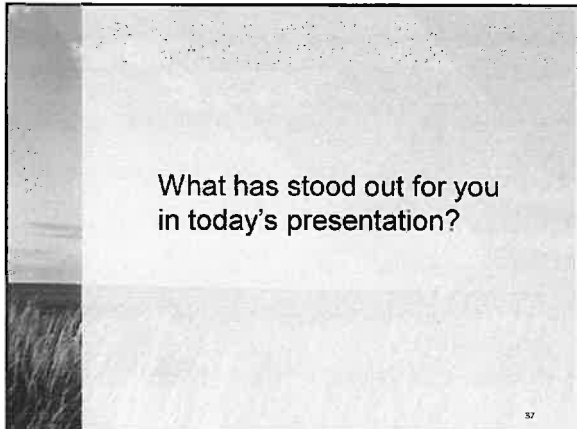
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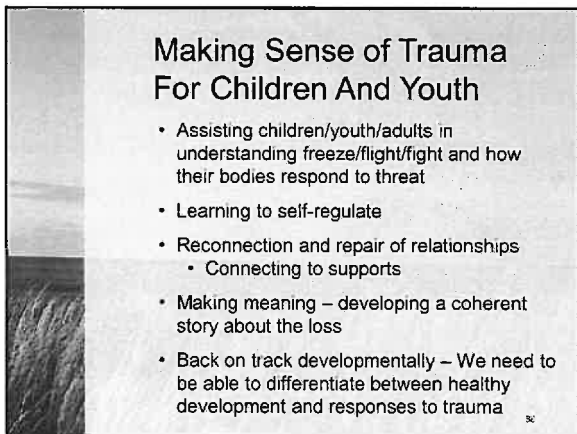
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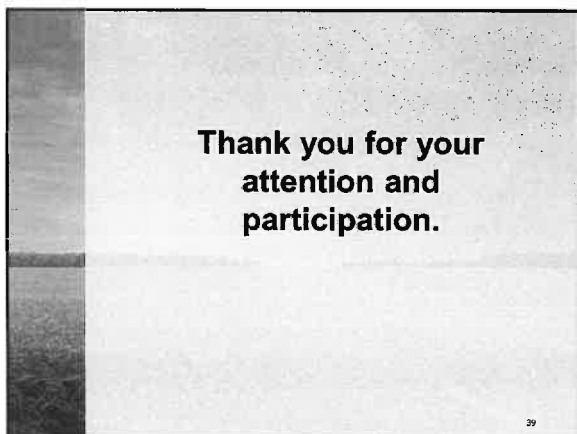
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