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An Ounce of Prevention

Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council of Humboldt County

www.capcchumboldt.org

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APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

April is National Child Abuse prevention Month. In order to reduce child abuse rates in Humboldt County we are working to become a more trauma informed community and to incorporate this knowledge in our work with children and families. According to SAMHSA's concept of a trauma-informed approach, "A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:



1. *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
2. *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
3. *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
4. Seeks to actively resist *re-traumatization*."



A trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization and is distinct from trauma-specific interventions or treatments that are designed specifically to address the consequences of trauma and to facilitate healing. (from <http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>).



Hands, Eyes, Ears

He had two hands. Two eyes. Two ears. One Heart. Just like me.

He had a damaged heart. Unfortunately, a quick and devastating stress induced heart attack.

He had two ears that were notorious for never working, or at least that is what mum always joked about. I would try to talk to him in any way from ask him anything, say hello or goodbye, joke about the kitchen being on fire, but there was always little interaction back between us. He would do it to mum and my brother as well. I learned later that he not only wasn't listening, but was purposefully distancing himself from us. . . At a very young age I was certain he hated me.

He had two eyes that would scream in rage. He didn't have to say anything; his eyes could gesture his every hurtful movement, words, neglect. Each eye was an affirmation of me being "a mistake", "worthless", "no good".

On one of his hands there was love. On the other was hate. And I don't mean in some proverbial way, no, his ink soaked hands were *very* real. Sometimes I couldn't see the love behind the blood, not knowing if it was his or mine, my brother's, my dogs, my mum's. I was grateful for the rare occasions where I couldn't see the hate when his hands were embraced around me like a fathers should. I knew it was a vicious cycle.

I was desperately fearful, anxious, scared that my abusive past would become a norm in my relationships. To my future children's. I had to learn and accept my emotions, pain and feelings. I am meaningful, purposeful, and loved. That *love* shouldn't *hurt*. Not now. Not ever.

I have two hands, two eyes, two ears and one heart that are used to love and be loved.

Maya Talpai-Vasinthascha, Spare Change 2015-16,
Senior at Academy of the Redwoods



Mirror Mirror... In Our Hands—(Trauma Informed Work in Schools)

By Gillian Wadsworth, LCSW
(reprinted with permission)



A warm greeting from a teacher to a 16 year-old student is met with stony silence. F-bombs crash against each other in the hallways and echo off bathroom walls. In the classroom, shrill laughter and deliberate side conversations override an instructor's voice. Every day, there is a challenge; for students and for education teams.

HCOE's Court and Community Schools has launched our Trauma Informed, Resilience Ready culture shift during this school year, 2015-2016.

Most of us working with families have experienced an "ah, yes" moment of clarity where the connection between people's experiences and behaviors reveals itself. This connection exists whether the experiences are positive or negative. Collectively, we usually don't sweat the positive.

When Bruce Perry, MD (www.ChildTrauma.org) came

to speak in 2011, he filled HSU's Van Duzen Theater. (Bruce Perry is to the brain what Neil deGrasse Tyson is to the cosmos). He walked us through stunning science, illuminating the experience/behavior connection...then took us many steps further. He was very plain: the experience of trauma and toxic stress can re-direct, delay, and sometimes damage the way the brain develops, leading to fascinating, if ultimately destructive, behaviors. And because of that, he highly recommends we reconsider what we think of as "willfulness" and defiance".



Sometime near the end of Perry's lecture, I overheard Carmella Wenger, MFT, whisper contentedly to the woman to her right, "Well, it's nice that science has validated what we've known forever..."

Court and Community Schools enroll some of the highest risk youth in the county. Historically and currently, they are the highest risk of our youth for delinquency, substance use, and dropping out. They are also the highest risk for having experienced trauma and toxic stress. Student reputation might have at one time been summed up with the words "willful" and "defiant".

The students at Court and Community Schools are not "most likely to succeed" when they enroll; our goal is to change that. Court and Community Schools is on a pathway that consists of deliberate, intelligent re-design of education practices that employ what we've known intuitively for...well...ever.

Bruce Perry and the many researchers involved in scientifically describing trauma's impact offer us a framework around which we can build our own practices, responses, and perspectives. And if the building blocks of the framework consist of the science of the brain, then the tools we'll use to assemble them are personal: tolerance, open-mindedness, a focus on "what happened", and ultimately, repeatedly, "student behavior is not about me".

Jim Sporleder reconstructed the alternative education program that is the topic of Paper Tigers, a documentary (<http://www.papertigersmovie.com/>) soon to be screened in Humboldt County. A veteran educator, consultant, and parent, Sporleder captures the essence of this new work, "First, we put down the mirrors". Behaviors, even disruptive, dismissive, off-putting, or frozen, are intricate systems. They are informative if we care to explore them. Sporleder's point is, we cannot interpret youth behavior through our own images, we need to see our students for who they are and where they are, and meet them there.



Trauma Informed Prevention: Caring with Daring

By Karen Diers

Just thinking about child abuse can be traumatizing for many. It takes courage and creativity to address- rather *heroic* actions. Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz stands out as a relevant heroine exemplifying key concepts of trauma informed prevention of child abuse. First, because she is a child herself, one who has faced Adverse Childhood Experiences before the story even begins. But how she faces the challenges that stand before her is most important. Unlike many popular heroes, she does not charge into battle- alone but armed with weapons. Rather, she travels on her journey down the Yellow Brick Road arm in arm with her peers. And every step of the way she demonstrates caring, a willingness to listen and learn, perseverance, daring, and hope.

"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

Like other heroes, Dorothy begins her journey reluctantly. A force beyond her control, in this case, a cyclone, disrupts her life. The cyclone may be seen as an apt metaphor for trauma. Trauma occurs when an event or situation overwhelms a person's ability to cope, potentially leading to a loss of safety and trust. Being overwhelmed is what led Dorothy to run away from home initially. Moreover, it is important to note it was not a threat to her person that affected her but a threat to her beloved dog, Toto. This feeling of being overwhelmed affects everything, including identity and world view. A person can feel estranged and disconnected, like they do not belong.



A recent article, "How Childhood Domestic Violence Impacts Us... Young and Old," gives an example of a person who grew up with Childhood Domestic Violence early in life. They grew up believing "that they were guilty, ashamed, that there was something wrong with them, or if they thought they were inherently worthless or fearful, then their brain finds evidence as to why this is true throughout life. This simply becomes who they are. These beliefs then impact their behaviors, health, emotions and relationships."

This is an example of Complex Trauma, which has a cumulative impact. Trauma that is re-occurring, as with many types of interpersonal violence, decreases a person's ability to cope.

In order to try to regain control over his/her life, a person who has experienced trauma may fall in and out of one of the four central trauma roles in their relationships with others. These include: Victim; Abuser; Bystander; and Rescuer. Acting out any of these roles is a way of establishing power and control or giving it to someone else. This is an important concept for service providers, who may be acting on good intentions to help but inadvertently take power away by doing too much or vice versa try to force or coerce people into doing what they think is best. Imagine what would have happened if Glinda the Good Witch had stepped in and told Dorothy exactly what to do and sent her magically back to Kansas without taking this journey.

“You’ve always had the power, my dear. You’ve had it all along.”

Being trauma informed means understanding that the way to change the patterns of unhealthy relationships is to *unlearn* what has been learned, and that this happens in relationship. Because the most devastating forms of trauma occur in the context of relationships, the path to healing must also occur

in relationship- collaborative, safe, based in equality, sharing power- the opposite of what has been learned. Though they had originally looked outside of themselves to a wizard who was supposed to “fix” them, Dorothy and her peers supported each other through their relationships, and in so doing found their own inherent strengths.

“There’s No Place like Home.”

In her curriculum for supporting survivors called *Risking Connection*, Karen Saakvitne uses the

acronym R.I.C.H. to describe what must be present in relationships for healing to occur: *Respect, Information* (that is provided after INQUIRING & Actively LISTENING), *Connection*, and *Hope*: for both the people being supported and those supporting them. Gabriella Grant of the Center for Excellence in Trauma Informed Care crystallizes the essence as simply creating safety.

These concepts are in synch with Shery Mead’s Intentional Peer Support, which calls not for more services but for all members of the community to be able to support each other. It also aligns well with Cultural Humility, an approach developed by Melanie Tervalon and Jan Murray-Garcia. Cultural Humility allows recognition that everyone has their own culture and identity, and that no one can be “competent”

in anyone else’s culture. Vital components of this approach are to be curious and open to learning as a lifelong endeavor; to recognize power imbalances; and to hold institutions accountable. Inherent to both models is an open heartedness, a willingness to be vulnerable, and the courage to be self reflective, to



question our own assumptions and biases.

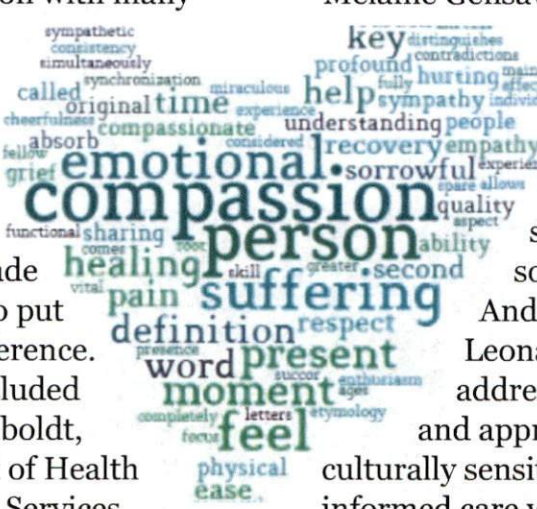
In these ways, staff of agencies can be supportive of each other. They can build collaborative relationships with those they serve, so there is less burn out. In turn they are modeling that parents can be like this with their children; young people can do this with their friends; couples can relate like this with each other. Everyone can do this! It is Universal Prevention as we break the cycles of Intergenerational Trauma. In this way, we can find our way forward to community, to safety, to well being.



Working in the Culture of Trauma Informed Care

On February 26th 2016 CAPCC hosted the 6th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference in conjunction with many partners, whose donations of money, time, materials and staff made it possible to put on this conference. Partners included First 5 Humboldt, Department of Health and Human Services, Humboldt County Probation Department, Humboldt County Office of Education, Changing Tides Family Services, Mission Linen Supply, Northcoast Children's Services, Bikers Against Child Abuse, Redwood Community Action Agency, United Indian Health Services and Starbucks coffee. The title of this year's all day conference was "Working in the Culture of Trauma Informed Care."

There were 120 participants at the Conference with a waiting list of over 40! A gentle reminder to those of you interested in attending next year to sign up early as this event has filled up the past several years.



The morning started out with the keynote speaker, social worker and cultural coach, Melanie Gensaw talking about trauma, culture & inherent resilience. Fortuna school district social workers, Andres Castro and Leona Sousa addressed strategies and approaches in culturally sensitive trauma informed care with elementary aged students. Diana Nunes-Mizer then spoke about the parenting classes that she teaches, Conscious Parenting. Part of her focus was on normalizing challenge and uncertainty to build inner strength, joy and resilience. Participants were then allowed to recharge and refresh with a delightful lunch catered by

Dorris and Daughters.

After lunch we were treated to a presentation from United Indian Health giving us a taste of the work that they do with their Teen Advisory Group (TAG), which included viewing some PSAs and a video the youth created tackling social issues. One of the presenters, Sammy Gensaw, was a former member of TAG and spoke about the ways in which TAG provided him with support to make positive choices in his life. Gillian Wadsworth shared her work with trauma informed prevention in the alternative education setting. Karen Diers finished off the day with a focus on trauma informed prevention.

If you have an idea for next year's conference or would like to be a presenter, contact the CAPCC coordinator at 707-445-7006.

What is Trauma?

All living beings experience stress and most can bounce back from these experiences with love and support. Trauma, however, is characterized as an emotional and biological response to an overwhelming event, such as an intensive medical intervention, exposure to violence, an accident or a natural disaster. Trauma impacts individuals in ways that can change ones view of the world and, left untreated, can have life-long consequences.

Using Infant Massage to Support Babies Exposed to Trauma

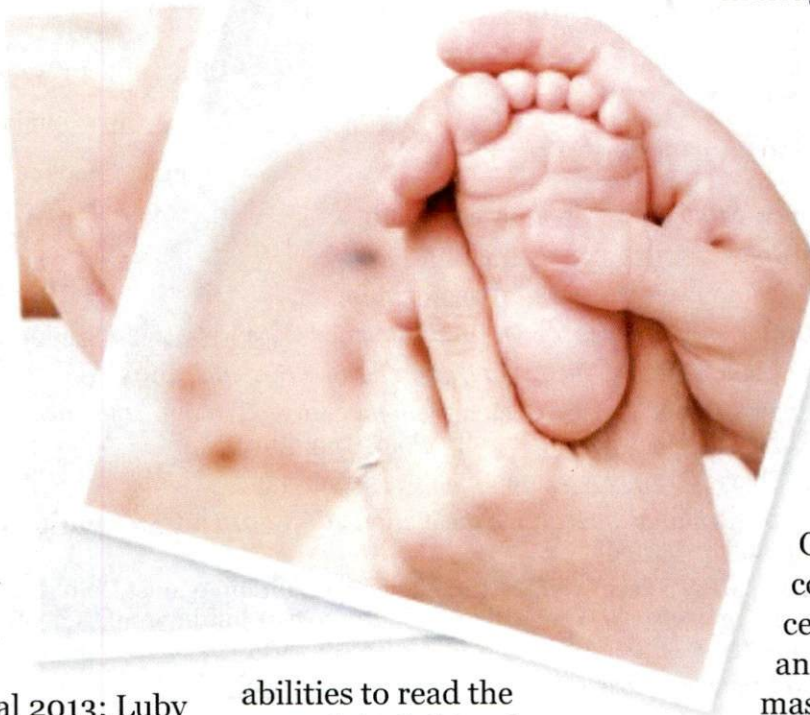
By Meg Walkley, MSW,
IFECMHe

Babies are very vulnerable, both physically and mentally to the impact of trauma and toxic stress. These experiences cause high levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, to be released in the infant's body.

In the absence of support and intervention, infants with high cortisol levels are more likely to develop social and emotional problems, struggle with behavior issues and face higher levels of health issues later in life. In the worst case scenario, toxic stress can actually alter brain growth and shorten the lifespan. (Asok et al 2013; Luby et al 2013).

The good news is that strategies have been identified that have been shown to help reduce the impact of trauma and stress on very young children. One beneficial strategy involves the power of positive touch. Skin is a primary receptor site for each person's system to process and modulate sensory information. Touch can either help speed up

or slow down the sensory integration process. It can either trigger an intense reaction or calm one. (Lillas, 2014). The International Association of Infant Massage teaches an infant massage method that builds caregivers'



abilities to read the cues of the babies they are nurturing. This, in turn, promotes caregiver-infant bonding. Caregivers also receive instruction about touching infants in ways that can help lower cortisol levels and help build stronger sensory integration capabilities. This instruction is particularly important for caregivers of infants with a trauma history which might

include negative experiences with touch or an absence of positive relationship experiences that would foster regulation.

In July of 2015, 19 practitioners participated in four days of intensive training to lay the foundation for them becoming certified instructors of infant massage. These practitioners

represented diverse disciplines and regions throughout Humboldt County. Each practitioner is responsible for providing free instruction to at least 10 families in their community. Some of these classes are still in the planning stages. Other practitioners have completed all of the certification requirements and have built infant

massage instruction into their work. If you are a family or you work with a family that has an infant who experienced early trauma there is likely infant massage instruction available. Please contact me at 221-2015 or mwalkley@humboldt.k12.ca.us for more information.



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The Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council of Humboldt County is a broad-based non profit advocacy organization that works to eliminate child abuse and neglect in our community through (1) striving to assure coordinated services and policies for the prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse among agencies and organizations, (2) actively promoting and supporting high-quality programs that successfully reduce child abuse and neglect and (3) increasing public awareness of resources to help prevent child abuse and decrease family stress.

Check out our website:

<http://capchumboldt.org/>

or on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CAPCCHumboldt>

Resources used for

Trauma Informed Prevention: Caring with Daring

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: <http://www.acestudy.org/>

Bloom, Sandra. *The Sanctuary Model*, www.sanctuaryweb.com

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Leading Change 2.0: Advancing the Behavioral Health of the Nation 2015–2018 <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA11-4629/04-TraumaAndJustice.pdf>

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The National Center for Trauma Informed Care: <http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/> .

National Empowerment Center: www.power2u.org /Mission: To carry a message of recovery, empowerment, hope and healing to people with lived experience with mental health issues, trauma, and extreme states.

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Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others

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Lillas, C. 2014. *The Neurorelational Framework in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health*. In: *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: Core Concepts and Clinical Practice*. American Psychiatric Publishing, Washington DC.

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International Association of Infant Massage: <http://www.iaim.net/>