

Trauma and Brain Development

Trauma and the Brain

Trauma affects the nervous system and can make it very sensitive:

- Difficulty with regulation
- Inability to bond or attach
- Difficulty with controlling behavior
- Impulsive
- Difficulty with focusing

Use your brain to calm the brain:

- “The best exercise for the brain is exercise”
- Movement and music can be used as a tool to regulate the brain
- Get up and get moving: 10-15% more blood flows to the brain when active – that helps get into the front of the brain.

Parts of the Brain

Brainstem

- High arousal state- reptilian part of the brain
- High alert - fight, flight, freeze survival instincts (can't think, just react)
- Running off, fighting, biting

Limbic or Mid Brain

- Can talk a little, but still not able to process and problem solve
- Name calling

Frontal Lobe

- Can use words
- Can problem solve (talking and processing)
- Can learn new things

Teach by using repetition while child is most receptive to learning. Repetition builds neurons in the brain – continue to teach and teach.

Tools to use in a Psychosocial Group Setting

Kids need predictability; they need routine:

- Greet them, eye contact
- Thumbs up day
- Soothing music
- They know what to expect
- Send the message that they're safe

Kids need to feel like they belong:

- Group handshake
- Group flags
- Special music for transitions
- Picture schedules

When the kids come into group in an agitated state, you have to meet them where they are. They may need to burn off energy or have some alone time.

Pay attention to the positive things. Tell kids what you want to see.

- Please use your walking feet
- Please use your listening ears
- Please use your kind words

Realize that these kids will see your weaknesses and they will try to put you in your brainstem.

Supervisors – one of the best ways to help your staff is to get in there, experience what's going on first hand and find out an answer together.

Two great resources for information on working with traumatized children:

- Dr. Bruce Perry
- Dr. Becky Bailey