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### Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the impact of trauma on children/youth
- Learn the principles of trauma-informed care
- Explore the current understanding of the nervous system and trauma survival responses
- Identify specific tools that assist with freeze/flight/fight survival responses in children and youth

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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.com](http://www.acestoohigh.com)

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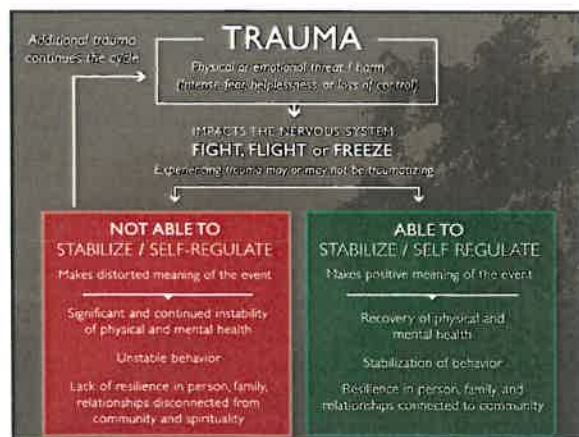
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### When A Child Or Adult's Trauma Is Unresolved

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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### 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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### 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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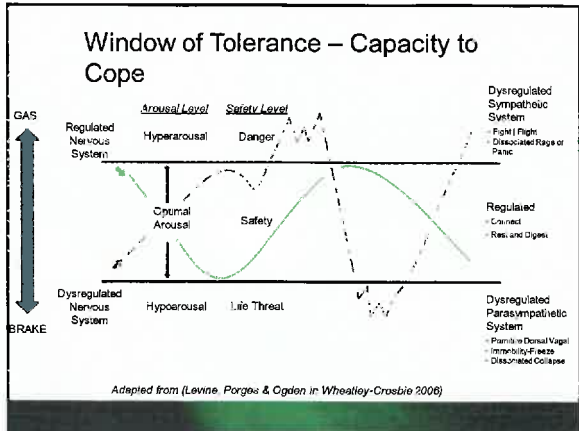
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### The Downstairs and Upstairs Brain

- The **“Downstairs Brain”** (Siegel and Bryson, 2011) includes the limbic region and the brain stem, it is more primitive and is responsible for:
  - Basic functions (*breathing, heart rate etc.*)
  - Survival Response (*fight, flight or freeze*)
  - Strong emotions (*anger, fear*)
  - Like a thermostat in regulation
- The **“Upstairs Brain”** (Siegel and Bryson, 2011) includes the cerebral cortex, is most recently evolved and is responsible for:
  - Executive Functioning (thinking, imagining, planning)
  - Soothing the **“Downstairs Brain”**

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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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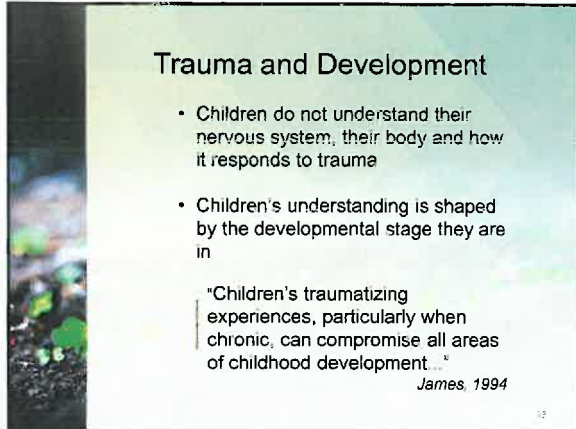
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### Trauma and Development

- 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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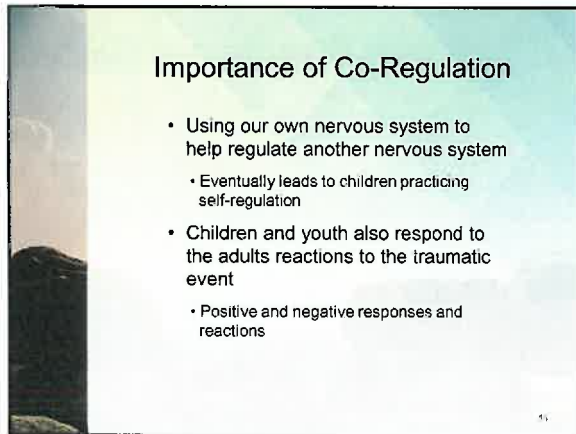
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### Importance of Co-Regulation

- 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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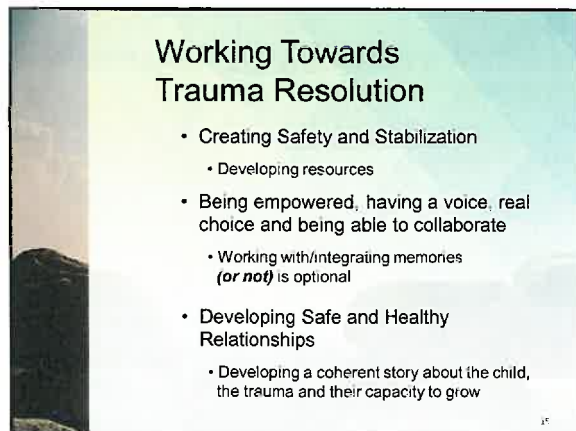
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### Working Towards Trauma Resolution

- 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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### Trauma Begins To Be Resolved By...

- Learning to self-regulate
  - Increases capacity to cope and promotes resilience
  - Assists in mastering their developmental stage
- Making meaning
  - Creating a coherent story or narrative
  - Repair and Reconnect – with self and others
- Using appropriate resources – cultural, play
- Regaining Hope

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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 is 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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### 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
- Insisting on direct eye contact can be threatening

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### Tools For Flight (Cont.)

- Predictability and planning – co-regulating
- Create an imaginary safe place within themselves
- Containment exercises – using large muscle groups of the legs
- Maintaining connection
  - Expressing worry vs. anger about their desire to run away or when they actually run away
  - Negotiating contact using phone calls, texts, emails, Facebook, twitter
  - Reconnecting - What message do you want to communicate when they return?

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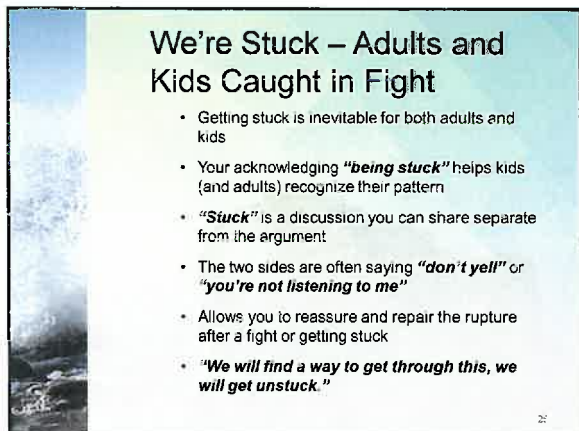
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### We're Stuck – Adults and Kids Caught in Fight

- 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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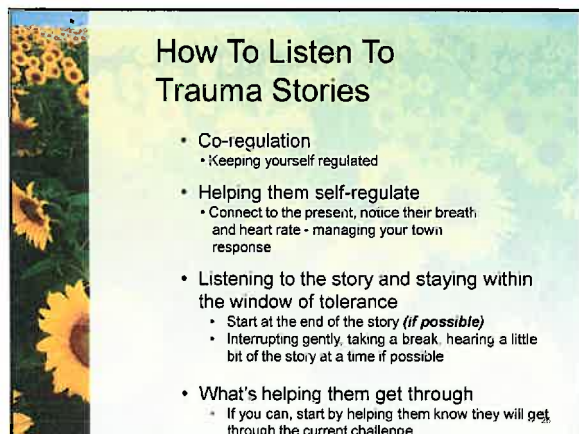
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### How To Listen To Trauma Stories

- Co-regulation
  - Keeping yourself regulated
- Helping them self-regulate
  - Connect to the present, notice their breath and heart rate - managing your town 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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### Creating New Pathways

- Pathways are created in our brain when we repeat a pattern of thoughts or images over and over, positive or negative patterns.
  - Create opportunities for integration with new pathways
  - Promotes self-regulation and stability
- How to create new pathways:
  - Imagine having the help from a trusted adult (missing resource)
  - Imagine a safe place
  - Practicing new self or co-regulation strategies

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### How We Heal Is In Relationship

- Ruptures occur in all relationships
- Repair is a choice we all make – offering a gesture of repair or accepting it
  - Children often make small gestures of repair that are overlooked e.g. can you play with me
  - Offering repair teaches and models for children how to build and maintain healthy relationships
  - You and the child know that the relationship is restored (*the amygdala has been settled*) when the gesture of repair is accepted
- How might you offer or accept a gesture of repair?
- Can you and your child plan how you will repair after the next rupture?

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### Laughing Baby

What regulation of a nervous system looks like...



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### When My Nervous System Is Regulated

- I am operating within my window of tolerance
- I feel: curious, connected to my body, open to connect, competent, relaxed yet alert, responsive and present
- I know I have choices and options and can reach out for support
- I recognize when I am moving out of my window of tolerance and have tools to re-establish stability

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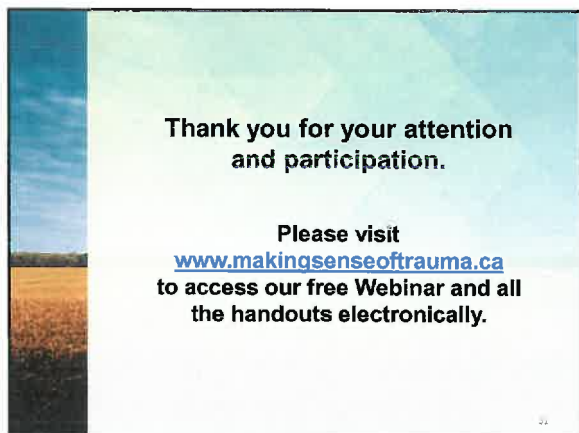
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