



RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL  
MODULE FIVE:  
CHILD TRAUMA AND LOSS & TRANSITIONS

Pre-Service Training

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## Agenda

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- ▣ Types of Childhood Trauma
- ▣ Traumatic Stress Response Cycle
- ▣ Understanding Trauma Triggers
- ▣ Impact of Trauma Exposure

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## Childhood Trauma Defined

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- ▣ Being witness to and/or experiencing an event that creates an actual or perceived threat of imminent danger to either the child or someone of meaning to the child (e.g., parent, sibling, teacher, friend etc.).
- ▣ The trauma event then interferes with the child's natural ability to cope causing a range of negative emotions and daily stressors.

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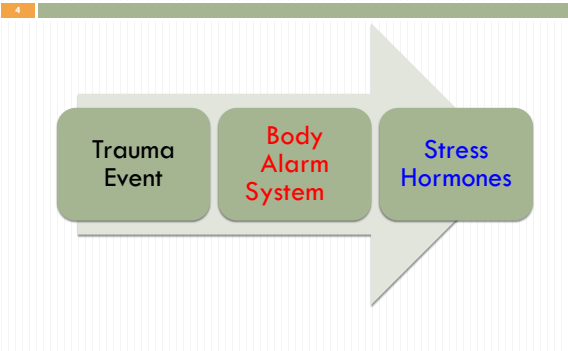
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## Traumatic Stress Response Cycle




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## Types of Childhood Trauma

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- Acute Trauma
    - A single event that is limited in duration
    - Examples Include:
      - Serious Accidents
      - Natural Disasters
      - Sudden death or Loss
      - Community Violence
    - An acute trauma does not imply a minimal impact on the child's emotional well-being.
    - Every child responds differently to traumatic stress which can cause a range of negative emotions and/or daily stressors.

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## Types of Childhood Trauma

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- Chronic Trauma
    - Exposure to multiple traumatic events that may or may not be related to one another
    - Examples Include:
      - Related Example: longstanding exposure to domestic violence and/or child maltreatment
      - Unrelated Example: exposure to community violence, general neglect from parent, involvement in physically abusive adolescent relationship

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## Types of Childhood Trauma

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- Complex Trauma
  - Accounts for both the exposure to multiple traumatic events and the longstanding impact on a child's developmental functioning

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## The Impact of Childhood Trauma

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- Traumatic Stress
  - Is the cumulative impact of our thoughts, feelings and bodily responses to a trauma event
- Child traumatic stress requires understanding both:
  - The facts about the trauma event
 And...
  - The child's beliefs about the trauma event

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## Critical Factors Influencing Traumatic Stress Response

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- Critical Factors Include:
  - Child's Age & Developmental Level
  - Child's Experience as Witness or Victim
  - Child's Perceived Level of Fear and/or Danger
  - Child's Relationship to the Victim or Perpetrator
  - Child's History of Trauma Events
  - Child's Removal & Placement in Foster Care following Trauma Event
  - Child's Level of Support following Trauma Event

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## Audio: A Child's 911 Call

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## Activity

Caring for Children Following a Trauma Event

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## Understanding Trauma Triggers

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- Trauma triggers are any combination of events, reminders and/or cues that reactivate a child's traumatic stress response cycle
- Common Triggers for Traumatized Children Include:
  - Sights, Sounds, or Scents
  - Transitions, Loss of Control or Sensory Overload
  - Feelings of Loneliness, Vulnerability or Rejection
  - Confrontation, Authority or Limit Setting
  - Birthdays, Holidays or Anniversary Effects

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### Traumatic Stress Response: Fight



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### Traumatic Stress Response: Flight



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### Traumatic Stress Response: Freeze



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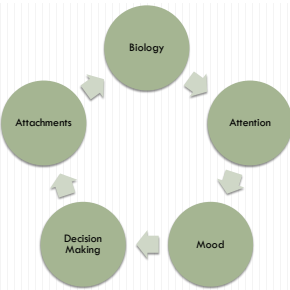
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## Daily Impact of Trauma Exposure




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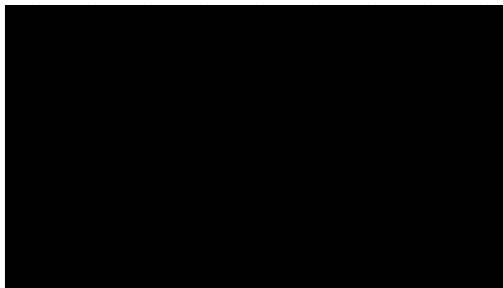
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## Video: Through Our Eyes— Children, Violence & Trauma




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## Next...

- ☐ Grief & Loss
- ☐ Transitions
- ☐ Case Vignette
- ☐ Resiliency

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## Separation, Loss & Grief

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- Separation:
  - Is the act of disruption to a meaningful relationship
- Loss:
  - Is the impact caused by the disruption to the meaningful relationship
- Grief:
  - Is the emotional process of working through the experience of separation and loss

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## Activity

Five Connections

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## Video: ReMoved

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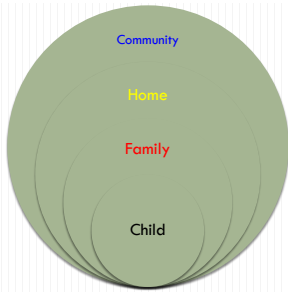
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## Placement in Foster Care: Understanding the Extent of Separations

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## Activity

Resource Families: Impact of Loss

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## Living with Loss: Shock, Denial & Protest

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### □ Signs of Struggle:

- **Shock–**
  - Confusion
  - Emotional Paralysis/Numbness
  - Periods of Intense Emotion
- **Denial–**
  - Absence of Distress
  - Fantasy or Magical Thinking
  - Persistent Requests to Return Home
- **Protest–**
  - Emotional Outbursts
  - Physical Outbursts
  - Disruption in Eating, Sleep & Daily Routines

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## Living with Loss: Shock, Denial & Protest

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### □ Tools for Resource Families:

- Invite comfort and familiarity into your home:
  - Ask questions about favorite foods, TV shows, bedtime routines and provide opportunities to recreate these norms and routines
- Model the importance of feeling expression through observational statements:
  - "You seem upset. It's okay to feel upset about what's happened. Would you like to talk about how you are feeling?"
- Provide answers to the child in an age appropriate and reassuring manner:
  - "I know you really want to go home right now, but right now your parent(s) are working out a plan with the Social Worker. Once we know the plan, you will know too."

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## Living with Loss: Bargaining

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### □ Signs of Struggle:

- **Striking a Deal:**
  - "I promise to behave better if you let me go home to my parents."
- **Power to Fix the Problem:**
  - "If I act out really bad with my resource family parent then my social worker will change his/her mind and send me home."
- **Self Blame:**
  - "It's all my fault. I should have never told my teacher what was going on at home."
- **Blame of Others:**
  - "It's all because of you [social worker or resource family parent] that I'm not with my parent(s)!"

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## Living with Loss: Bargaining

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### □ Tools for Resource Families:

- Reaffirm to the child that his/her behaviors were not the cause of their removal
- Encourage the expression of all feelings both (+) & (-)
- Do not take it personally when a child blames you for their placement—emotionally it is easier for a child to blame the social worker or the resource family parent than to blame their parent(s)
- Understand the meaning behind the behavior & focus on strengthening the relationship

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## Living with Loss: Disorganization

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- Signs of Struggle:
  - **Anger:** A universal response to grief & loss; Often expressed by children through behavioral patterns characteristic of depression and disruptive behavior
  - **Depression-like Symptoms:**
    - Anger turned Inward
    - Heightened Sadness
    - Withdrawal
    - Worries & Fears
    - Too much sleep or Too little sleep
    - Self harm behaviors & Suicidal thoughts and planning
  - **Disruptive Behavior- like Symptoms:**
    - Anger turned Outward
    - Verbal Aggression & Physical Aggression
    - Property Damage
    - Stealing and/or Lying
    - Aggression towards family pets
    - High Risk Behaviors (drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity)

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## Living with Loss: Disorganization

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- Tools for Resource Families:
  - Give permission to feel angry but with emphasis on healthier ways for feeling expression
  - Offer emotional containment through daily structure, safety and consistency in parenting style
  - Support ongoing connections with birth families
  - Use encouragement and praise to rebuild a child's sense of security and self esteem
  - Document the behaviors & Talk with the Social Worker
  - Advocate for mental health services, drug & alcohol counseling and/or behavioral support services

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## Living with Loss: Reorganization

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- Signs of Recovery:
  - **Acceptance:**
    - Accepting support of bio parent, resource family and other members of the professional team
    - Trying on new coping tools and daily living routines
  - **Resilience:**
    - Utilizing strengths of self and support system
    - Committing to healthier forms of coping
    - Allowing self to re-experience joy and happiness
  - **Forgiveness:**
    - A powerful shift in a child's response to the trauma and loss;
    - Is NOT forgetting the trauma;
    - Is NOT reconciling with the person responsible for the trauma and loss
    - Forgiveness is letting go of the ANGER

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## Activity

Role Play: Transitions

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## The Impact of Transitions

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- Integrating a child into your home:
  - Advocating for familiarities of home:
    - Clothing
    - Pictures
    - Pillows and Blankets
    - Favorite toys or stuffed animals
  - Facilitating familiarities of home:
    - Preparing favorite meals
    - Watching favorite TV show or cartoon together
    - Asking about routines and norms and making adjustments

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## The Impact of Transitions

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- Removals & Placement Changes
  - Exhausting All Resources Prior To A Removal:
    - Talking with the Social Worker
    - Advocating for Support and/or Resources
    - Requesting a Team Decision Making Meeting
  - Handling A 7 Day Notice for Removal:
    - Handling this Transition with Dignity and Respect
    - Preparing all Children for this Transition
    - Coping with your Decision for the Removal

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## The Impact of Transitions

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- Reunification, Adoption & Legal Guardianship:
  - Acceptance of Permanency Plan
  - Preparing for the Upcoming Transition and Loss
  - Maintaining Professionalism during the Upcoming Transition
  - Caring for yourself in relation to the Loss
  - Facilitating & Maintaining Life-long Connections

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## Resource Family Self Care

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- Setting Limits
- Respite Care
- Physical Exercise and/or Calming Activities
- Support Groups
- Religious/Spiritual Support
- Short Term Individual Therapy
- Breaks in Service

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## Activity

Case Vignette: Living With Loss

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## Fostering Resiliency

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- **Recognize** the effect trauma has had on the child/family's life
- **Create** an atmosphere of safety and nurturance
- **Provide** calm, consistent, and loving care to set an example of how to regulate, express, and manage emotions
- **Support** connections and relationships
- **Advocate** for the child and/or family's needs
- **Responsive Care** for YOURSELF & OTHERS

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## Foster Youth Video

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- ILSP Youth Sharing Their Story

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