



The Ripple Effect: Exploring the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

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Goals & Objectives



- Review domestic violence
- Identify the impacts on children
- Learn ways to interact with children
- Become proficient in safety planning with children
- Gain an understanding of ways to work with a child-parent dyad



Trauma... What is it?



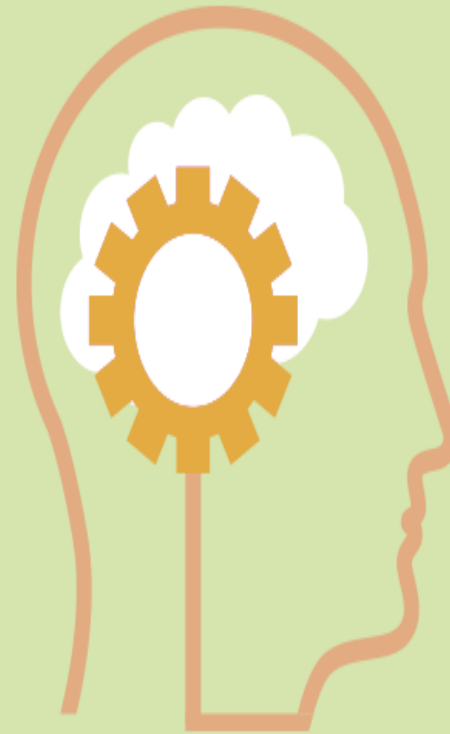
Trauma... What is it?



TRAUMA

TRAUMA IS A SITUATION OR AN EVENT THAT A PERSON SIMPLY CANNOT COPE WITH LEAVING THEM IN AN EXTREME STATE OF FEAR & AFRAID OF:

- IMMINENT DEATH ■
- DESTRUCTION ■
- PHYSICAL HARM ■
- MENTAL HARM ■



Traumatic Events... What are they?



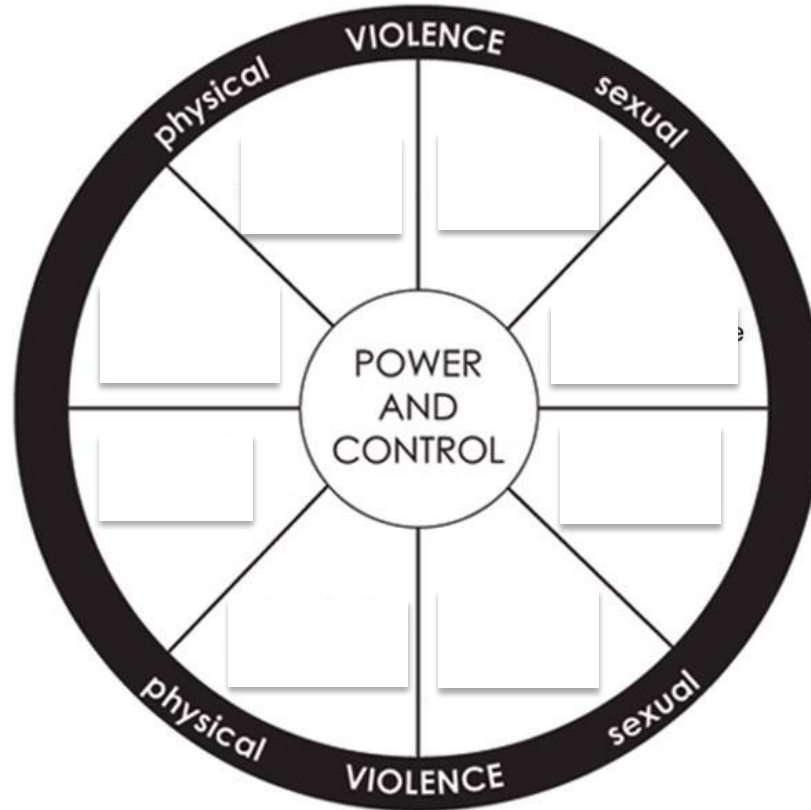
- Domestic Violence

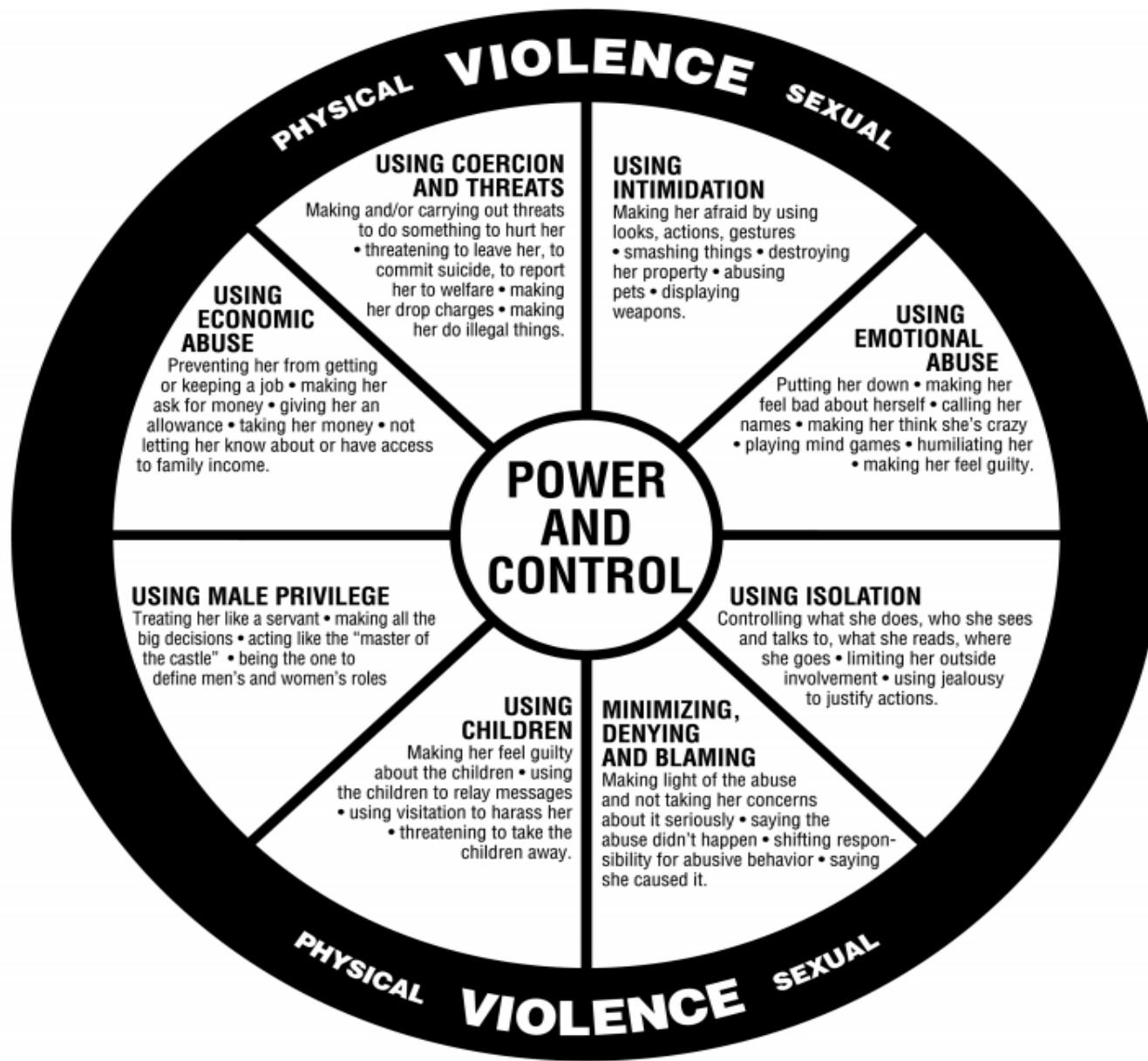
- Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain **power and control** over another intimate partner.



- Forms of Abuse

- The original power and control wheel has 8 categories. Do you know any of the categories?





- Flash Points (a place, event, or time at which trouble, such as violence or anger, flares up)
-



- Protective Order
- Released from jail/prison
- Criminal charges filed
- Seeking services
- Recent instability (job loss, etc)
- **Visitation or exchange of children**
- **Child Welfare Involvement**
- **Divorce/custody filed**



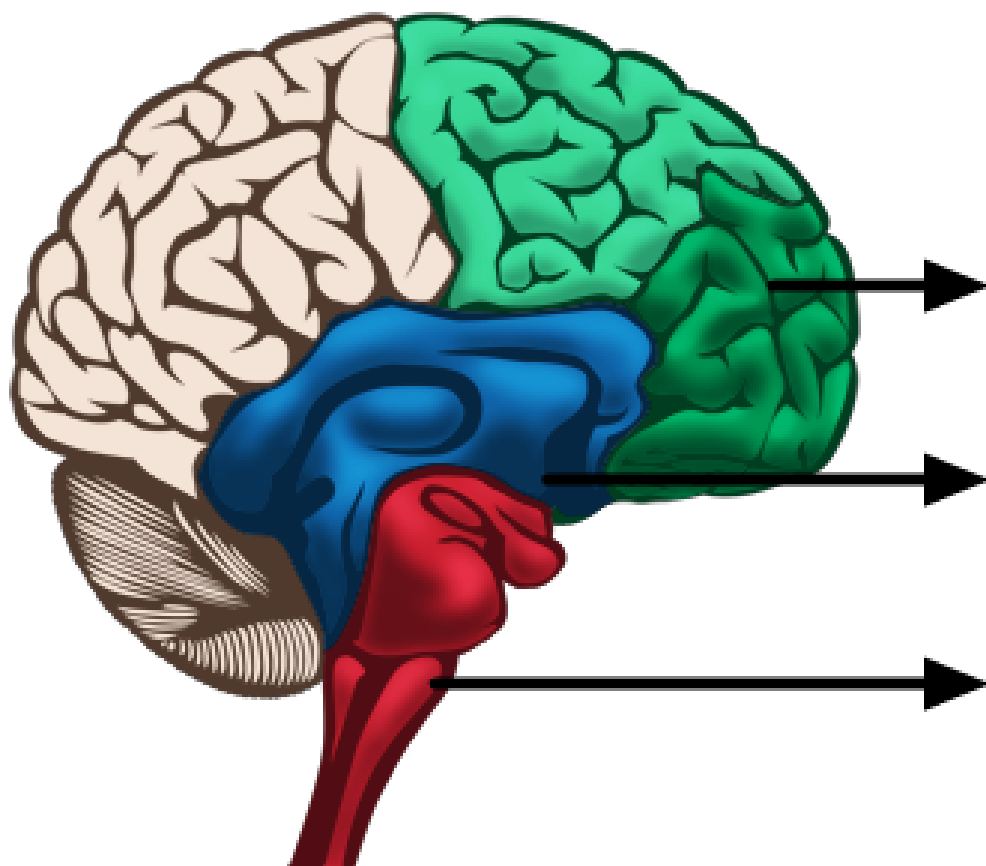
- Domestic Violence & Children



Trauma & the Brain



- Brain develops from bottom to top.
- Our survival brain is activated first.



Executive State

Prefrontal Lobes

What can I learn from this?

Emotional State

Limbic System

Am I loved?

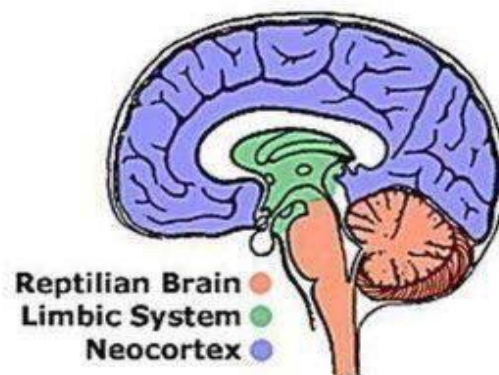
Survival State

Brain Stem

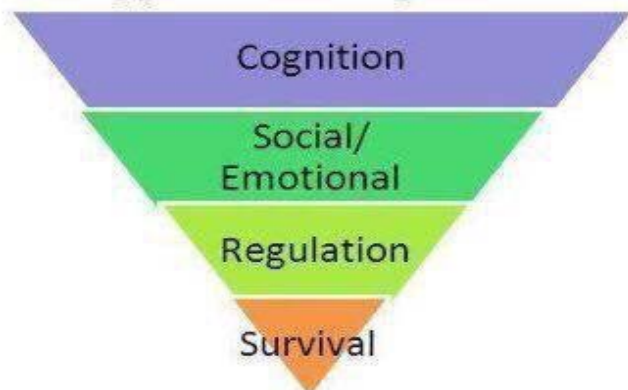
Am I safe?



Trauma & Brain Development



Typical Development



Developmental Trauma



Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education



Ways Children Experience Domestic Violence



- Visually observing the events
- Hearing the events
- A child being injured, on accident or on purpose, during a violent event
- A child stepping into the violence to try and protect the adult victim
- Living in a home with patterns of domestic violence

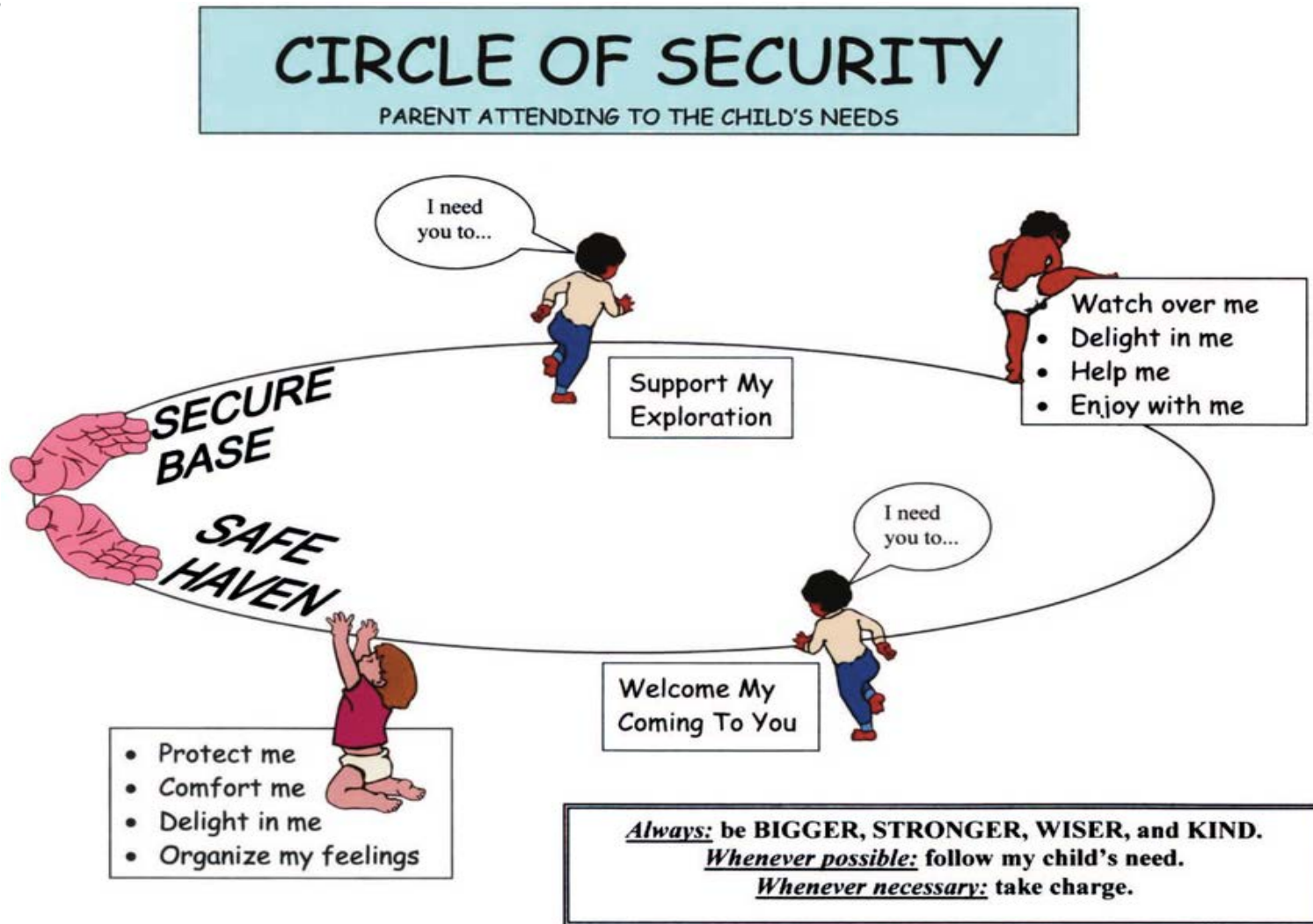


Ways Children Experience Domestic Violence

- A child calling the police or going to get help
- Retaliation (physical, mental, emotional) by the harm doer on the child for trying to stop or intervene in the violence
- The harm doer using the children as “pawns” to spy or question about activities
- Witnessing the “aftermath” of the violence such as arrests, going to a shelter, seeing the physical injuries or damaged items, etc.



What All Children Need



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Impact of Domestic Violence on Children



• Overview



Tasks of Infancy-Early Childhood & Impacts



Key aspects of development in infants and toddlers

Infants & toddlers take in information through their five senses

DV impacts: Loud noises, vivid images of violence, smell of sweat, feeling of shaking/fear/heart pounding from the body of the person holding them

Form secure attachments

DV impacts: Parents may not consistently respond to infants' & toddlers' needs or may respond in scary ways.

Become active explorers of their world

DV impacts: Fear, threat from abusive person, overwhelm may impair exploration

Learn about social interactions and relationships from experiences at home.

DV impacts: Learn about power & control in observed and experienced interactions



Tasks of School Aged & Impacts



Key aspects of development in school aged children:

Learn ways to express their emotions in safe, socially-appropriate ways

DV impacts: Learn unhealthy ways to express emotions

Form meaning in their world through experiences and observations

DV impacts: Confused by conflicted messages (what I see vs what I was told)

Think egocentrically

DV impacts: Blames themselves. Attributes violence to something they did

Form ideas of their role as a child based on social messaging

DV impacts: Learns gender roles associated with violence and victimization

Increased physical independence

DV impacts: Fear of adventuring out, especially outside of family nucleus



Tasks of Tweens-Teens & Impacts



Key aspects of development in tweens and teens:

Increase sense of self and autonomy from family

DV impacts: Care taking roles or premature independence, increase parent child conflict, early home leaving, school drop out

Increased peer group influence

DV impacts: Secret keepers which does not allow for safe connection with peers, high risk behaviors, substance misuse

Dating/Relationships

DV impacts: May avoid or seek intimacy, see having babies as an escape

Increase capacity for abstract reasoning and broader views

DV impacts: Less able to see shades of gray, difficulty understanding complex situations

Future Planning

DV impacts: Lack of confidence in themselves for a bright future



Parent-Child Relationship



- Identity struggles
 - They are 50% of each parent- one is being harmed, the other is causing harm
 - Distance themselves from caregivers
 - Mistrustful of adults in general, but especially their caregivers
 - Blaming/guilt/shame
- Child may lose sense of safety within relationship; Caregiver being harmed may lose confidence in keeping their child safe



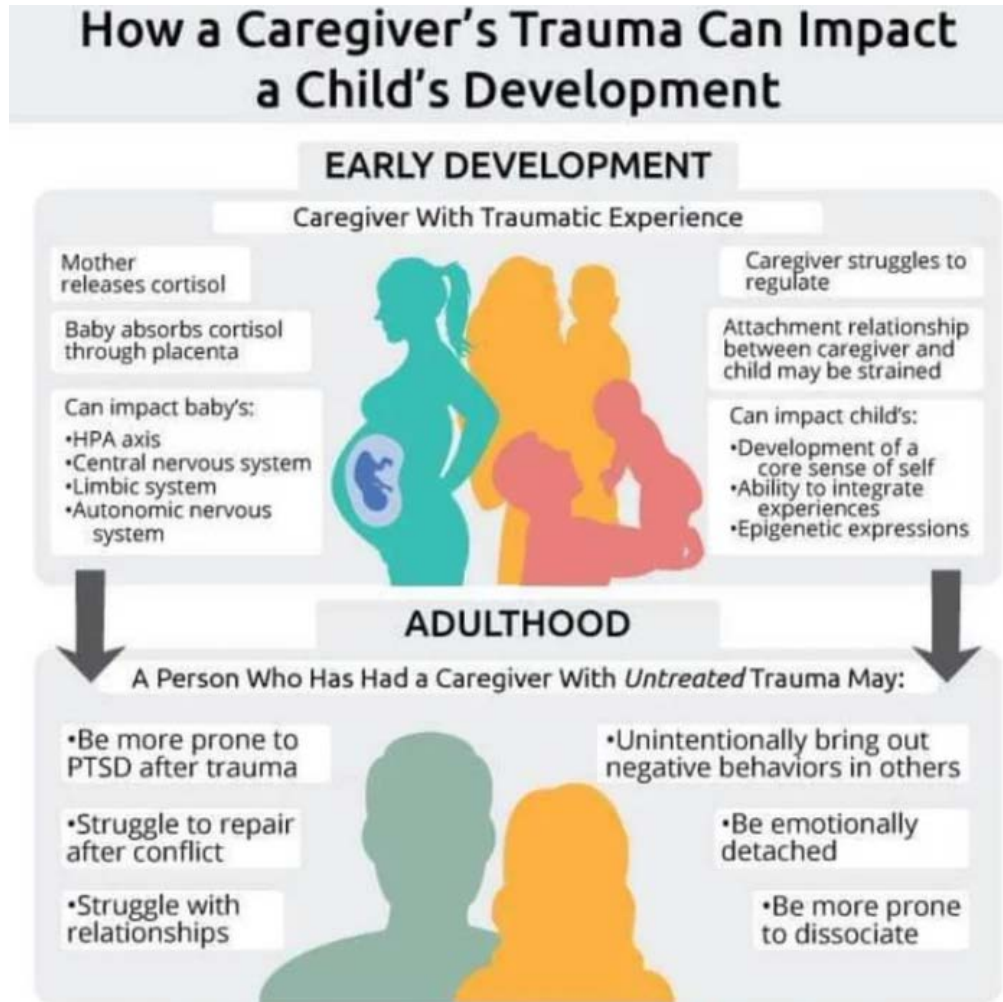
Parent-Child Relationship



- Caregiver's belief that they are a "bad parent" may be reinforced by child's acting out behaviors (aka trauma)
- Child may mimic harm doer's abusive behaviors, increasing survivor's reminders of trauma
 - Reinforces negative patterns of interactions
- Caregiver and child may serve as traumatic reminders to each other
 - Triggering survival responses in each



• Generational Impact



- Generational Impact



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- Putting It Together



Now... How do we help children?



The primary language of children is PLAY!



Play and Imagination



What does play help with?



Improves literacy and language
Enhances emotional skills
Encourages independence
Fosters cognitive growth
Reduces stress
Increases physical abilities
Allows for social skill growth
Processing trauma



Types of play



Symbolic or Dramatic

Associative

Onlooker

Solitary

Constructive

Fantasy

Competitive

Physical

Unoccupied



Types of play



Symbolic or Dramatic

Children will often process trauma using symbolic or dramatic play- at school, at home, at daycare, in therapy, etc.

It's important to know it may not be an exact depiction of what happened to them. They may play out themes in their play.



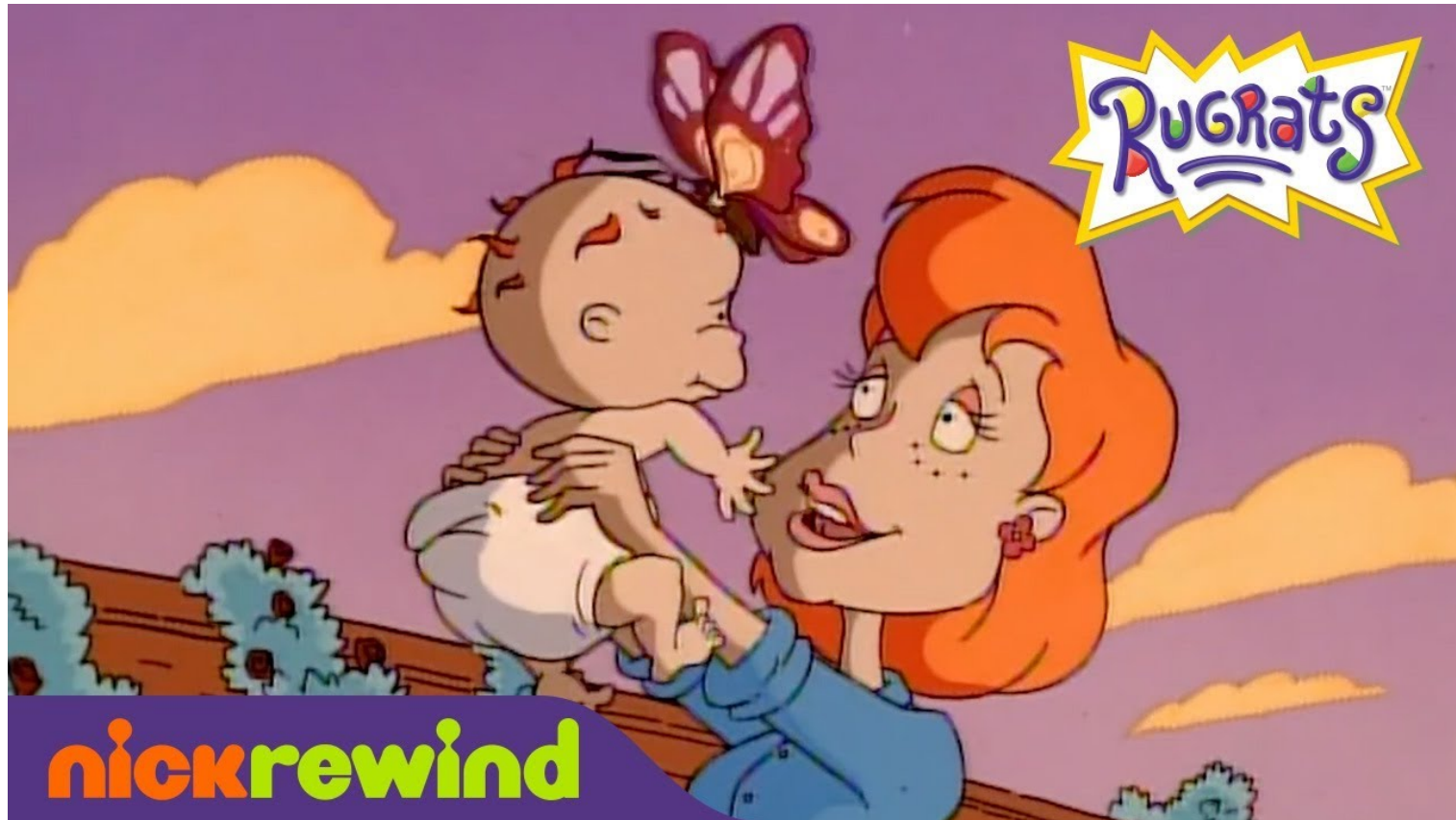
Developmentally Appropriate Conversations



People often forget that children are people too... They simply don't have the development adults have yet. However, they have ideas, thoughts, emotions, etc. just like adults. They also need to be told what is happening, just in developmentally appropriate ways.



Developmentally Appropriate Conversations



Developmentally Appropriate Conversations



Additional examples:

You might tell a 4 year old, “Mommy takes medicine the doctor did not give her. It’s not safe for her body.”

Then at 10 years old, you might evolve the dialogue to “Drugs are unsafe for our bodies and our brains. They can cause a lot of damage to our bodies and brains. When we use drugs, we cannot take care of kids safely. Your mom took drugs when you were little.”

Then at 18 years old, you might evolve the dialogue to “Your mom is addicted to heroine and she has a really hard time making a safe choice to get clean and stay sober.”



- Let's Practice

- In groups of 3-4, practice forming a developmentally appropriate, honest narrative for the following scenario:
 - Jimmy, a 7 year old boy, has noticed his mom and dad have been stressed out lately. Jimmy overheard that his mom is no longer working and has a lot of doctors appointments. Other than that, he is left guessing a lot of the time about what is going on. What Jimmy doesn't know (but you get to figure out how to tell him!) is that his mom is sick and she will need surgery to make her better. Her surgery will require 6 months of recovery, but she should be okay after that. Help Jimmy's mom and dad create a developmentally and age appropriate, honest narrative about what is going on.
 - Don't forget- play is language of children!



- Let's Review

- What did your narratives sound like?
- Would you use any play to help have the conversation? If so, what kind of play?



Now you know how to talk to kids...



- Safety Planning

- A safety plan is a strategy that involves identifying the steps the child/ youth can take to increase safety. A safety plan helps to prepare for the possibility of further violence and provides guidelines to follow if their safety is at risk.



Safety Planning



- Ask children to identify ways to get out of their house, if needed.
 - STAY AWAY from kitchens, garages, & small spaces!
- Remind children DV is **not their fault**.
- Remind children it is not safe for them, nor is it their responsibility, to intervene.



Help kids stay SAFE!



- Stay away from the fighting



- Ask for help



- Find a safe adult who will listen



- Everyone knows it is not your fault



How Can I Help?



- Let children know
 - They are not alone
 - Abuse is not their fault and it is not okay
 - They have a right to feel safe
 - You are concerned for their safety
 - Validate their feelings and experiences
 - LISTEN
 - Play!



Questions



Thank you!

