

# IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES BY INTEGRATING DIAGNOSIS WITH SCHOOL PRACTICE

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# PRESENTATION OBJECTIVE

Clinicians & Supporting Professionals will:

- Understand the impact of trauma/adverse experiences on the brain
- Recognize manifestations of trauma/adverse experiences in the school environment
- Learn how to establish effective communication and collaborative relationships with schools
- Apply newly learned knowledge to a current client/child

# ADVERSE EXPERIENCES &/OR TRAUMA ON THE BRAIN

- Fight, flight, or Freeze vs. Thinking brain
  - Can work in tandem, but is impacted in a traumatized brain
  - Emotional brain becoming a survival brain
    - Pervasive experiences of feeling fear, unsafe relationships, unsafe in bodies, and their feelings and thoughts.
      - Attempting to understand a chaotic world
    - Automatic responses that hijack the thinking brain; a hostile take over of the conscious mind
    - Core belief: people make good decisions or bad decisions
      - Traumatized brain cannot access and use the thinking brain to make those decisions
    - Alarm system in the brain is distorted and perceives danger everywhere; dangerous, neutral, and safe. The alarm is consistently sounding.
    - Ability to appraise the present and learn from experience
      - Velcro for bad and Teflon for bad; early experiences and wiring of the brain.
        - Good later experiences significantly outweigh the bad early experiences
        - Developmental trauma is healed over time, not in the short term

# PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSING

- Storage, Coding, Retrieval, and Application; Long term memory deficits, short term memory deficits, fluid reasoning, etc.
  - Learning difficulties, deficits, and disabilities
  - Identified through Response to Intervention (RtI), through School Teams, like the Student Study Team, and formally identified through the IEP Team
- The Residual Impacts:
  - Anxiety, executive dysfunction, social/emotional dysfunction
  - Childhood trauma is the single most powerful predictor of medical illnesses.

# THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- The Holistic Experience
  - Education should be a holistic experience
  - School is 1/3 of a child's life investment
  - Creation of a safe school environment
  - Creation of a safe classroom environment
    - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
    - Psychological and physical safety precedes learning
- Building Relationships; We cannot predict which relationship in a child's life will be a catalyst for healing; we are all impacted by trauma, and we promote healing when we connect with each other and with those who were directly traumatized.
  - Teacher-student and meaningful adult interactions
    - You have had this student before
    - *In loco parentis*
  - Student to student
    - Foster respect
    - Create inclusion

# THE LEARNING CHILD

- Academic Challenges
  - The learning environment
  - Difficulty learning
  - Poor academic performance
  - Learning disabled vs. Lazy & unmotivated
- Personal Experiences
  - Disrupted Learning
    - Ruminating thoughts
    - Flashbacks
  - Inform Instruction
    - Skills developed at an earlier life stage than expected
    - Relating personal choices to life outcomes

# THE EMOTIONAL CHALLENGE

- Behavioral Challenges
  - Common misdiagnosis (ADHD/ADD/ODD)
  - Declaring the student a “Bad Kid”
- Relational Challenges
  - Adult-Student
    - Responding appropriately vs. reacting
    - Learning appropriate rules of adult-child interaction
    - Knowing appropriate adult-student behaviors & boundaries
  - Understanding Student-Student
    - Defining friendships
    - Learning appropriate guidelines for student-student interactions
    - Learning appropriate time and topics of disclosure

# COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS

- Identifying essential school staff
- Establish common purpose
- Explain your reason for communication
- Establish the need for collaboration
- Be aware of possible school responses
- Ensure recommendation effectiveness result in increased student outcomes



# CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATIONS

- Understand HIPPA as it relates to disclosing vital information
- Ask school personnel questions to help determine what the current educationally related concerns are
- Correlate the educational concerns with the child's adverse life experiences
- ***Do not*** define the student by his/her adverse experiences
- Make recommendations to the school that are supportive of the student and applicable in the school environment
- Assist with the development of a plan for success (504, IEP, RTI, MTSS) in collaboration with the school team

# ONGOING COLLABORATION

- Extending the team
  - Include caregivers
  - Include medical professionals
  - Include psychologists/therapist & psychiatrist
- Facilitating information flow
  - Create a “team” of essential team members
  - Simplify the flow of information
  - Ensure necessary team member are in “the know”
  - Ensure only information vital to each member is shared
  - Respect team members time

# APPLICATION

- Think of a child you are currently supporting
- Identify concerning behaviors and
- Identify educationally related vital information that would be helpful to share with the school team
- Identify recommendations that can help create a supportive and safe classroom environment
- List personnel you could reach out to and contact information
- List 3 pieces of vital information with recommendations that will result in increased student outcomes to be shared with school personnel
- List follow-up steps with dates

# QUESTION & ANSWER

- For more information please contact:
  - **Marta V Leyva, M.A.**
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