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*Understanding Complex
Trauma*

“THE BRAIN IS THE BOSS”

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WHAT IS COMPLEX TRAUMA?

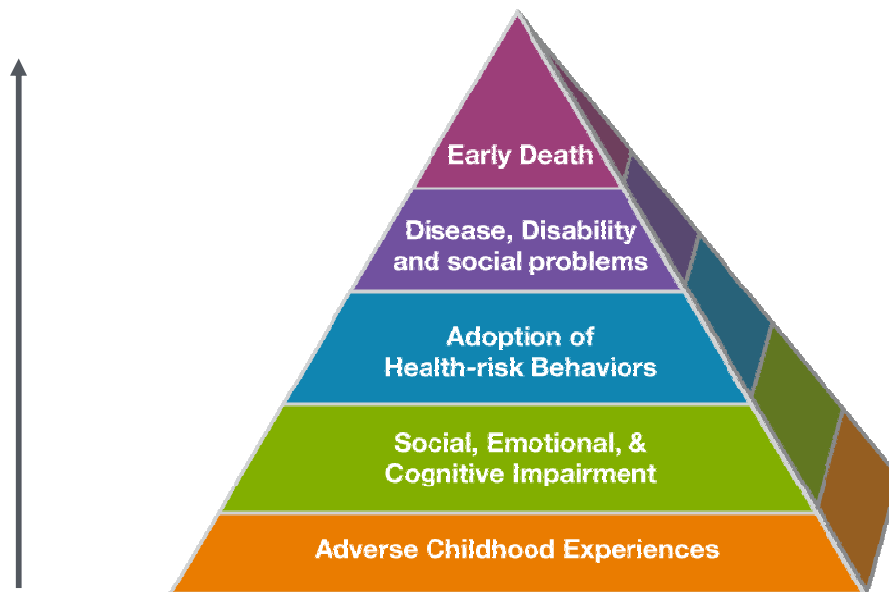
- *Exposure to multiple traumatic events and the long-term impact of this exposure.*
- *Physical and sexual abuse, exposure to substance abuse, domestic and community violence, separation from family members, abandonment, neglect.*
- *Usually begins early in life and disrupts child’s neurobiological and emotional development.*
- *Linked to problems such as addiction, depression and anxiety, self-harming behaviors and psychiatric disorders.*

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE)

- *Studies relationship of adverse childhood experiences to adult health and behavior*
 - *Domestic violence*
 - *Sexual/physical/emotional abuse*
 - *Physical/emotional neglect*
 - *Substance abuse in the home*
 - *Mental illness in the home*
 - *Parental loss, divorce/separation*
 - *Incarceration of household members*

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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE) OVERVIEW OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



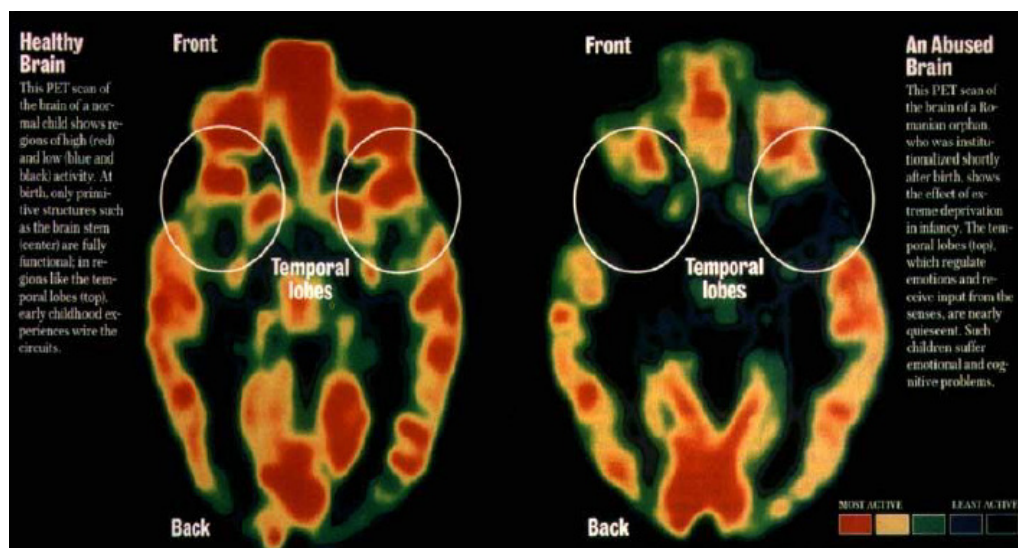
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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE) OVERVIEW OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- *The higher the number of traumatic experiences in childhood, the higher the presence of chronic depression, suicidal ideations, smoking, alcoholism, risk of rape or STDs, multiple sexual partners, unwanted pregnancies, hallucinations, domestic violence and early death.*
- *Proves that childhood experiences affect physical and emotional well-being into adulthood.*
- *When working with victims of sex trafficking, it is crucial to understand their childhood and history prior to your intervention.*

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NEUROSCIENCE OF TRAUMA, ABUSE & NEGLECT



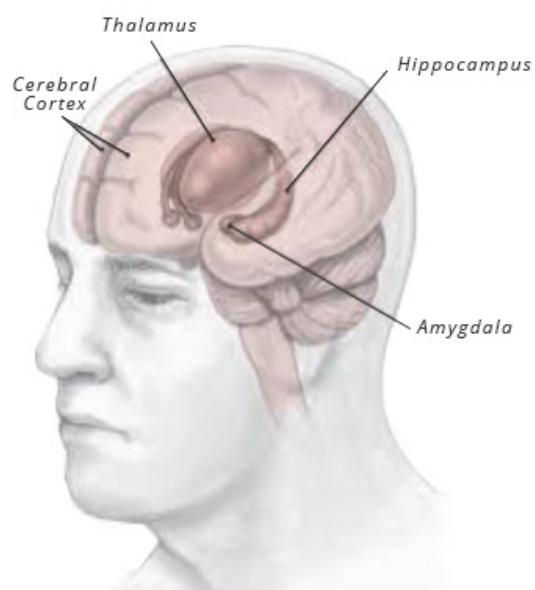
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TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING NEUROSCIENCE OF TRAUMA, ABUSE & NEGLECT

- *Trauma changes the responses of the brain, impairs healthy brain development.*
- *Crucial to understand what is going on at a biological level in the brain because we cannot see the impairment, we just experience the behavior that results.*
- *Not necessarily a problem of character, morals but rather a biological impairment, a brain that cannot do what we are expecting it to.*
- *Strengths based approach: focus on what the brain CAN do, rather than on what it can't.*

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CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BRAIN



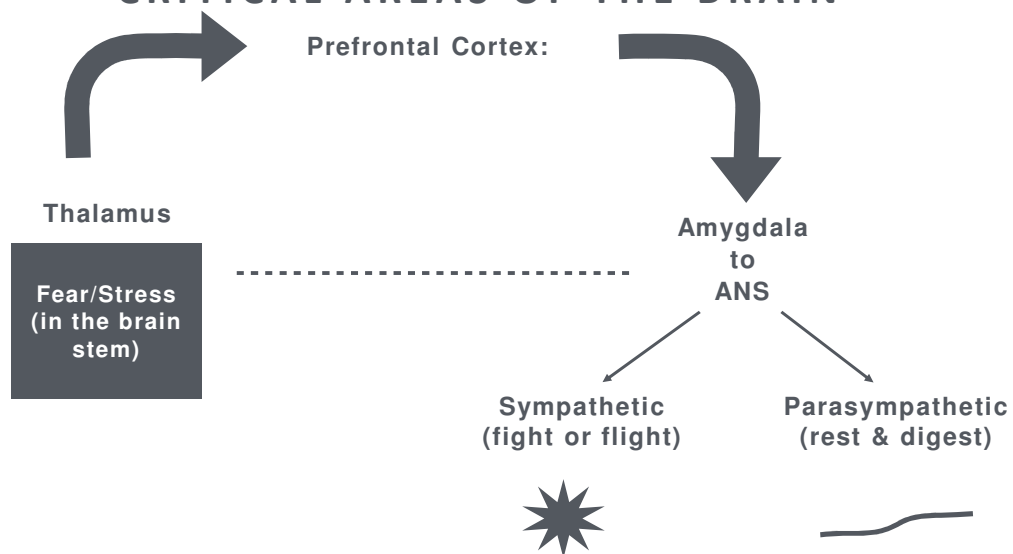
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THE TRAFFICKERS CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BRAIN

- *Prefrontal/Cerebral Cortex: delayed gratification, reasoning/logic, control/moderation, decision making, problem solving.*
- *Amygdala: fear receptor, emotional reactions*
- *Hippocampus: short/long term memory, ability to focus, regulate emotions.*

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THE TRAFFICKERS CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BRAIN



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STRESS AND THE BRAIN

- *When experiencing stress, the stress response system is activated.*
- *The body and brain go on alert - adrenaline rush, increased heart rate, increase in stress hormone levels.*
- *When the stress is relieved/resolved after a short time, or a young person receives support from caring adults, the stress response winds down and the body returns to normal.*
- *In severe situations, such as ongoing abuse and neglect where there is no caring adult to act as a buffer against the stress, the stress response stays activated even when there is no apparent physical harm.*

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STRESS AND THE BRAIN

- *Overtime, this results in a stress response system set permanently on “high alert”*
- *Brain unable to think rationally, body will continue reacting in fear when there is no longer a threat.*
- *Fight/Flight responses were designed for rapid action, not prolonged stress or complex trauma.*
- *Too much stress over too much time, or too much stress too fast changes the brain and impacts brain development.*

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STRESS AND THE BRAIN

- *Prolonged activation of stress hormones in early childhood can reduce neural connections in important areas of the brain at just the time when connections should be increasing for proper development.*
- *Affects short term memory, emotional regulation, ability to pay attention, focus, motivational drive.*
- *Understanding how the brain responds to fear and stress, we can see acting out behavior (fight/flight/freeze) as a normal response for their abnormal stress.*

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BRAIN BASED APPROACH

- *SEEDS for Brain Health*
 - *Socialization*
 - *Education*
 - *Exercise*
 - *Diet*
 - *Sleep*

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BRAIN BASED APPROACH

- *Work from a BASE*
 - *Brain*
 - *Alliance*
 - *Systems*
 - *Evidence Based Practice*

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B = BRAIN

- *Understand and educate youth about the brain systems and stress response.*
- *Their symptoms are normal for traumatic stress. There is nothing wrong with them, what happened to them was wrong.*
- *The body and mind adapt to survive, and we learn to manage stress from others. This survival mode can continue after danger is over. What helps them survive can become harmful when survival is no longer needed.*

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A = ALLIANCE/ATTACHMENT

- *Establish healthy boundaries*
- *Build rapport through respect*
- *Honor the power of Betrayal Bonds/Trauma Bonds/Survivor Guilt*
- *Work with authenticity*
- *Foster trust - don't make promises you can't keep*
- *Teach and model that conflict is welcome if it can be resolved without rejection, abandonment and abuse.*

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S = SYSTEMS

- *Work within all systems: education, housing, employment, health, mental health, religion, child-care, transportation, social services/child welfare, financial, legal system, socialization.*
- *Build collaborative relationships with other professionals.*

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E = EVIDENCE BASED

- *Motivational Interviewing*
- *Scheduling/Journaling*
- *Seeking Safety*
- *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*
- *Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*
- *Exposure Therapy, EMDR*

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MIRROR vs. SPONGE

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