Heads of the Hydra

What is harmed by relationship can be healed by relationship.

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Healing Through Healthy Relationships
It’s all about relationships
Working together to cauterize and replace; repair and restore.

- Transmission – relationship.
- Mental health and mental illness; stress versus trauma; lecturing or listening?
- Intervention – what is harmed by relationship can be healed by relationship.  
  – Asking is doing.
- Practice – The story of Bill.
We don’t see things as they are; we see them as we are.
“Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”

The outcome: A triune brain -- 3 levels of evolution

Level 3. The Neocortex: High-order thinking & cognition

Level 2. The Limbic System: Emotions

Level 1. The Reptilian Brain: Survival

Source: http://www.cop.com/info/346edc.gif

Sources, http://images.google.com
Results of ACE’s – people are dangerous
Raised with anger, we see anger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Disgust</th>
<th>Fear</th>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Fear" /></td>
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<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Sadness" /></td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Surprise" /></td>
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Impacts of early relational stress

• Chronic maternal stress leads to “wired up”, fussy infant.
• Early developmental stress leads to hypersensitivity to threat (hypersensitive amygdala).
• Difficulty remembering (reduction of hippocampal volume).
• Difficulty planning and inhibiting responses based on social cues (reversible dendritic atrophy).
Stress and trauma become self-perpetuating – creating inadequate coping and more stress even when the original disturbance has ceased.
What do you do?

• **BE SOMEONE FOR THE CHILD, DON’T DO SOMETHING TO HIM.**
• **Don’t talk him out of feeling bad, help him experience feeling good.**
• Be consistent within the relationship.
• Offer opportunities for helping others.
Direct effects of stress – the HPA Axis

- Hypothalamus
  - CRH
  - ACTH
  - Pituitary gland
  - Cortisol
  - Adrenal gland

Cortisol:
- Regulates glucose (blood sugar) levels
- Increases fat in the body
- Helps to defend the body against infection
- Helps the body respond to stress
Results of ACE’s: Direct effects of chronic stress

- Suppression of immune and inflammatory responses.
- Reversible brain effects.
- Decreased thyroid function, (including Cushings disease).
- Increased abdominal fat.
- Change in sodium and potassium utilization.
Chronic stress effects the brain

- **Amygdala**
  - Hyper-responsive
  - Correlated with symptom severity
  - Persistent dendritic growth
  - Persistent spine formation

- **Hippocampus**
  - Reduced volume
  - Inversely correlated with symptom severity
  - Reversible dendritic atrophy
  - Reduced neurogenesis

- **Stress**
  - Reversible dendritic atrophy
  - Reversible spine loss

- **Medial prefrontal cortex**
  - Hyporesponsive
  - Inversely correlated with symptom severity

**Source:** Nature Reviews | Neuroscience
Results of ACE’s – coping mechanisms.

- Cigarettes have an immediate anti-anxiety and mild antidepressant effect.
- Alcohol affects GABA and glutamate to decrease anxiety and tension, but excessive use disinhibits HPA axis and increases stress response.
- Foods with salt, fat and sugar increase activity in nucleus accumbens (reward/pleasure center) and long term protection from unwanted sexual advances.
Long term effects of ACE’s

- **Epigenetic effects:**
  - Isolation, plus chronic stress leads to permanent alteration of sense of danger, and increased expression of diseases such as cancer, heart disease.

- **Even one monthly connection with a trusted caregiver can moderate epigenetic effect of stress.** (Kaufman, 2004).
So what are we to do?
Mental illness versus mental health
This is about US

17% have 4 or more.
(compared to 16% in original sample)

Native Americans in this sample have 2X the occurrence of 4 or more ACE’s.

With 4 or more ACE’s:
- Suspended from school
- Incarcerated
- Drug and alcohol abusing
- Homeless.
And even more specifically US

ACE SCORE SURVEY RESULTS – Helena 2013

Percentages

ACE SCORE

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Stress versus trauma

*If everything is trauma, nothing is trauma.*
Trauma – in the eye of the beholder

• Inescapable trauma splinters the experience (van der Kolk, 2003; Perry & Pollard, 1998), and only gradually do the pieces come together.

• Observing violence may be as traumatic as experiencing it.

• Child cannot begin to cope with trauma until he is out of danger. (Briere, 1997).
Interventions to reduce trauma (Levine, 1997)

- Create safety.
- Slow exploration of meaning.
- Titrate arousal.
- Uncouple fear from immobility.
- Provide corrective experiences.
- Increased self regulation.
Stress

• Upsetting, but not necessarily overwhelming.
  – Awareness is heightened, not fragmented.
  – Sense of agency intact.

• Many of the individuals in ACE survey would NOT categorize their experience as traumatic.

• Resilience features involve finding healthy coping mechanisms.
Interventions to reduce stress

- It’s about regulating and relationship.
- Put on your own oxygen mask first – calm yourself.
- Communicate and develop a dialogue with children.
- Create relationship time
  - Doesn’t have to be deep conversation
  - Preferentially with activity (walking, bike riding, car repair).
Guidelines

• Listen to stress, listen and treat for depression, refer for trauma.

• If you don’t ask, they won’t tell.

• Present resilience material. Most of us had some resilience factors in our lives.

• When in doubt - LISTEN
Referring has its limitations

Actually, I'm not a doctor... I'm the health care administrator.

That's okay. I'm not the patient... I'm his attorney.
Relationship - THE evidence based practice. (Norcross 2013)

- Unexplained Variance: 40%
- Patient Contribution: 30%
- Therapy Relationship: 12%
- Treatment Method: 8%
- Individual Therapist: 7%
- Other Factors: 3%

The evidence-based practice. (Norcross 2013)
First step, be present with children..

• The child’s ability to heal is about the adult’s ability to **be someone for the child, not do something to the child.**
Eleanor

• Began to hear commentary voices in college.

• What do you think the first response of her professor was?

• What do you think the first response of the psychiatrist was?
And so the child becomes the adult

- What would you do? Would you be frightened?

- What might have changed her outcome earlier?
Why lecturing doesn’t help

Triune (3-layered) Brain

Left
(newest)

Right
(older)

Mammalian

R-Complex

Limbic
(oldest)

Reptilian

RxM-1: "Feed"
RxM-2: "Flight"
RxM-3: "Fight"
RxM-4: "Sex"

RxR-1: "Rigid"
RxR-2: "Compulsive"
RxR-3: "Ritualistic"
RxR-4: "Paranoid"

YOU ARE HERE

THEY ARE HERE
The core emotional experience of childhood adversity

Shame – I am bad. Look away. I can’t tolerate relationships.
Second step, potential parents

- How many of you are involved with potential parents?
  - OB/GYN
  - Medical care facilities
  - Young, pregnant teens
  - School
  - Juvenile probation
  - Mental health
  - Foster care
How to begin

• Educate about ACE’s... in schools, in juvenile probation, in parenting clinics.
• Ask about ACE’s in parenting, in juvenile probation, in school, in foster care, in clinics.
  – If you don’t ask, they won’t tell.
• Start with adults – people parent the way they were parented.
• Believe in the positive intentionality of parents.
Resilience factors for children and families— it’s all about relationships

• Belief in the love of mother and father.
• Family help with parenting.
• Other family members enjoying the child.
• Soothing relatives.
• Other adults (neighbors, adult friends) who like the child.
• Coaches, ministers, youth leaders who enjoy the child.
Relationships and resilience

- Family caring about school.
- Adults talking about making lives better.
- Rules and structure in the house.
- Trusted others to talk to.
- Feeling capable and competent.
- Being independent and accomplishing.
- Believing that life is what you make it.
Short term solutions may not work

• “You can take the child from the mom, but not the mom out of the child.”
  – By the age of 3 children have internalized relationship with mom as the way life is.
  – Children’s brains develop based on patterned-repetitive interactions.

• Attachment system will create stress when child is separated from the parent (even a damaging one).
Parental help

- **Concrete support in times of need.**
- **Foster parent training (Dozier, 2005)**
  - Re-interpreting child’s signals
  - Overriding one’s own propensities.
- **Training parents to be sensitive and attuned to the needs of the child, e.g., Circle of Security (Hoffman et al., 2006).**
  - Regulating the parent so she can regulate the child.
Inform the public

- Information about child development and the impact of toxic stress.
- Give the ACE questionnaire.
- Positive, coping messages more effective than fear provoking messages.
  - Negative messages tend to cause people to default to familiar “frames”. Creates the “not me” attitude.
Working with adults

- Wherever an adult comes into contact with the system – ask about ACE’s and educate.
- Listen for stress, refer for trauma.
- Connect and inform direct health care providers.
- Make it easy to refer.
What is harmed by relationship can be healed by relationship
Bill was born in a middle class family. His mother, Susan, was a professor and his father, Jeff, was a nurse.
Bill, Part 1

Susan’s parents were alcoholic, there was domestic violence and when drunk they regularly berated her as stupid. Susan’s parents were divorced when she was 10.

Jeff’s family was “odd.” Jeff’s father was paranoid and shot the neighbor, for which he went to jail briefly. Jeff’s father hit him regularly when he was “out of line.”
Bill is born…

Susan became educated, moved away from her family and married Jeff, who has also become educated. Susan is being seen at the University Health Clinic during her pregnancy with Bill.

• What is Susan’s ACE score? What is Jeff’s ACE score? How might their scores affect their parenting?
• How could the nurse at this clinic intervene with Bill’s mother with the ACE’s? What impact would that have?