

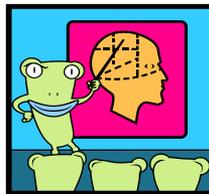


Trauma as an Imprint

"We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience in the mind, brain, and body . . . Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way the mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think."



Source: Van der Kolk, Bessel (2014). The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.



Neurobiology of Trauma





What is Trauma?

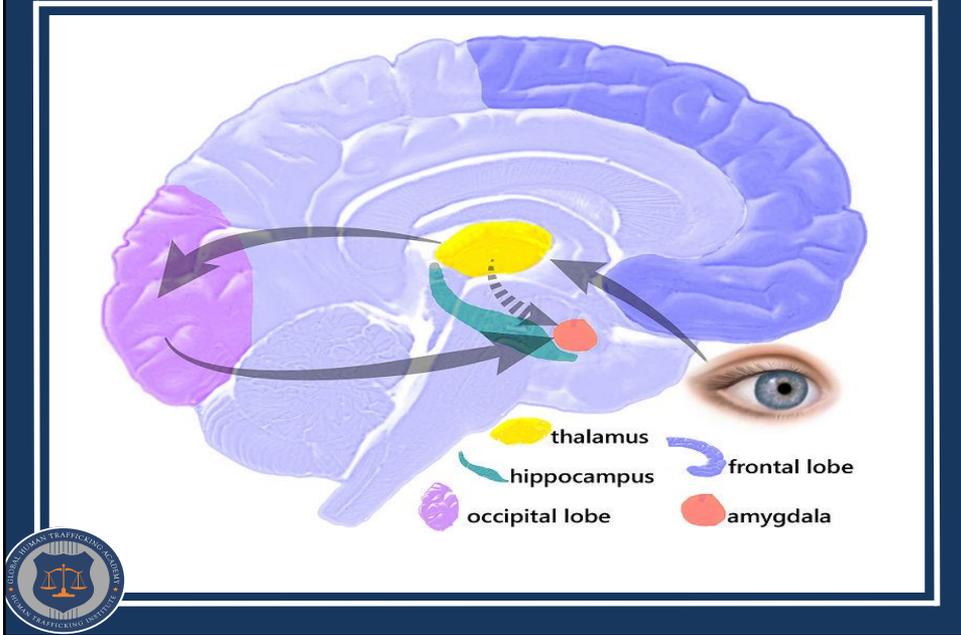
What different types of trauma/traumatic experiences come to mind?

The Layers of Trauma

- ✓ Emotional abuse
- ✓ Physical or Emotional Neglect
- ✓ Physical and/or Sexual abuse
- ✓ Poverty
- ✓ Community Violence
- ✓ Bullying
- ✓ Discrimination (race, ethnicity, education, gender, disability)
- ✓ Lack of opportunities
- ✓ Losses (death, separation, from loved ones, loss of community)
- ✓ Sexual assault
- ✓ Domestic violence
- ✓ Human trafficking

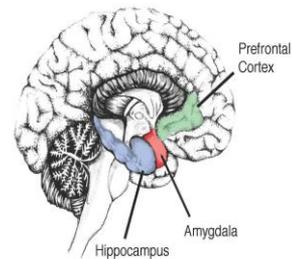


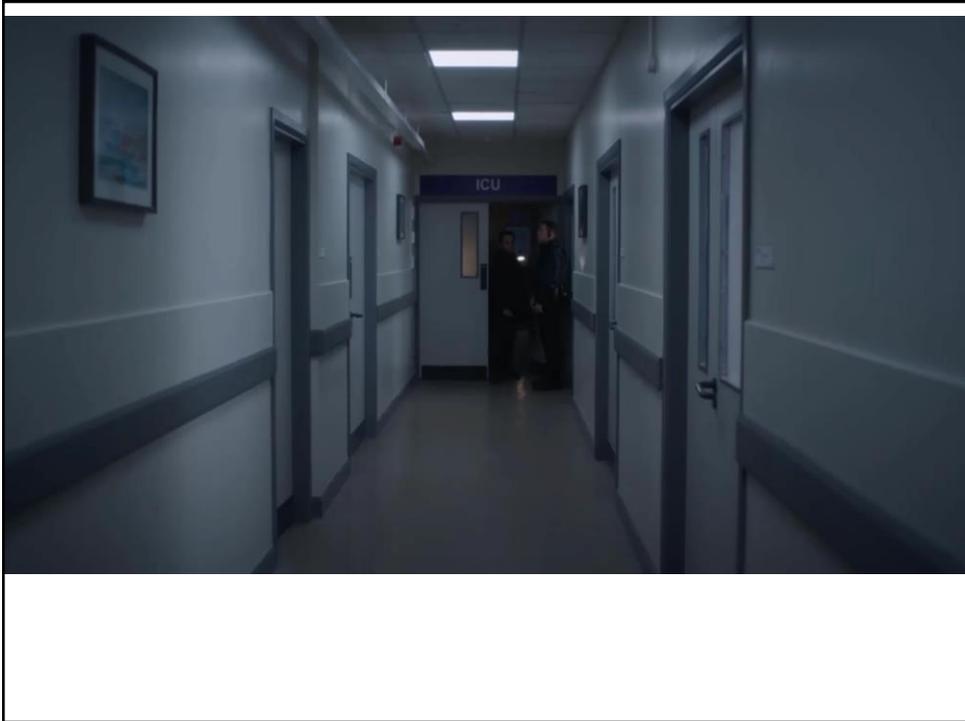
Critical Areas of the Brain



Trauma and the Brain

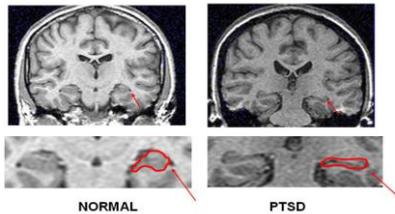
- Primitive brain in overdrive, constantly activating the body's stress response- "amygdala hijack"
- Conditioned fear response
- Intrusive thoughts and memories
- Inability to distinguish between past/present threats
- Compromised executive functioning, judgment
- **Fight**: irritability, anger, defensiveness, combativeness
- **Flight**: fear, anxiety, avoidance
- **Freeze**: numbing, dissociation, detachment
- Transference





Trauma and the Brain- Memory

Hippocampus



- Limbic brain
- Critical for encoding memory
- Highly sensitive to cortisol, a biomarker for stress
- Impaired ability to recall memories
- Also impacts *precision and context* of memories
- Over time, volume shrinks

Source: Bremner, J. Douglas (2000). *The Invisible Epidemic: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Memory and the Brain.*



Neurobiology of Trauma

- **Hyper/jangled/scattered behavior**
- **Flat Affect / no emotion**
- **Laughing/joking inappropriately**
- **A freeze response**
- **Collapsed immobility**



Changes Can Affect Memory

- Story may come out fragmented and sketchy
- Victim has inability to recall events in sequence/context
- May believe the victim is lying, being evasive or making it up as they go along
- Accuracy of the memory is not impaired



Memory recall is the problem...



Impact of Trauma on the

- Stress hormones affect brain function
- Fight, flight or freeze
- Time slows down
- Brain takes “snap shots” and breaks them up to process ~ stored all over the place.

*“Kid gave no details. Said he couldn’t remember.”
“If it really happened, there’s no way he’d forget.”*



The Role of Sensory Experiences

HEAR	You said Lee and Sue were fighting in the kitchen. Tell me everything you heard when Lee and Sue were fighting.
SMELL	You said the room is above a restaurant by 4 th and Arch. Tell me about all of the smells coming from the restaurant.
TASTE	You said Lucy gave you something red to drink. Tell me all about the taste of the red drink.
FEEL	You said Jean came in and got on top of you. What did your body feel when Jean got on top of you.
SEE	You said the car stopped at a bridge. Tell me everything you saw at the bridge.



"Gut reaction"/Perception	Using the lens of trauma
Standoffish, unengaged, evasive	Feels disconnected, isolated, unprotected, scared, overwhelmed, ashamed, lack of immigration status/fear of detention
Lazy	Inability to focus, engage in higher/organized thinking, unable to think beyond current crisis, may not believe she has a future
Lying, inconsistent	Impaired memory, shut down, protective, fearful
Emotional outbursts, immaturity	Feels unsafe, emotional triggers from reliving traumatic events, potential traumatic bonding with trafficker
Unwilling to help herself	Feels powerless, nowhere to go/housing instability, used to being let down, scared to trust others to help her



What Does It Mean To Be Trauma Informed?

Organizational structure and framework for interactions that:

- **Understands** the impact of trauma on those we are trying to help
- **Recognizes** symptoms of trauma (not just undesirable “bad victim” behaviors)
- **Minimizes** retraumatization
- **Fosters safety**- physical, psychological, and emotional
- **Builds** on strengths
- **Collaborative** in nature
- **Encourages transparency**
- **Promotes voice and choice**

Guiding question: what are we doing to create opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and safety?



BUILD RAPPORT THROUGH TRUST

- **T**-truthful
- **R**-respectful
- **U**-understanding
- **S**-safe
- **T**-transparent