

How do Children communicate their
TRAUMA ???

Welcome

We will endeavor during these minutes to expand our knowledge and understanding of how children communicate their trauma and how to care for those who have experienced significant trauma.

What are the principles

1. Nothing of value will happen in the absence of a healthy, caring relationship.

How do we form relationships

We need to learn how to form relationships, build relationships, and ultimately how to put those relationships to the test to establish trust.

1. The Interview

Making a first impression. How do you encourage children to want to be in a relationship with you?

- Learn to use the person's name.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Paraphrase
- Conclude quickly (don't interrogate)

2. Micro Skills

1. Maintain eye contact.
2. Have an open posture.
3. Lean forward.
4. Sit facing client square on

(Mostly to Teenagers)

3. Use Strategic Silence

- Don't be afraid to use silence.
- Silence can:
 - Allow children to collect thoughts and carefully think through a topic.
 - Encourage children to talk.
 - Reduces the pace of the discussion.
 - Allows children to realize their experiences are validated.

4. Reflecting

- Reflecting allows you to gain clarity regarding what has been said.
- Reflecting really is communicating back feelings or ideas that directly relate to what the children has said.
- It is almost a summary of what has been said. Ex. “so what you are saying is that...”
- Demonstrates the child’s point of view or the way he/she feels valued/accepted. Ex. “You’re obviously upset by this, it must be hard for you...”
- Allows you to focus on the child, not the problems.

5. Translate into Feelings

- Rather than focusing on the problems, which makes them bigger, focus on identifying the underlying feelings.
- When you respond to children in terms of feelings (rather than content) it gives them the satisfaction of truly being understood.

**When to stop reflecting

1. When a child repeatedly conveys thoughts or feelings of resentment for unchangeable things that have happened in the past.
2. When the child's problems demand immediate practical action.
3. When child wallows in negative thoughts or feelings to avoid dealing with issues.

Principle #2

Communicating our concerns to another person in a safe and caring environment brings relief.

Obstacles to communicating

- Not listening
- Giving advice
- Being critical, judging, not trusting, not believing
- Attempting to please you
- A fear of not being loved & cared for
- Lack of safety

What to remember

- Don't rush/hurry the children. Allow plenty of time and be patient. Allow the children to progress at his/her own pace.
- There are many reasons a child may not tell the truth: fear of punishment/retribution, desire to please you or other adults, fear you will be wounded by hearing, difficulty expressing feelings, inability to accept what has happened.
- Allow for the expression of emotions through crying, etc. Offer the freedom to express emotions & provide comfort. It may be painful for you and the child, but it can ultimately bring healing.
- Some children may need physical contact to comfort & reassure them.

What to remember (cont.)

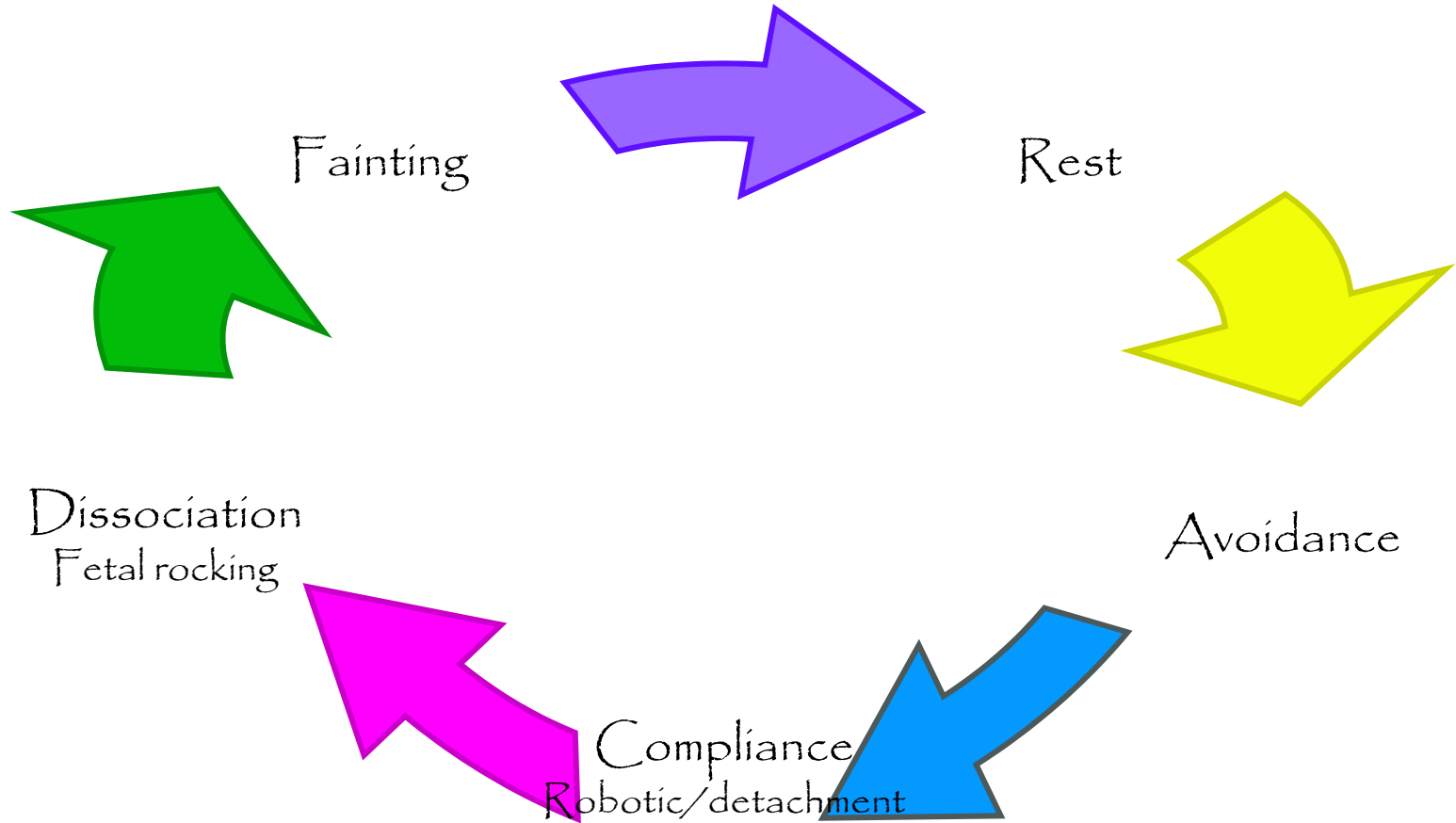
- There is a cultural attitude that children are not allowed to express themselves. They are to be seen, not heard.
- Don't force expression but positively reinforce the effort of a child to express.
- There are many forms of communication. Physical aggression may be an expression of what the child is experiencing. You must be patient and not take it personally. You must try to understand the deeper meaning of what is going on for the child.

How do children respond to threat

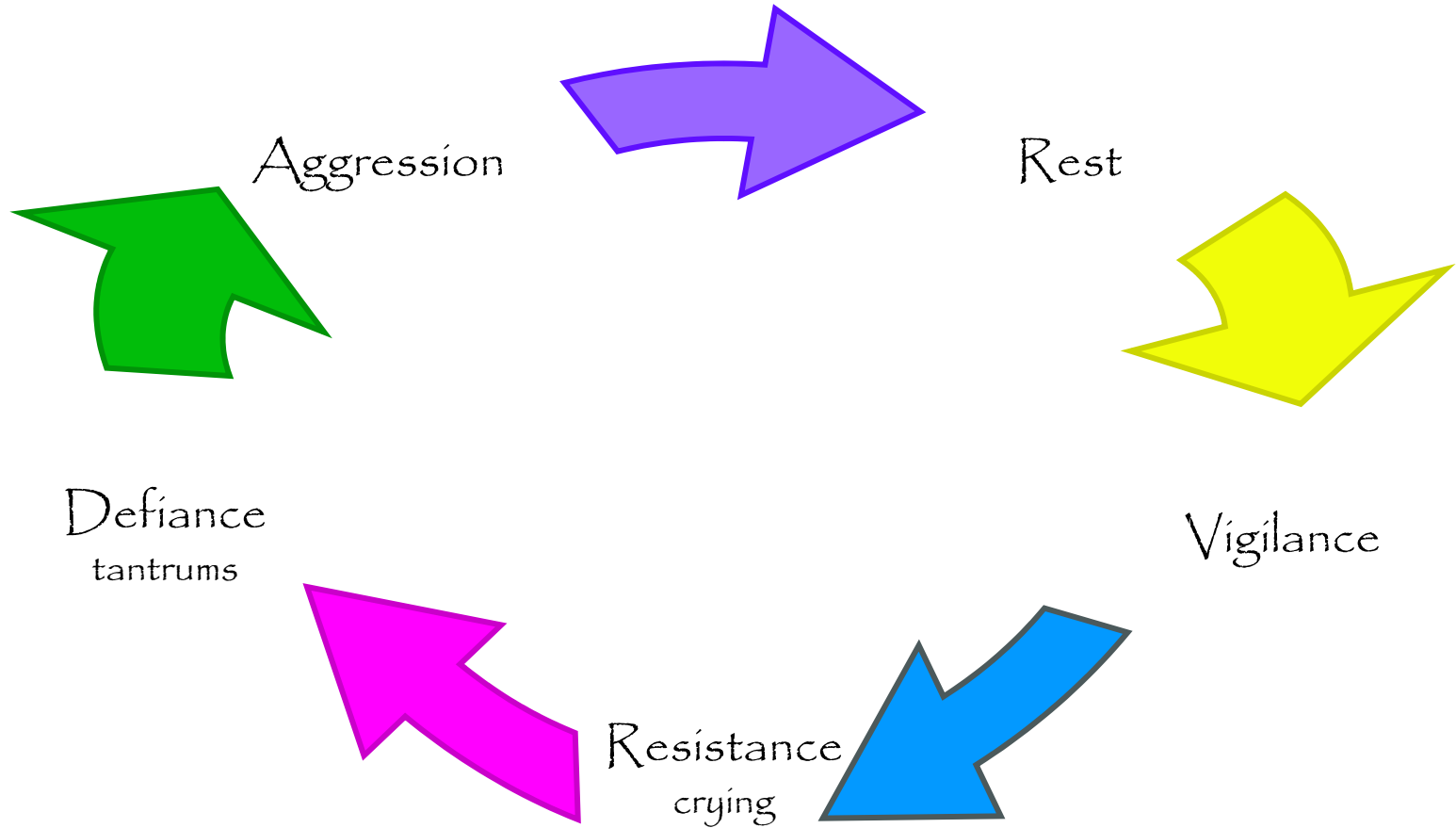
Responses to threat vary greatly from child to child

- Hyperarousal (Fight or Flight)
The many physiological changes during hyperarousal will influence the way a person thinks, feels, and acts.
- Dissociation (Avoidant)
withdraws attention from the outside world and focuses on the inner world.

Dissociative Continuum



Hyperarousal Continuum



Key Point

- The nature of an event can determine which response pattern is most adaptive. In one case, fleeing was protective during a shooting, but would have been foolish in a storm.

Key Point #2

- Traumatic events of the same nature can induce different adaptive responses in the same child at different times during the development.

Key Point #3

The primary adaptive response to threat appears to vary according to several factors.

- Dissociation is more common in younger children, females and during traumatic events that are characterized by pain or an inability to escape.
- Hyperarousal responses are more common in older children, males, and when the trauma involves witnessing or playing an active role in the event. In most traumatic events, the child will use a combination of these two primary response patterns.

After the Trauma

- For almost all children, a traumatic experience will play itself out repeatedly in their minds, even after the event has ended.

After the Trauma

- In effect, the child has both emotional and state memories from the traumatic event, causing a state of hyperarousal.
- Even at rest in the weeks following a traumatic event, children and adolescents often exhibit signs of physiological hyperarousal, such as tachycardia, despite outwardly normal behaviors.
- Persistent physiological and emotional distress is both physically exhausting and emotionally painful.

After the Trauma

- When faced with reminders of the traumatic event they suffered, trauma survivors may experience so much pain and anxiety that they become overwhelmed.
- Dissociating children will not readily respond to questions by adults. Their answers to questions will seem unclear, unfocused, or evasive.

Good Listening Skills

1. Find a quiet place that provides privacy and safety allowing for comfort in expressing.
2. Maintain confidentiality. (discuss the limits)
3. Notice the person's body posture, facial expressions.
4. Don't write details.
5. Give undivided attention, away from distractions.
6. Avoid interruptions.
7. Be patient
8. Accept what is said without judgement.

When listening, DON'T:

- Blame
- Minimize what the child said
- Give advice or solutions
- Tell your story, or that of another person that may be similar
- Lie or tell half-truths in an effort to be comforting.
- Promise things you can't deliver
- Discipline, leave that to someone else
- Interpret what they are saying without clarifying.
- THINK

“Listening” to communication

Children communicate in various ways:

- Play
- Interactions with other children
- Music, dance, singing
- Dresses
- Cries
- Storytelling & prayer
- Physical contact
- Discussions

Activities

You can do various activities to promote communication/expression.

- Writing exercise
 - “The most important event in my life...”
 - “The best thing that ever happened to me...”
 - “I am most happy when...”
 - “A dream”
 - “How I would describe myself”
 - “My best friend”
 - “The person I trust the most and why”
 - Students can also suggest different topics

Activities (cont.)

- Writing (cont.)

- Students can share their writing with a small group.
- Students should be allowed not to share if uncomfortable.
- It is important to enforce respectful listening among the other students.
- Your responses to the writing should validate the thoughts and feelings they share. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

- Play

Acting any movie of interest and what roll the child would play

Activities (cont.)

- Drawing

- You may want them to draw whatever is on their mind.
- Or, you may want to give them a specific topic such as in the writing assignment.
- This too can be done in a small group setting.
- Ask questions that would encourage the students to express
 - “Tell me about your drawing?”
 - “What happened here?”
 - “Where are you in this drawing?”

Principle #3

We must have a good understanding of trauma to assist children who have experienced significantly stressful events.

What is trauma?

1. Common , Unavoidable, pervasive, Not well understood.
2. Definition: “any event is traumatic if it is extremely upsetting and at least temporarily overwhelms the individual’s internal resources.”

Types of Traumatic Events

- Rape and Sexual Assault.
- Domestic Abuse. physical aggression.
- Torture
- War
- Child Abuse

The Effects of Trauma

- Many variables affect the outcome of trauma.
 - Victim variables
 - Characteristics of the stressor
 - Social response, support & resources
- Existential concerns - profound sense of emptiness, loss of meaning in life, loss of connection with God, disruption in one's ability to hope, trust or care about oneself or others.

The Effects of Trauma (cont.)

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic
- Phobias
- Dissociations
- Substance Abuse

Principle #4

Children have a need to process trauma related memories. Not only do children need to communicate concerns, they also need to specifically process trauma related memories.

Process Trauma Related Memories

- It is now believed that humans have an innate tendency to process trauma related memories and move toward more adaptive psychological functioning.
- This implies that individuals who present with trauma related symptoms are, in a very real sense, attempting to internally resolve distressing thoughts, feelings, and memories.

Process Trauma Related Memories (cont.)

What can we do to aid in the processing of trauma related memories?

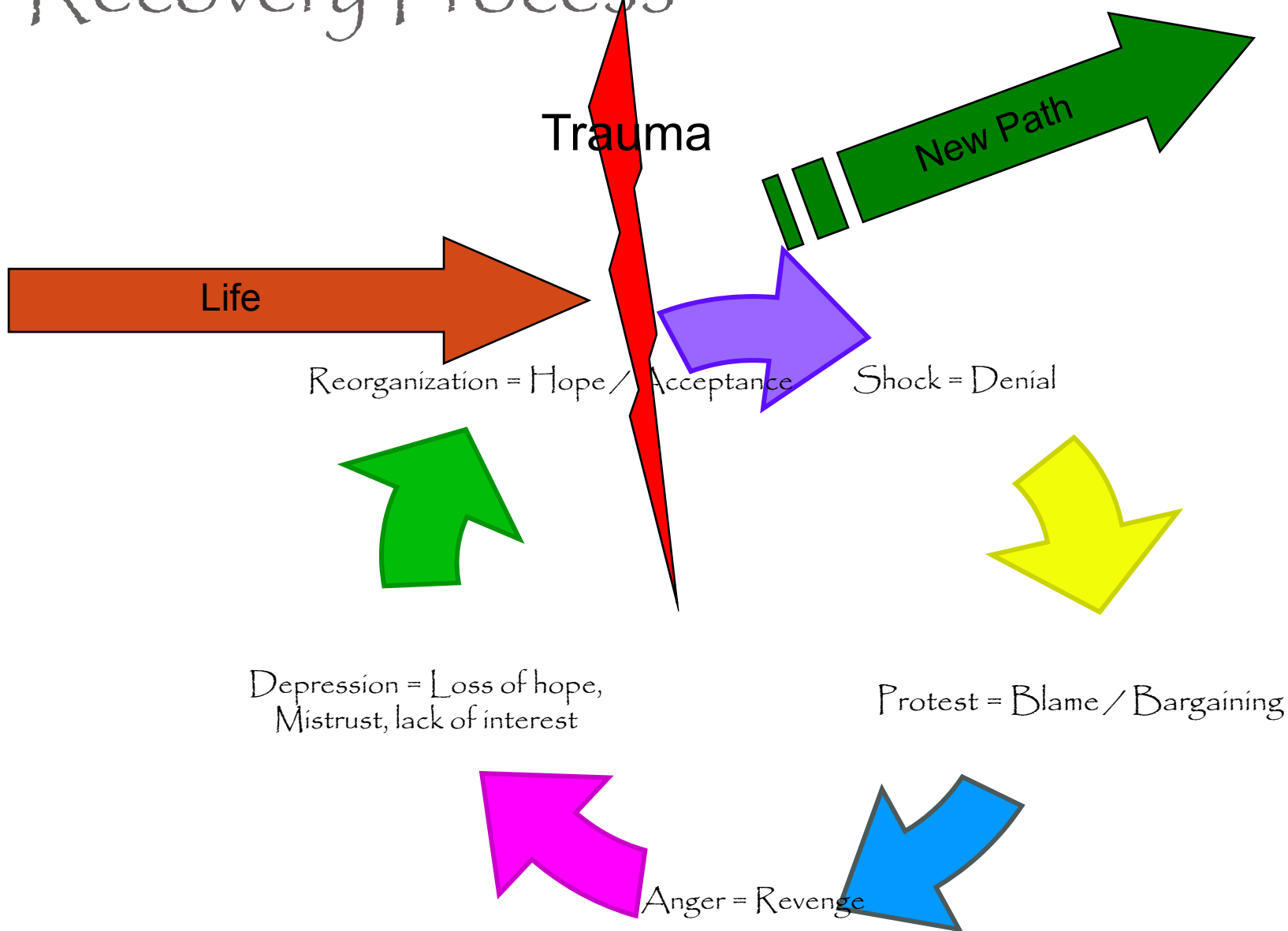
1. Provide and ensure safety
 - Because trauma is about vulnerability to danger, safety is a critical issue for trauma survivors.
 - It is only when safety conditions have been adequately met that the child can begin to reduce his or her defenses and more openly process the thoughts, feelings and memories associated with traumatic events.
 - It is critical that the children experience safety while remembering danger. Only then will the fear and distress associated with trauma in the past lose the capacity to be evoked in the present.

Process Trauma Related Memories (cont.)

2. Life stability

- Without sufficient security, food, shelter, etc., avoiding traumatic material (through numbing or substance use) may appear more useful to the trauma victim than reliving painful memories.
- The first intervention with who have few resources is often social work; arranging for basic necessities to be met.

Recovery Process



God bless Children