

# **INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA**

**Intergenerational** definition is - existing or occurring between generations.

**Intragenerational** definition is - occurring or existing between members of one generation; occurring during the span of one generation

[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

**Transgenerational:** Having an effect on several generations of a family.

[Glosbe.com](http://Glosbe.com)

**Transgenerational epigenetic inheritance** is the transmission of epigenetic markers from one organism to the next that affects the traits of offspring without alteration of the primary structure of DNA.

[Lisden.com](http://Lisden.com)

**Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.**

<https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma> 4/11/20

LACK OF CONTROL

LACK OF SAFETY

NOT BEING HEARD

**CORE  
ISSUES  
OF**

**TRAUMA**

*What  
meaning and  
value you are  
giving the  
event?*

- GENETIC
- DEVELOPMENTAL
  - *Physiological*
  - *Fetal Programming*
  - *Insecure Attachment Style*
  - *Trauma Patterning*
- ENVIRONMENTAL
  - *Learned Behavior*
  - *Secondary Trauma*
- CULTURAL/  
HISTORICAL

## MODES OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

# EPIGENETICS

- Epigenetics is the impact of experience on how our DNA gets activated, and becomes used as a template to be able to generate protein structures that become parts of our brain.
- Through epigenetic process, the experiences we have determine which genes are turned on or off, and which ones are used as templates for protein construction of our neural systems and neurons....our experiences are literally becoming flesh.

Louis Cozolino Ph.D.

**Research indicates that individuals maltreated as children have 12 times more epigenetic changes than non-maltreated individuals.**

**Children of holocaust survivors were three times more likely to meet the criteria for PTSD than those in the community whose parents were not, when encountering the same event.**



# DEVELOPMENTAL – PRE-NATAL /FIRST TWO YEARS

- MOM EXPERIENCES TRAUMA IN THIRD TRIMESTER
- FRONTAL LOBES RELEASE SEROTONIN TO MODULATE ANGER AND FEAR
- NURTURING - OXYTOCIN RECEPTORS FIRST TWO YEARS OF LIFE
- CHILD'S OWN TRAUMA INTERFERES WITH DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOCAMPUS
- CAN'T MODULATE ANGER AND FEAR / CAN'T BOND / CAN ONLY LEARN IN SITUATIONS OF HIGH INTENSITY
- WHAT DIAGNOSIS DO WE GIVE?

# DEVELOPMENTAL – Fetal Programming

- “the way that signals from the pre-natal environment (i.e. the mother’s physiology) can alter developmental trajectories, in some cases through epigenetic mechanisms. Such alterations can leave lasting imprints that result in susceptibility to psychological suffering later in life.”

Russotti & Douthit 2017

- Mother experiences food shortage in pregnancy which creates expectation.

Child living in abundance constantly over-eating to prepare for shortage.

- Mother exposed to stress during pregnancy which creates expectation.

Child develops anxiety, ADHD, conduct disorder.

# INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE

- Parenting style is uninvolved, inconsistent, and/or unpredictable.
- Results in child being in a constant state of hyperarousal or fear.
- This stimulates the amygdala, which causes the release of cortisol, which impairs the development of the hippocampus and oxytocin receptors.
- As an adult, this neurological condition affects the way the mother's brain responds to her infant, and her attachment style becomes insecure.
- In this way, insecure attachment is passed down from one generation to the other.

# THE MALE MICE

- **MALE MICE WERE CONTINUALLY AND UNPREDICTABLY SEPARATED FROM THEIR MOTHERS FROM BIRTH THROUGH DAY 14.**
- **IN ADULTHOOD THESE MICE DISPLAYED PTSD-LIKE SYMPTOMS, AND REVEALED CHANGES IN 6+ GENETIC MARKERS.**
- **THE NEXT GENERATION EXHIBITED THE SAME BEHAVIORS AND GENETIC MARKERS BEING RAISED NORMALLY, WITH LITTLE OR NO INFLUENCE FROM THEIR FATHER AS IS NORMAL. IN TURN THE SAME TRAITS WERE PASSED TO THE 3<sup>RD</sup> GENERATION.**
- **SPERM EXTRACTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MALES WERE INJECTED INTO FERTILIZED EGGS IN OTHER FEMALES. THE PUPS EXHIBITED THE SAME TRAUMA TRAITS AS DID THEIR OFFSPRING.**

# TRAUMA PATTERNING

**“If finding safety is not possible, our bodies are designed to bounce back and forth between fight/flight and shutdown. When life threatening danger looms for long periods of time we find ourselves alternately feeling anxious and depressed.”**

**Contee & Wagner 2021**

# ENVIRONMENTAL TRAUMA

- *Learned Behavior*
- *Secondary Trauma*

## **COMPULSION TO REPEAT**

**Traumatized individuals often unconsciously reenact their prior victimization. In these dynamics one may take on either the role of victim or victimizer.**

van der Kolk

# **SECONDARY TRAUMA**

**The consequences of indirect exposure to the details of a traumatic event through close contact with the direct victim. The symptoms are essentially similar to those of the survivor's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms.**



# **HISTORICAL TRAUMA**

**A COMPLEX AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA  
EXPERIENCED OVER TIME AND ACROSS  
GENERATIONS BY A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO SHARE  
AN IDENTITY, AFFILIATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE**

# **HISTORICAL TRAUMA RESPONSE**

**A PATTERN OF SYMPTOMS ARISING IN RESPONSE  
TO HISTORICAL TRAUMA  
(COLLECTIVE PTSD)**

# Definition of Culture

... **culture** is defined as the shared patterns of **behaviors** and interactions, **cognitive constructs**, and **affective understanding** that are **learned through a process of socialization**. These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group.

**The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. *What is culture*. Retrieved January 2016 from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/definitions.html> .**

# CULTURE

Culture is:  
The beliefs (about self and one's place in the world),  
The way of thinking (conscious and sub-conscious),  
The pattern of feelings and emotions,  
And the behaviors used to respond and cope with the environments of an interactive group of people.

# **CULTURAL TRAUMA**

**exists when the beliefs, thoughts, emotions and behaviors of an interactive group of people have been affected by trauma.**

**Research suggests a striking commonality related to family dynamics and the transmission of historical traumas as it is carried in the body and the psyche of the perpetrator.**

**There can be no diversity-informed practice without trauma-informed care because all marginalized groups are directly or indirectly affected by some form of identity-based trauma.**

Laverne H. Collins

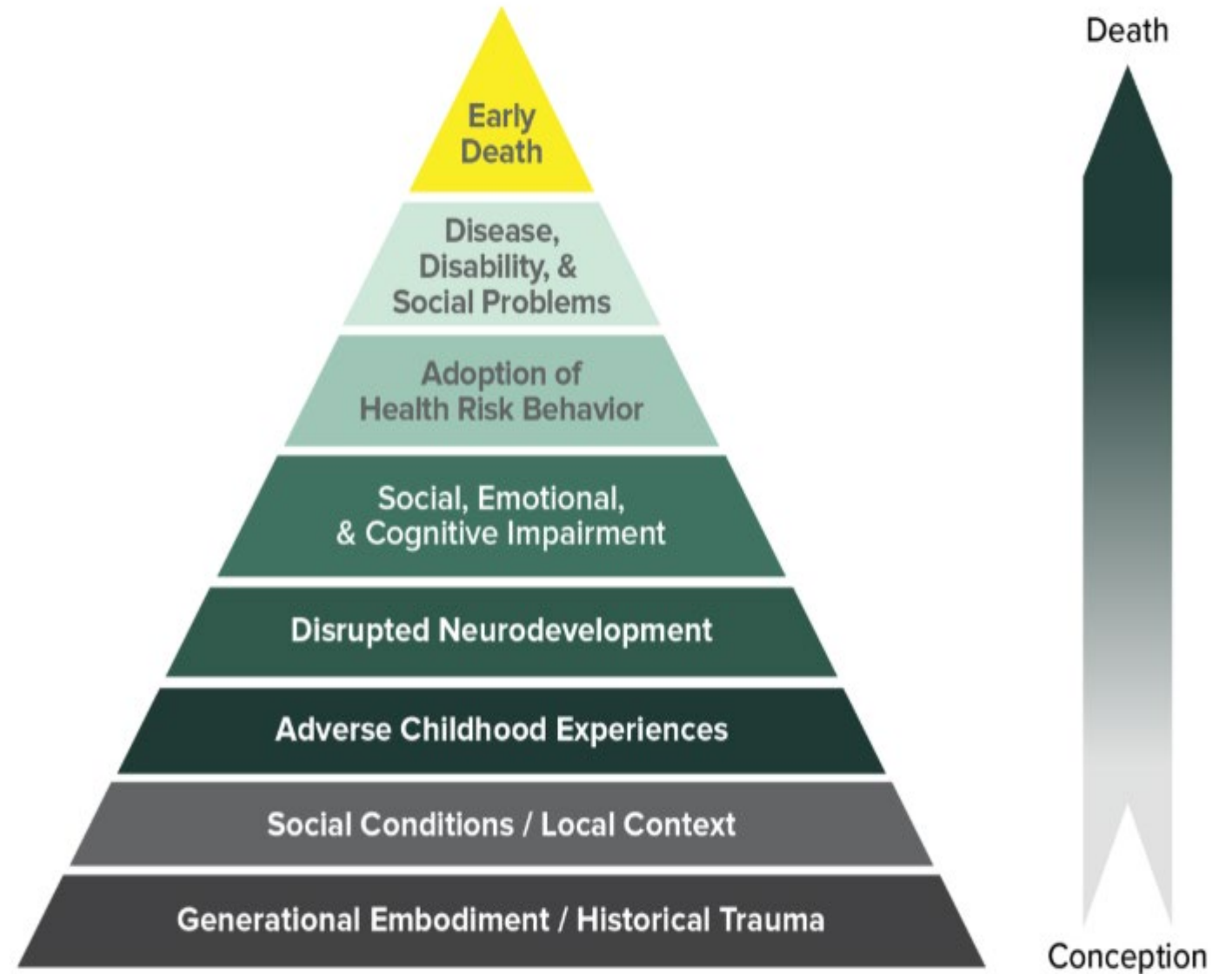
**WHAT CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS  
DISTURBED ENOUGH TO BECOME A NEXUS FOR  
REOCCURRING TRAUMA?**

# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES STUDY (ACES )

CONDUCTED BY KAISER PERMANENTE AND CDC

1995-1997

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html> (7/21/19)



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan



# COMPLICIT BEHAVIOR

**THE ENVIRONMENT MUST BE ONE THAT HAS THE BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES NECESSARY TO 'NOT SEE' THE TRAUMA.**

***(TURNING AWAY, BEING OBLIVIOUS, MISDIRECTING, GASLIGHTING, NUMBNESS, EXCUSES, MINIMIZING)***

# COMPLICIT ACCEPTANCE

**THE TRAUMA BECOMES A PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR WHICH IS NORMALIZED AND REINFORCED BY LANGUAGE AND DISTORTED WORLD VIEW, DISTORTED VALUES AND DISTORTED BELIEFS AGREED TO BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT.**

***(IT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS. I WAS TREATED MUCH WORSE WHEN I WAS A KID. IT'S NOT THAT BAD. I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.)***

# COMPLICIT LOYALTY

**THE MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING THE VICTIM, DEVELOP UNCONSCIOUS LOYALTIES TO THE TRAUMA.**

**THE VICTIM (OR OTHERS) MAY EXPERIENCE FEAR, GUILT, HARASSMENT, THREATS OR CONTROLLED ISOLATION WHEN THEY TRY TO SET BOUNDARIES OR BREAK THE TRAUMA LOYALTY.**

# • INTERVENTION

# SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

- ❖ **Progress needs the direction of the rational brain and the drive and energy of the emotional brain.**
- ❖ **The rational brain can gather the facts and make the plan, but the emotional brain makes the decision.**
- ❖ **Most successful change involves a short term sacrifice for a long term gain.**
- ❖ **The benefit of the change must outweigh the perceived 'cost' of the change.**
- ❖ **Failure (relapse) is often a necessary part of change. Prepare for the possibility.**

# INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS FOR TRAUMA

Therapeutic Relationship – ensuring an excellent relationship through feedback-informed treatment.

Self-regulation and Relaxation – teaching survivors to monitor and regulate autonomic arousal through ongoing relaxation (stress reduction).

Cognitive Restructuring – focus on psychoeducation about the neurological, physical and psychological effects of trauma.

Exposure or narrative – using exposure or narrative to desensitize traumatic memories and memory fragments (meaning and value).

# DEVELOPING A SENSE OF COHERENCE

COMPREHENSIBILITY – understanding the world around oneself

MANAGEABILITY – possessing the resources and skills to meet the challenges of that world

MEANING – are the challenges worthy of the effort to surmount them

## **CHANGING MEANING AND VALUE**

**Increasing client's confidence in their ability to get rid of repetitive negative thoughts and feelings, reducing internal cues and sense of present danger.**

**Assisting client to formulate goals according to one's current situation and resources rather than focusing on the goals that the traumatic event has violated.**

**Enabling client to identify any positive consequence of the of the traumatic event.**

**Using exposure or narrative to desensitize traumatic memories and memory fragments.**



# ELEMENTS OF FAMILY RESILIENCE

COMMITMENT	SPIRITUALITY
COHESION	CONNECTEDNESS
ADAPTABILITY	TIME TOGETHER
COMMUNICATION	EFFICACY

**Our ancestors are not gone; they live on in us and with us. This truth becomes a clarion call from future generations, who require that their ancestors be healed so that they may live in a better world.**

**Thomas Hubl**  
*(Healing Collective Trauma)*

