



# HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS AND TRAUMA BY BECOMING AN ALLY

Bridge the Relationship Gap

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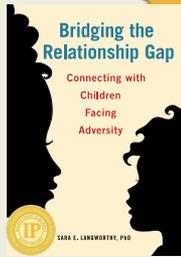
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## Presentation Notes

Presentation materials and videos available online:

[www.drlangworthy.com/presentationmaterials](http://www.drlangworthy.com/presentationmaterials)  
My book (and audiobook!)  
[www.drlangworthy.com/book](http://www.drlangworthy.com/book)



Let me know your thoughts!  
I'm @DrLangworthy on Twitter

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## POLL

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*"We need never be hopeless,  
because we can never be  
irreparably broken."*

*~John Green*

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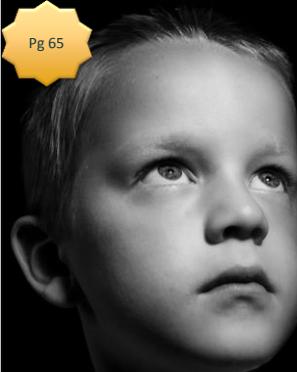
Pg 65

### What is trauma?

Two requirements

1. Situation of perceived injury/death to self or others
2. Response includes fear, helplessness, and/or horror

<https://pixabay.com/en/sad-child-boy-kid-crying-tears-219721/>



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### What are ACEs?

[www.drjangworthy.com/presentationmaterials](http://www.drjangworthy.com/presentationmaterials)

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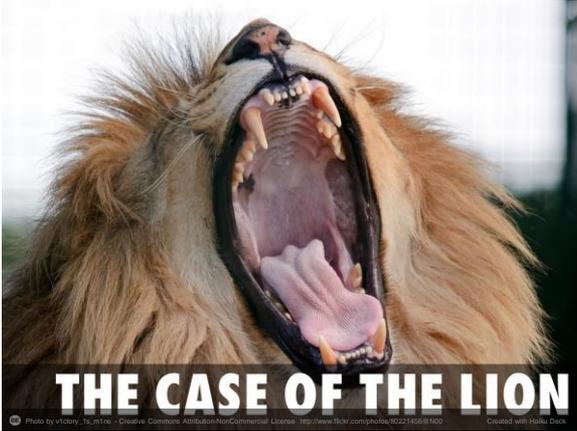
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### Biological signs of threat

- "Fight or Flight"
  - Adrenaline rush
    - Increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing
  - Cortisol release
    - Increases blood sugar, slows down digestion, inhibits immune system

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### Different levels of stress

- Stress
  - Positive Stress
    - Moderate, short-lived (e.g. giving presentation)
  - Tolerable Stress
    - Intense, but limited time periods (e.g. death of loved one)
  - Toxic Stress
    - Strong, frequent, chronic, uncontrollable (e.g. abuse, neglect)



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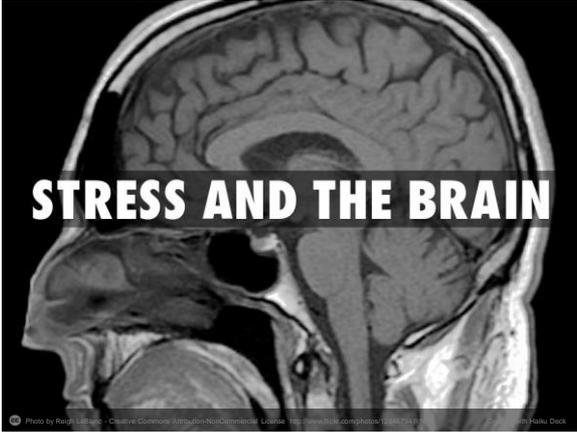
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### What happens to the brain?

Pg 40

- Stress Response System
  - Fight/flee
- Cognitive Systems
  - Decision making
- Why stress matters
  - Timeline of development
  - Overpowering

By The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

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Typically developing children

Children with a history of physical abuse

**Angry!**      **Angry!**

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# POLL

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Typically developing children

## WHY?

Children with a history of physical abuse



Angry!



Angry!



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## Adaptive in one context...



...disruptive in another

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## Plasticity & Growth

Pg 44

Brain is malleable, plastic early in life



Brain is more susceptible to negative effects of stress...

...but also more resilient

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## What is resilience?

[www.drjangworthy.com/presentationmaterials](http://www.drjangworthy.com/presentationmaterials)

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## Relationships Matter

Daily, positive interactions with care providers can help build children's resilience to stress



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# What's wrong with you? vs What happened to you?

Pg 69

Shift focus from the behavior, to understanding the **why** behind the behavior.

*"What the hell's the matter with him?"*  
*"Nothing is 'the matter with him,' ...it's everything around him."*  
The End Games, T. Michael Martin, 2013, p 104

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# Developmental Repair

Pg 73

Reorganizing and changing our understanding of challenging behaviors



Developmental Repair: A Training Manual <https://washburn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/WCCDe/Repair-revised.pdf>

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# What does trauma look like?

- Infants
  - Disruption to sleep, eating
- Toddlers/preschoolers
  - Recklessness, little focused exploration, excessive self-care



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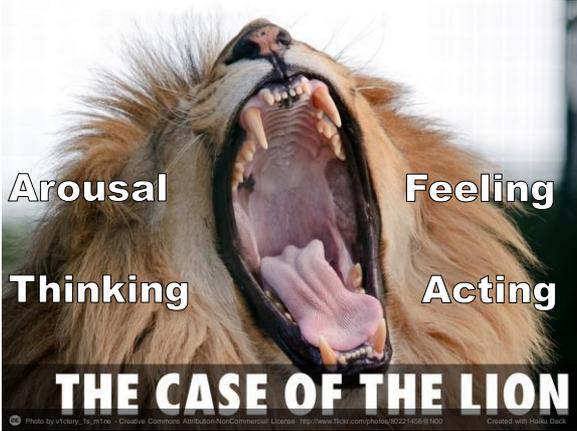
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### Arousal: What to do Pg 75

- Ensure safety
- Be a quiet, nearby presence
- Lower tone of voice
- Acknowledge and identify emotions
- Ride the wave, revisit the rules

*"I see you are not okay. I will stay here with you to keep you safe."*

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### Thinking: What to Do Pg 103

- Give permission for arousal to end
- Work together
- Recognize and identify their thoughts
- Intention vs action
- Interest over blame

*"You're thinking I wanted to hurt you, but I don't. It was an accident that you got hurt and I'm sorry it happened. I didn't want that to happen to you."*

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## Feeling: What to do

Pg 76

- Give words to feelings
- Describe discrete emotions
- Degrees of emotion
- Emotion regulation

*"It's okay to be a lot sad right now. I don't think sad will be forever, but it's a big feeling right now."*

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## Acting: What to do

Pg 147

- What do they want?
- Suggest alternative solutions for next time
- Willingness vs coercion

*"You can't climb on the furniture. I know rules are hard. I can help you with that rule so you and I can read or play a game. You choose."*

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## Parents under Stress

- May be experiencing their own trauma
  - Experience their own children as a threat
  - Difficulty controlling emotions
  - Unhealthy coping
  - Be distrusting of others




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## Helping families manage stress



- Predictability
  - Being consistent, present, clear
- Controllability
  - Provide families choices and autonomy
- Social supports
  - Work *with* families, not *on* families

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## Context is everything

*Understand* a family's contexts  
then  
*Create* a new context

*"We need never be hopeless, because we can never be irreparably broken."*  
~ John Green

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## Building healthy bodies, minds, learners

*The partnerships have completely turned our building around. Vento used to be a really hard place because we did not have the systems in place to meet the needs of the kids. Now we have. With those systems in place, it has helped create a positive and safe learning environment. Family Innovations, Second Harvest and University of Minnesota, have all helped us do that!*  
— Principal Masini



[z.umn.edu/vento](http://z.umn.edu/vento)




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# Thank you!

**Presentation Materials:**

[www.drlangworthy.com/presentationmaterials](http://www.drlangworthy.com/presentationmaterials)

**Book:**

[www.drlangworthy.com/book](http://www.drlangworthy.com/book)

**Where to find me:**

**Email:** [sara@drlangworthy.com](mailto:sara@drlangworthy.com)

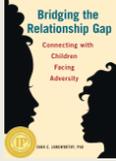
**YouTube:**

[youtube.com/DevelopmentalEnthusiastChannel](https://www.youtube.com/DevelopmentalEnthusiastChannel)

**Twitter:** @DrLangworthy

**Medium:** [medium.com/@DrLangworthy](https://medium.com/@DrLangworthy)

**Website:** [drlangworthy.com](http://drlangworthy.com)



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