

Redefining Trauma: A Journey Of Hope

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Family Stress

- All families experience normative and transitional life event stressors (ie: birth, death, moving, earning a living, etc)
- All parents are subject to the inherent chronic stressors of parenting
- Parental psychological stressors are related to the worries that parents have about the physical safety and the growth and development of their children

When a child is diagnosed with disabilities, all of the attention is focused on helping the child.

But parents also need assistance in coping with stress, their own feelings and frustrations.

Types of Traumatic Stress

- Internal
- External
- Psychological
- Physiological
- Medical
- Environmental
- Social

Trauma can be anything...

- Finding quality primary care
- Multifaceted specialized care
- Long-term care of disabled child
- Navigating team of specialists working with the disability
- Medical, developmental, emotional conditions that are rare or difficult to diagnose
- Navigating routine transportation
- Medical crises
- Housing
- Maintaining adequate accommodations to meet physical disabilities and limitations
- Expense of modifications

Typical Reactions To Traumatic Stress Events

- **Shock and disbelief** – difficulty accepting the reality of what happened
- **Fear** – that the same thing will happen again, or that you'll lose control or break down
- **Sadness** – particularly if people you know died
- **Helplessness** – the sudden, unpredictable nature of the unexpected, accidents, medical emergencies result in feeling vulnerable and helpless
- **Guilt** –feeling that more could have done more to help or prevent the situation
- **Anger**
- **Shame** – especially over feelings or fears that can't be control

The Challenge for Parents/Caregivers

- ❖ Feelings of Inadequacy/ Not Knowing What to Do
- ❖ Grief & Loss
- ❖ Strain on Relationships
- ❖ Anticipatory Anxiety
- ❖ Secondary Traumatic Stress
- ❖ Stress due to ongoing needs of children that may continue into adulthood

Promote a Healing & Protective Environment

- ❖ Create or recreate a safe & secure interpersonal environment
 - ❖ Use “micro-behaviors of relationships” attuned to needs
- ❖ Recognize behavior as the child’s method for adapting to unwanted circumstances
- ❖ Use person-centered tools & frameworks to expand behavioral management to include a focus on:
 - ❖ Increasing quality of life
 - ❖ Changing the environment
 - ❖ Increasing alternative means of coping
 - ❖ Teaching self-care skills

What Can a Provider Do?

- ❖ Identify and enhance family strengths and natural supports.
- ❖ Ask about siblings.
- ❖ Take the time to listen to parents/caregivers and ask them what about their questions, concerns & challenges.
- ❖ Provide practical tools for promoting a secure attachment and a healing & protective environment.
- ❖ Provide anticipatory guidance.
- ❖ Help parents/caregivers access support.
- ❖ Help parents find access to respite care.

Developing IDD- & Trauma-Informed Recovery Plans

- ❖ Identify what is important **to** the child as well as what is important **for** the child.
 - ❖ Recognize the child's talents and strengths as well as needs.
 - ❖ Include the child's personal circle of significant relationships when developing a plan.
 - ❖ Identify the child's hopes and dreams, as well as fears and nightmares.
- ❖ Identify additional information that you need to gather.
- ❖ Identify what is important to the family and what is important for the family
 - ❖ Trauma assessment/screening
 - ❖ Protective factors to enhance
- ❖ Focus on concrete action to move toward the desired life.
 - ❖ Referrals to trauma-focused treatment
 - ❖ Referrals to other supportive services (e.g., respite, activities, parent trauma)

Steps to Family Stress Reduction

- ❖ Practice principles of safety & empowerment
- ❖ Share successes & shortcomings
- ❖ Ensure regular & reflective opportunities
- ❖ Support open communication
- ❖ Hold open discussions
- ❖ Listen to family concerns

What can families do to manage traumatic stress?

- Take time to heal
- Do not try to force the healing process.
- Be patient with the pace of recovery.
- Be prepared for difficult and volatile emotions.
- Allow experiencing of feelings without imposing judgment or guilt.
- Talk to trusted others

What can families do to manage traumatic stress?

- Make a plan and stick to it. Make sure you include all of the elements necessary for a healthy life.
- Follow your physician's advice.
- Team up with a spouse or friend for time off
- Get your finances organized, money can be a huge stressor.
- Use relaxation tapes or exercises to calm down after a hectic day.
- Find a place of retreat (the bathroom or the car, for instance), and go there for cooling off when the tension is very great.
- Make recreation and relaxation a priority, so that you have some time off during the week.
- Hire out or trade off chores that are time consuming and distasteful. Sometimes it is well worth paying someone else to do those chores so that you have more time and energy to devote to yourself and your family.