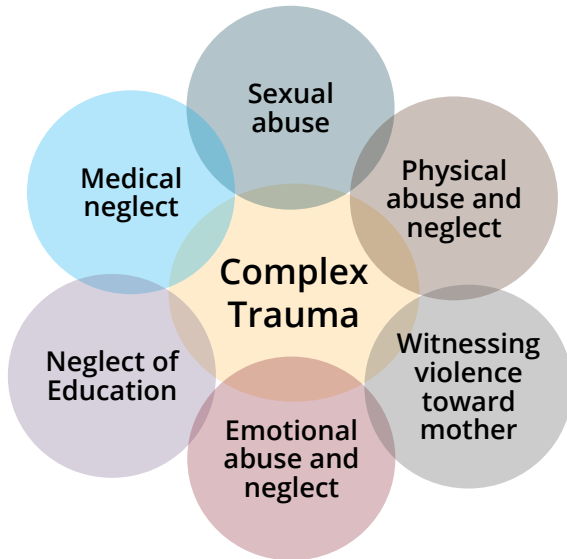


Complex Trauma, Self-Regulation, and Mindfulness-Based Practices

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Children & families in the child welfare system have histories of complex trauma that affect their capacities for self-regulation. Showing children & parents how to do mindfulness-based practices can help overcome the effects of trauma & foster the development of capacities for self-regulation.



Complex trauma is composed of two or more adversities that overwhelm capacities for coping and that affect development and functioning in a variety of domains. Persons with untreated complex trauma have issues with trust, self-love, attention, and concentration. They often experience emotional pain and seek a variety of ways to soothe the pain.

Self-regulation refers to capacities to manage and make sense of one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in times of stress and in the course of everyday life. Children develop these capacities when they have secure attachments with their parents and caregivers who provide secure bases that support their development and safe havens where they can work out the effects of trauma and stress in ways that don't harm the self or others.

Complex Trauma + Secure Attachments = Self-Regulation

Complex Trauma + Insecure Attachments = Dysregulation

Mindfulness is a state of awareness of one's bodily sensations, perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors without judgment. This awareness leads to a clear mind and a relaxed body. In states of mindfulness, persons have capacities for self-regulation and also have good executive function, where they anticipate consequences and thus act in prosocial ways and not in ways that harm self and others. Service providers are most effective when they engage in mindfulness-based practices.



Resources

The following websites provide mindfulness-based exercises that can be used with children & families.

- Holistic Me at Robert W. Coleman School https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jy_c99q0WQI
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon. The Breathing Space by Jon Kabat-Zinn: A 3 Minute Exercise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZlJdTHUsR0>
- Mindfulness for Children <http://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/>
- Mindfulness for Teens <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/resources/resources-for-mindfulness/>
- Sitting Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) <http://www.shambhala.com/sittingstilllikeafrog>
- Go Zen! Mindfulness Meditations for Kids <https://www.youtube.com/user/gozenonline>
- Mindfulness: 10 Lessons in Self-Care for Social Workers <http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/mindfulness-10-lessons-in-self-care-for-social-workers/>

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