Trauma-Informed Practices with Immigrant Children

Monica Romo, LCSW
ABOUT GIRASOL

Our Mission
Girasol provides trainings, consultations, and resources to build a network of trauma-informed professionals that support immigrant families.

Our Values
Social Justice, Connection & Growth

OUR VISION
A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THAT PRIORITIZES THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ALL IMMIGRANT FAMILIES.
The Girasol Program

Girasol strives to achieve its vision by working to create a global community of trauma-informed professionals. In so doing, we are ensuring access to integrated systems of support and resources for the well-being of all immigrant families.

**WE GET IT DONE WITH THESE 4 PROGRAM AREAS**

- **Trainings & Consulting**: We provide professionals with trainings and consultation services.
- **Mental Health Collaborative**: We collaborate and maintain a statewide network of social workers and mental health professionals working in immigration.
- **Social Work Detention Response**: We provide social work students with volunteer and advocacy opportunities.
- **Navegando Austin**: We maintain and update the Navegando Austin website, a comprehensive list of available immigration resources.
AGENDA

• Trauma 101
• ACEs
• The Brain
• Trauma Responses
• Trauma-Informed practices
TRAUMA

Response to an event or events that are perceived as threatening the life or safety of a child or someone important to that child, causing an overwhelming sense of terror, helplessness, and horror. When these experiences are internalized, it impacts the perception of safety along with the views of self, others, and the world.

Acute Trauma

Chronic Trauma

Complex Trauma
Trauma

- Intrusive memories
- Nightmares, Flashbacks
- Startle response
- Shame, self-hatred
- Panic attacks
- Emotional overwhelm
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Little or no memories
- Hypervigilance
- Dissociation
- Depression
- Irritability
- Loss of interest
- Numbness
- Decreased concentration
- Hopelessness
**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN CHILDREN?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anger and aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hyperactivity and poor impulse control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depression and isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clinginess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changes in sleep and appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Poor concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Restlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Memory loss; inability to recall or store new information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disassociation – “daydreaming”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulty trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dependency on others – helplessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Immigrant Children Triple Trauma Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Migration</th>
<th>Migration</th>
<th>Post Migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme poverty</td>
<td>Dangerous journey</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Human trafficking</td>
<td>Separation from loves ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse &amp; neglect</td>
<td>Other Crimes</td>
<td>Detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real or Perceived Abandonment</td>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>Loss &amp; grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Cultural shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural disasters</td>
<td>MPP; Title 42</td>
<td>Court proceedings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of deportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Social Support &amp; Community Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<pre><code>                                                                          |                                                                           | Discrimination                                                                 |
</code></pre>
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

The three types of ACEs include:

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLECT**
- Physical
- Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother treated violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce

WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?
“Missing from the ACEs framework, however, is the role of pervasive and systematic oppression that afflicts certain racialized groups and that leads to persistent threat and deprivation. ...the consequence of a limited ACEs framework is that clinicians and researchers fail to address the psychological violence inflicted on children from increasingly restrictive immigration policies, ramped up immigration enforcement, and national anti-immigration rhetoric.”

-Barajas-Gonzalez, Ayón, Brabeck, Rojas-Flores, Valdez, 2021
Parts of the Brain

Brainstem – survival
  • Automatic functions such as breathing, heart rate, digestion

Limbic System – emotions
  • Alarm system

Neocortex – thinking
  • Higher level functions such as problem-solving and planning
DR. DANIEL SIEGEL’S HAND BRAIN MODEL

- Middle prefrontal cortex
- Cerebral cortex
- Limbic regions
  - Hippocampus
  - Amygdala
- Brainstem
  - Base of skull
  - Spinal cord
TRAUMA RESPONSES

- **Fight**
  - Rage
  - Anger
  - Irritability
  - Attack

- **Flight**
  - Panic
  - Fear
  - Anxiety
  - Run

- **Freeze**
  - Shut-Down
  - Detached
  - Stuck
  - Hide

@wellness_compass
TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES
Recognizing the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledging the role trauma may play in an individual’s life and behavior.

THE 4 R’S OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- Realize the widespread impact of trauma
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and the role it may play in an individual’s life and behavior
- Responds by integrating knowledge about the effects of trauma into policies and practices
- Resists re-traumatization
TRAUMA-INFORMED JOURNALISM

• Learn about trauma and its effects
• Create safety
• Allow them to tell their story
• Take care of your own mental health
It’s important that reporters speak to their interviewee and see a person there, not just a source of information. By humanizing, rather than objectifying, the people reporters talk to, they are more likely to build rapport and gain trust.

- Melissa Stanger, LMSW
“Trauma-informed journalism means understanding trauma, understanding what a trauma survivor is experiencing before you show up at their door, and understanding how your actions [as a journalist] will impact them after you pack up and leave.”

- Tamara Cherry
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Tell stories that humanize immigrants

• Cover stories that highlight the immigrant experience

• Take a holistic approach & include stories about immigrant communities already in the US.

• Include immigrant voices, not just the “experts”

• Limit the use of derogatory, dehumanizing language
Girasol

Apoyo para el bienestar de los inmigrantes
Supporting the Wellbeing of Immigrants

The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing
Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Girasoltexas.org