

Paper Tigers:
Reforming Schools Through Trauma-
Informed Practices

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“It’s About T.I.M.E.” (Trauma-Informed Movement in Education)

- Pilot program launched at Beach High School, in Long Beach
- Train staff in the neuroscience of trauma, recognizing trauma in students’ behaviors, and trauma-informed interventions based on The Child Trauma Academy’s Neurosequential Model in Education (NME).
- On-site 2 days/week as a consultant and model of trauma-informed interventions:
 - Sensory regulation for students (music, movement, play, walk, etc)
 - Build supportive relationships between myself and staff, myself and students, and staff and students.
 - Encourage alternative disciplinary procedures that attempt to understand the student’s behavior and meet their underlying needs, rather than trying to control the behavior.

Understanding trauma

Trauma is:

- *“ANY experience that overwhelms us, leaving us altered and disconnected from our bodies. Any coping mechanisms we may have had are undermined, and we feel utterly helpless and hopeless.”*
- *“Trauma is not in the event itself; rather, trauma lies in the nervous system.”* – Peter Levine, [Trauma Through a Child’s Eyes](#)

The Effects of Trauma

- Distorted smoke detector, distorted templates of threat, reward, and relationships.
- *“The body continues to fight the unseen enemy.” –Bessel van der Kolk*
- Physical changes to stress response neurobiology (thermostat is out of balance).

Understanding Trauma

- Trauma lies on a spectrum
- Intense & acute or ongoing & moderate
- Abuse, exposure to violence, poverty, abandonments, inadequate caregiving, medical procedures, etc.
- *“When bad things happen, but also when good things don’t happen.”*

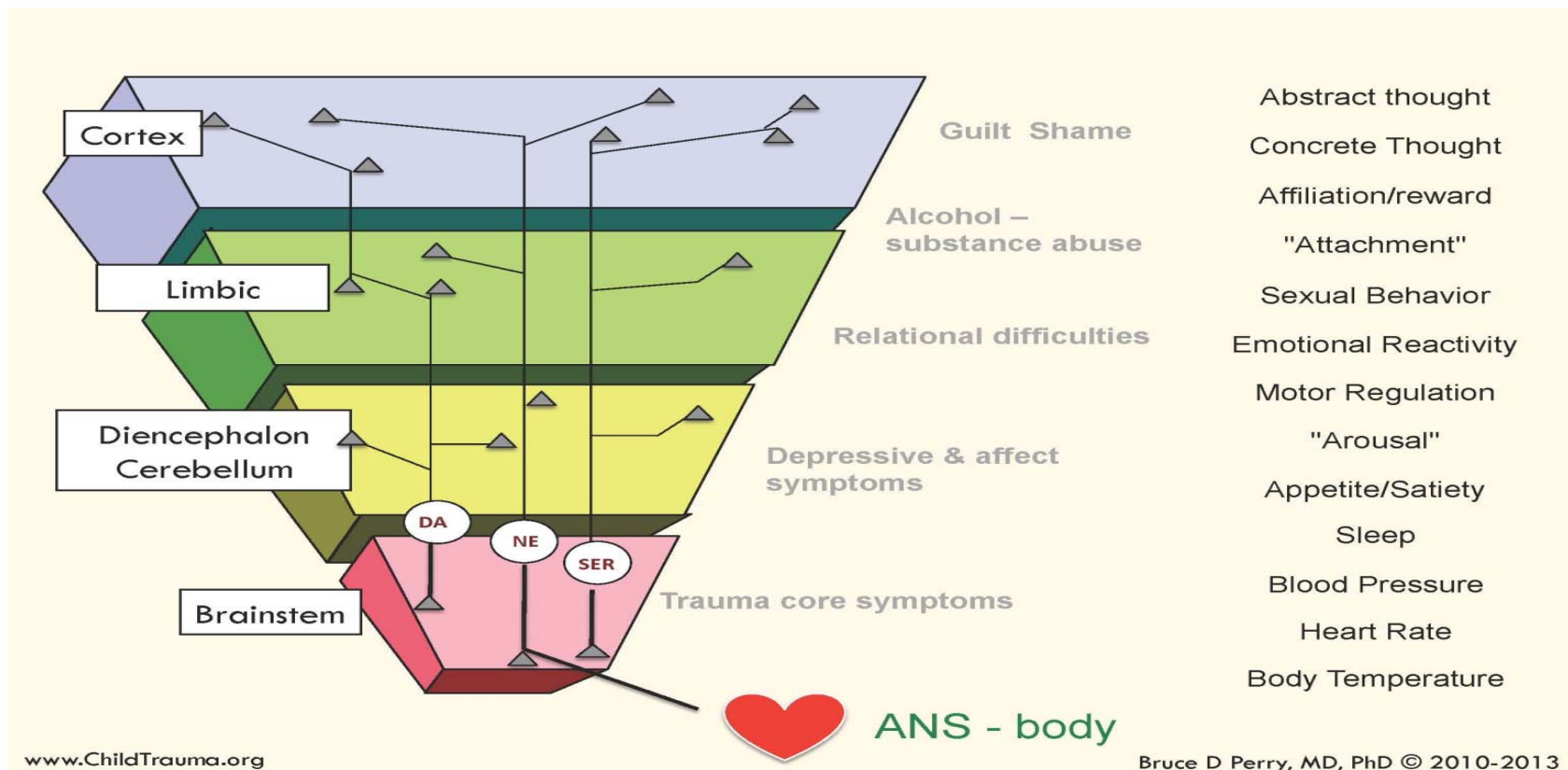
Neuroscience of Trauma

- The brain is a historical organ. It becomes what it has been exposed to.
- The brain is use-dependent: vision, language, empathy, communication, emotional regulation, ability to love, relational reward, trust, problem solving, social interactions, stress response, etc.
- The quality and quantity of patterned-repetitive experiences will determine developmental level achieved (eg. # of words or # of empathic problem solving interactions for average 5 y/o)

Neuroscience of Trauma

- Neural templates: Brain makes associations based on pattered, repetitive stimuli. (eg. siren = firetruck, raised voice = Domestic violence)
- The brain develops and is most susceptible to the effects of trauma from conception to age 5.
- The brain develops from the bottom-up.

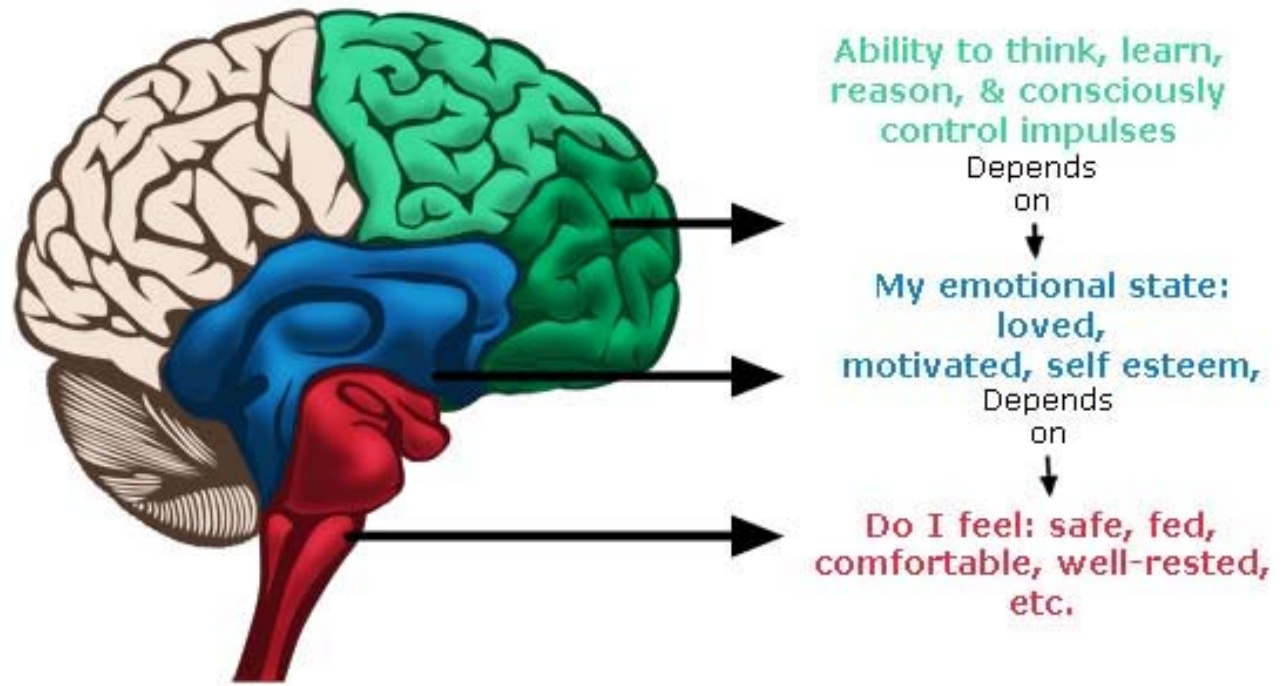
Neuroscience of Trauma



Bruce D Perry, MD, PhD © 2010-2013

Neuroscience of Trauma

- Trauma affects all brain areas, but mostly the lower areas.
- Brain functions from the bottom-up.
- If lower areas are not regulated, upper areas will not be regulated.



Behaviors Through the Trauma Lens

ALMOST ALL BEHAVIORAL IMPAIRMENTS FALL UNDER:

- **Fight** (anger, aggression, defiance, need for control, etc)
- **Flight** (hyperactivity, impulsivity, sensory seeking, etc)
- **Freeze** (dissociate, ignore, distractibility, etc)
- **Fold** (numb, give in, give up, etc)

State-Dependent Functioning

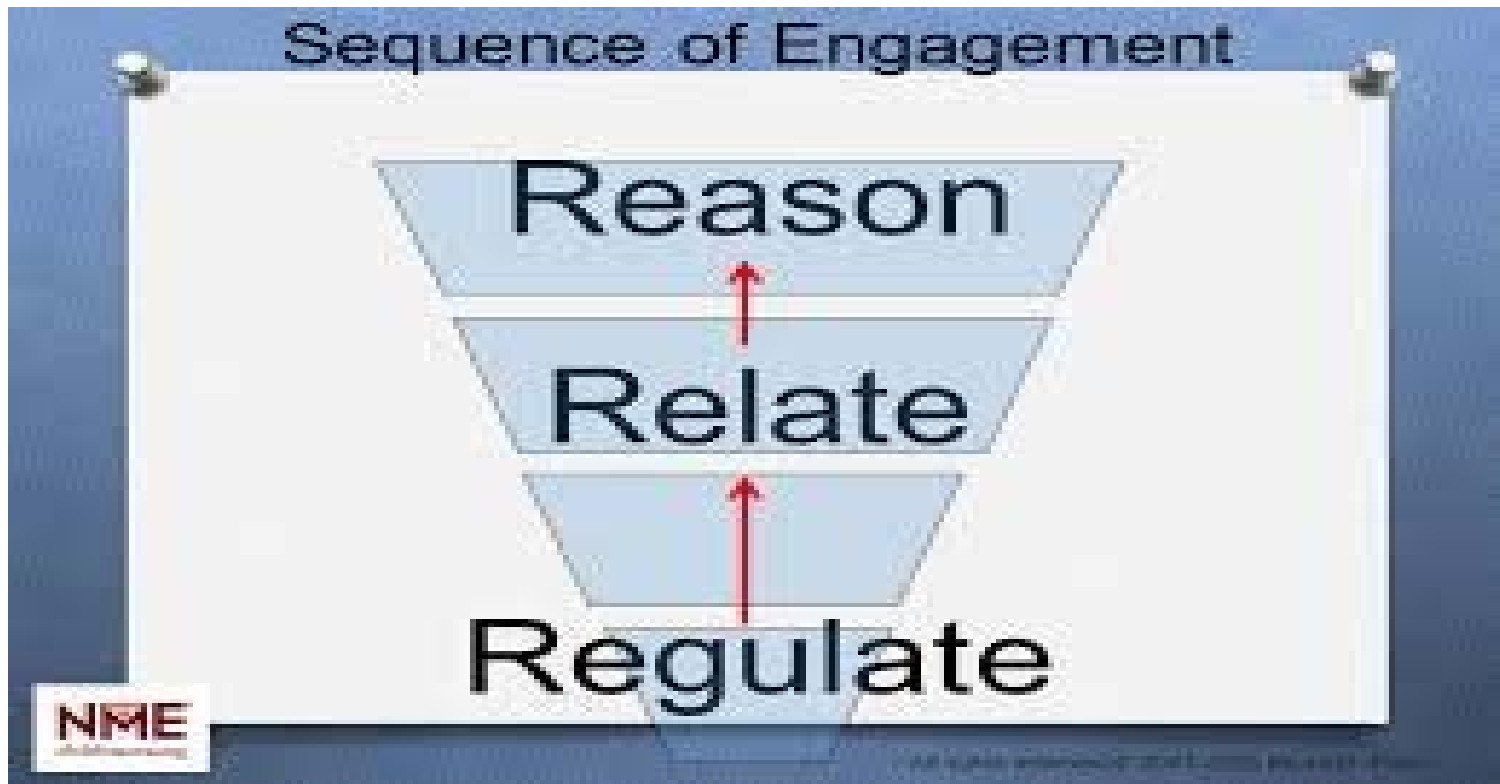
- Our ability to function depends on what state we are in.
- “When we stress we regress”
- Arousal continuum vs dissociative continuum



Application of NME/NMT

- Not a treatment model or collection of techniques, but rather a lens and understanding of how trauma and the brain play a part in psychological functioning.
- Use whatever treatment approach you see fit, keeping in mind the organization and neurosequential functioning of the brain.

Application of NME/NMT



Application of NME/NMT: Regulate

Sensory regulating activities:

- Appropriate touch, massage, rocking
- Dance, exercise, walking, marching
- Play-doh
- Music, singing, drumming,
- Drawing
- Playing catch/other ball games
- Sand/water play
- Occupational Therapy ideas

Application of NME/NMT: Relate

- Respect the intimacy barrier: mind your facial expression and proximity/stature.
- Don't overpower the child with threats, consequences, or lectures.
- Connect with their inner child.
- Active listening, empathy, validating & reflecting statements.

Application of NME/NMT: Reason

- Collaborative problem solving
- Verbal processing
- Cognitive restructuring
- etc

In closing...

“Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.” Dr. Bruce Perry