Safe and Sound
Creating a Net of Calm Connection to Buffer
The Impact of Trauma

Gillian Boudreau, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist
School Psychologist
Registered Yoga Teacher

Relationships And Connection Are Key To Resilience

Building a positive relationship with a client is the main predictor of the benefit of any psychotherapy intervention (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989, 1994; Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000).

Interpersonal connectedness at school plays a big role in academic motivation and success (Martin & O'Sullivan, 2008 review).

Trust In Self and Others
Belief in Basic Safety
Self-soothing
Object constancy

Healthy Attachment Sequence

Physical or Emotional need

Relaxation
Distress

Need Is Understood And Met

Calm Connection Example

Unhealthy Attachment Sequence

Physical or Emotional need

Terror/Rage/Numbing
Distress

Need Is Misunderstood, Ignored or Punished

The Importance of Basic Safety
When we are feeling connected and calm, we believe we are generally safe in the world.

Basic safety brings us out of survival mode and allows higher order processes to occur like the development of:

Problem Solving
Perspective Taking
Empathy

“This traumatized people chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies. The past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort. Their bodies are constantly bombarded by visceral warning signs, and, in an attempt to control these processes, they often become expert at ignoring their gut feelings and in numbing awareness of what is played out inside. They learn to hide from their selves.”
— Bessel A. van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma, p. 97

The Common Factor Underlying Trauma Symptoms is: Fear
Things register as trauma when things are too fast and intense to be dealt with or processed in the moment, and when we feel alone or unsafe or insignificant in the world.

When working with trauma, we must slow down and connect intentionally with ourselves and with others so that all feel seen and heard.

### Understanding Common Behaviors as Fear

- Defensiveness/ Reluctance to Try
- Fear of Failure/Judgment/Punishment
- Worry
- Fear of The Unknown
- Impulsivity
- Fear of Losing Out/Helplessness
- Trouble Focusing/ Addiction
- Fear of The Present Moment
- Tearfulness, Aggression
- Primary Fear Response

Fear is the basis of many challenges among those experiencing trauma, and it also exists systemically in institutions and agencies.

It takes a village of calm and regulated professionals to help individuals who have experienced trauma thrive.

Fear is contagious.

People make bad decisions when they are fearful.

Fear disrupts our biological reward systems.

Fear blocks perspective and credibility.

Calm is also contagious!
**Co-Regulation**

Auto regulation is the ability to self-regulate independently. It is the ability to calm oneself down when agitation rises to the upper limits of tolerance and to stimulate oneself up when lethargic or down.

Interactive (psychobiological) regulation utilizes relationships to mitigate breaches in the window of tolerance, and to stimulate or calm oneself.

From Allan Schore

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**Fear Chain: Who is Afraid of What?**

Chief
Director
Supervisor
Case Manager
Provider
Client

**Chain of Fear**

Pressure re: Outcomes
Director
Patience/Advocacy

Hopeless Statement
Supervisor
Sees Progress

Mistrust
Practitioner
Trust

Symptoms Up
Patient
Symptoms Down

**Chain of Calm**

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**So How Do We Create Calm Connected Systems?**

Building a positive relationship with a client is the main predictor of the benefit of any psychotherapy intervention (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989, 1994; Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000).

“Team spirit” is an important protective factor for keeping clinical professionals emotionally healthy (Collins & Long, 2003).

Stress at work is reduced when people talk about their challenges and experiences with colleagues and supervisors (Salston & Figley, 2003).

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**Don't: Minimize Triggers**

**Do: Practice Radical Empathy**

- Adults allow themselves to fully feel a child’s distress
- Adults recognize that humans are generally doing the best they can
- Students don’t want to melt down at school any more than adults do at work
- Adults consider what would have to happen for them to have a commensurate meltdown in a given setting
- Adults accept that children’s triggers have this level of emotional intensity

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**Well-Meaning Minimization:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child: I can’t find my lunchbox!</th>
<th>Adult: It’s ok, I’m sure it will turn up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child: No I need it right now!</td>
<td>Adult: Well I don’t see it. Don’t worry we’ll just put your lunch in a paper bag for today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child: I need my lunchbox!</td>
<td>Adult: Don’t worry, you won’t be in trouble for losing it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child: I need my lunchbox!!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Connection and Co-Regulation are Key**

- From Allan Schore (Pat Ogden)
Current Conceptualization of Mindfulness

1. Focused attention on present moment experience
2. Open and accepting attitude toward experience

Empathic Responding:

Student: I can't find my lunchbox!
Adult: Oh goodness I am sorry to hear that.
Student: I don't know where it went!
Adult: Oh wow, have you been without it a long time?
Student: I had it this morning but now it's gone!
Adult: Losing things is an awful feeling, I can tell it is really important to you.
Student: Yes and now I'm going to starve!
Adult: This sounds like a really difficult situation. I've lost things before too and it's the worst feeling. Would you like some help?

Empathy is Particularly Helpful for Calm Connection Because...

A Mindful State Mimics Secure Attachment

5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Exercise
3 Part Breathing
Breath Counting

Questions To Carry Out

How do we build calm connection at your organization? Can we create strategic alliances? Could we implement movement and/or mindfulness during lunch breaks? How can we keep progress going? Monthly check-ins?

Mindfulness is Particularly Helpful for Calm Connection Because...

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