

**TRAUMA:** Experience(s) that causes intense physical and psychological reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is/are experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.\*

\*According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

# Prevention & Intervention Techniques for Reducing Disobedience & Disruption

## ~A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH~

Kate Blazer, MSW Student, Portland State University

Prepared for Mandy Davis, LCSW, PhD

### What does it mean to be Trauma Informed?

**Philosophy:** Trauma Informed practices are a way to engage others, based on the awareness and understanding that the experience of trauma is pervasive and deeply impactful, which can lead to a wide range of vulnerabilities. A Trauma Informed approach prioritizes a commitment to supportive services that avoid re-traumatization, in order to facilitate healthy outcomes for all.

**Paradigm shift:** Preventing re-traumatization and promoting safety, self awareness, stability & regulation are prioritized before disciplinary action and assertion of authority.

**Priorities:** Safety. Prevention. Predictability. Trust. Relationship. Transparency. Empowerment. Cultural competence. Thwart re-traumatization. Resilience.

**Policies, Procedures & Practices:** Trauma Informed practices permeate every aspect of the environment. Choice. Explanation. Collaboration. Representation. Accommodation. Clarification.

### Perception of Behavioral Process:

**Stimulus** (environment, sensory experience or thought) LEADS TO **Processing** (assessing, associating or remembering) LEADS TO **Action** (behaviors).

### Benefits of a Trauma Informed Approach

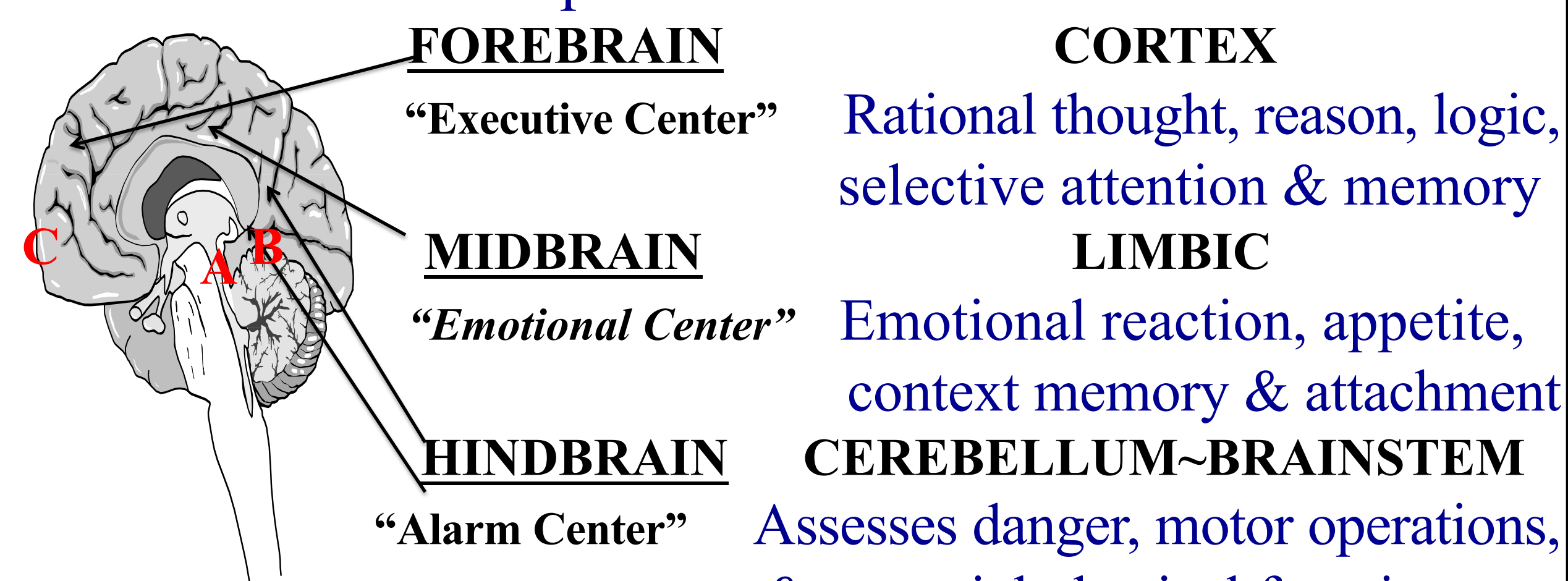
- Work smarter, not harder
- Enjoy students & colleagues more
- Avoid burnout & emotional exhaustion
- Reframe perceptions of personal offense
- Be more effective, especially during difficult times

### What is required of me?

**AWARENESS**  
of yourself and others  
**COMPASSION**  
for yourself and others  
**POSITIVE REGARD**  
assume the best of people & regard others with empathy  
**CHANGE**  
see & do things differently

### Brain Science

\*The brain is built over time & develops from the bottom up \*Development is affected by many factors, such as relationships, environment & experiences (neuroplasticity) \*Function is malleable, yet consistently prioritizes survival \*Different parts of the brain have specific functions, which can be heightened, altered, disrupted and/or altogether shut down \*The brain is repairable.



Right Brain: Thought, intuition, creativity & emotional processing  
Left Brain: Language, rationale, logic & analytic thought

### Trauma's Affect on the Brain

If exposed to trauma during development, the brain's organization & functioning can experience a cascading impact (bottom up). After a traumatic experience, the brain's detection of & response to stressors remains heightened. As a result, stimulus that might otherwise look nonthreatening can trigger a relived experience of the original trauma response (re-traumatized). This can result in a heightened or dissociative cognitive, emotional and physical response. Re-experienced over time, the central nervous system becomes imbalanced.

### Internal Experience~External Expression

- (A) Amygdala: Senses danger & stimulates secretion of stress hormones. When adrenaline & cortisol are secreted the body and mind experience freeze/fright/fight/flight.  
~Aroused. Agitated. Sweating. Flushing. Fidgeting~
- (B) Hippocampus: The surge of hormones distracts attention, creates hyper-vigilance and disrupts memory & attention, except for heightened awareness of danger.  
~Inattentive. Avoidant. Impaired memory & speech~
- (C) Prefrontal Cortex: Function decreases, impairs planning judgment & reasoning and reduces impulse control \*Left/Right Brain don't communicate. Left Brain shuts off.  
~Intensity (emotional & physical). Dissociated (mentally & emotionally). Unable to reason. Impulsive. Reactionary~

### Trauma Truths

**Trauma is:** An insult to neurodevelopment. A wound. Life altering. Cumulative. Preverbal. Acute. Chronic. Complex. Vicarious/Secondary. Toxic Stress. **Experiencing trauma:** Changes the nervous system. Freezes thinking. Results in lasting internal chaos. Alters perception of the world & future experiences. Can result in PTSD. Disrupts the stress-hormone system. Increases susceptibility to future (re)traumatization. **Trauma creates:** Long term impact on developing brain. Memory lapses. Learned helplessness. Shame. Elevated stress hormones. Contamination of future experiences. Compulsions to repeat or recreate trauma. Outward expressions of internal chaos and confusion.

**Trauma Can be Triggered During Times of Safety**  
A trigger is a stimulus that prompts an embedded memory of past trauma/traumatic experience, which recreates the experience of trauma, even in an otherwise safe conditions. Triggers are a sensory reminder which are not necessarily consciously associated, may/not be specific to the traumatic content or environment, and might be miniscule, remote or benign to others (such as a blue shoe). Once triggered, the brain and body respond as they did to the initial trauma/traumatic experience.

### Trauma Informed Approach to Triggers

~Triggers can't always be anticipated or predicted~  
Commitment to the principles and practices of being Trauma Informed reduces the likelihood of triggering and increases awareness of the signs/behaviors of someone who is being triggered. Prevention might include giving a warning before exposing others to intense, unusual or unexpected stimulus. **Examples of School Triggers:** Public reprimand. Bullying. Fight. Fire alarm. Emotional content (writing prompt, movie or reading). Substitute teacher. Pop quiz. Racism. Shaming.

**Reducing Triggers & Their Impact:** Prioritize safety. Establish class rules & routines. Create plan for students who get triggered. Promote self worth. Teach self regulation. Maintain positive relationships/regard. Provide external executive function for students. Use color coding. Be predictable. Provide students legitimate choices. **REFERENCES**

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### Possible Student Behaviors When Triggered

Frequently sick. Relationship troubles. Angry. Overtired. Mood swings. Disorganized. Easily startled. Illogical. Highly reactive. Absent. Late to class. Decreased reading ability. Daydreaming. Drug & alcohol use/abuse. Unprepared. Disobedient. Agitated. Poor listening. Fighting. Not following direction. Distracted. Irrational. Skipping class. Emotionally intense. Chronic irritability. Inattentive. Talking out of turn. Aggressive. Isolated. Frustrated. Diminished impulse control.

### Modeling/Promoting De-escalation & Self Regulation

#### DE-ESCALATION BEFORE ENGAGEMENT

The skills of self-regulation can be taught like any other subject, by introducing the concepts, providing examples & explanations of techniques and modeling for students.  
~Identify & calmly express personal frustration.  
~Verbalize attempt to slow thoughts down by using techniques of mindfulness: deep breathing, getting grounded (sit down, feet on floor, hands on knees) & slowing thoughts down.  
~Think out loud. Voice executive thought process: identify thoughts and feelings, assess physical state, evaluate environment, consider options, and evaluate possible outcomes to determine best course.  
~Normalize: Assure the person *they are normal*; it is the experience/effects of trauma that is not ordinary. Mitigate shame & maintain positive regard.  
~Provide time/space for triggered students to: Breathe. Drink water. Get grounded. Eat a healthy snack (no sugar or caffeine). Practice mindfulness. Move their body. Leave the room. Walk. Re-engage when regulated.

### \*TACTICS & TIMING MATTER\*

### REFRAMING RESPONSE TO DISOBEDIENCE & DISRUPTION

A direct attempt to assert power, control or discipline over someone during an acute experience (of trauma or re-traumatization) amplifies the negative affects. Diffuse first. Address others issues once regulation, sense of safety & full cognition has been restored.

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