



Adolescence & trauma

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Self-protection

- Keeping self safe
- Impact on professionals

Adolescence

- Period of transition from childhood to adulthood
- Physical, behavioural, cognitive, social, emotional & psychological changes
- A young person develops sexual maturity, an identity separate from parents, and a concept of the future
- It is a time of increasing emotional independence
 - occupation, values, relationships

Theories of Self – adolescent themes

- Conflict and renegotiation – family arguments, power struggles
- De-idealisation - Rules are the “invention of a deranged despotic parent”
- Depression and loss – “Heaven knows I’m miserable now”
- Egocentrism, grandiosity & self consciousness
 - Imaginary audience
- Significance, uniqueness & indestructibility
 - “I will never die”
- Mentoring and seeking ‘new gods’
 - Beckham, Cobain, Mandela, guidance teacher...

Harrop & Trower (2002)



Development is *dynamic*

What is complex trauma?

- Multiple traumatic events within a care giving system
- Repeated events that begin early in childhood
- All areas of child development affected

What is complex trauma?

- Can involve highly invasive traumatic events but does not have to
- Can involve exposure to repetitive childhood sexual, physical, and/or sexual abuse
- Not necessarily a consequence of sexual abuse
- Does not necessarily involve a traumatic “event”



Importantly, the trauma...

...is of an interpersonal nature

...is a process not an event

**...is not likely to be seen as trauma
because children who are neglected
have no other reality**

Traumatic dilemma

the situation in neglected or emotionally abusive families can be impossible to resolve for the child.

the child experiences a simultaneous strong urge to flee from the source of fear (the loved one) and flee to the attachment figure (same loved one).

Consequences

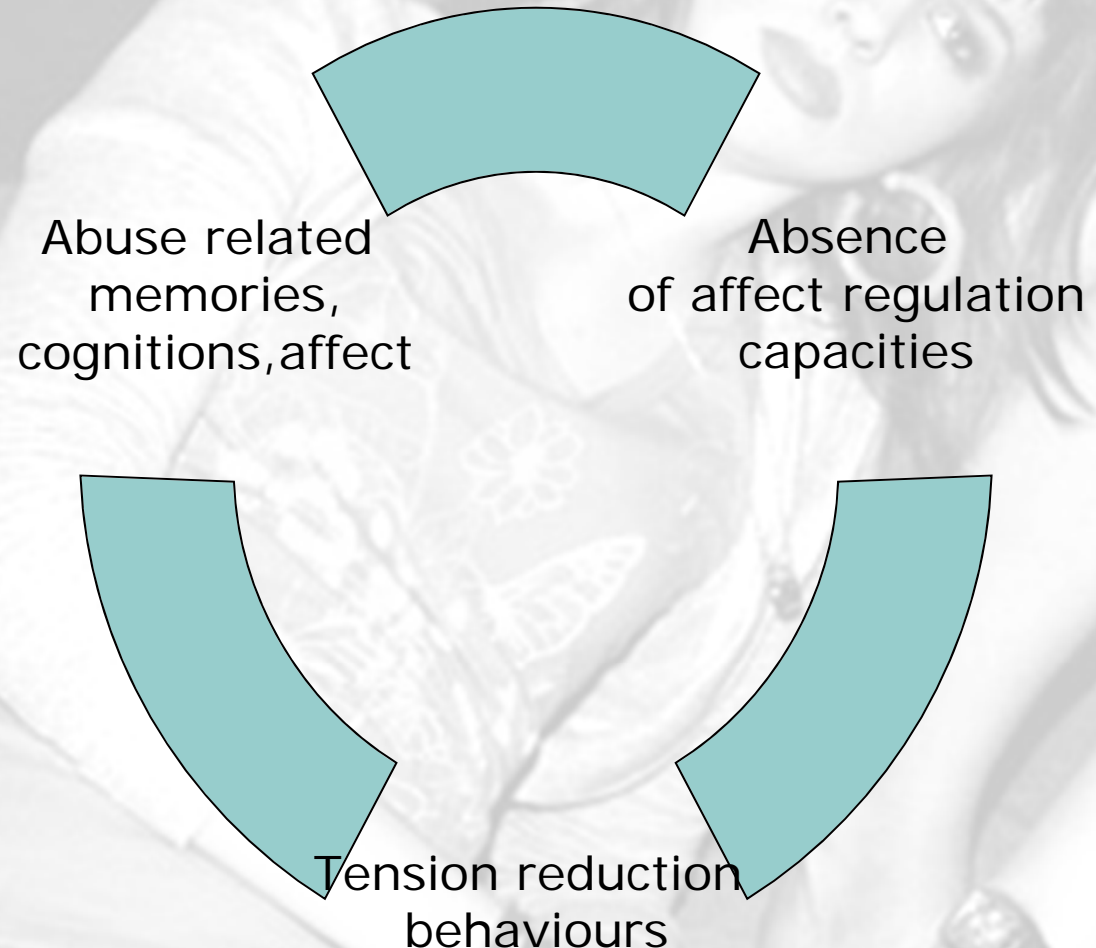
- Affect regulation & ability to self soothe
- Alterations in self-perception (self-blame, guilt) – incorporated into sense of self
- alterations in relations with others (inability to trust others and lack of comfort/intimacy in relationships)
- Altered attention and consciousness (dissociative symptoms)
- Sense of helplessness resulting from the impossibility of being understood by anyone

Overall symptom picture

- Emotional lability
- Poor emotional regulation
- Relational instability
- Impulsivity
- Unstable self-structure

-post traumatic adaptation to severe
childhood abuse & attachment trauma

Interactions



Abuse related
memories,
cognitions, affect

Absence
of affect regulation
capacities

Tension reduction
behaviours

TRIGGER = RELATIONAL STIMULI

- Closeness
- Kindness
- Reliance
- Support
- Trust

=> all things we are trying to support in foster placements, therapy, key-working...

The 3 stage model

Staying safe and taking control

Processing what's happened

Moving forward

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Thank you for listening

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