

## **Attachment Disorder 201**

**PRESENTATION TITLE:** Early Childhood Trauma and the Developing Brain & Out of Control Children (Part 1 and Part 11)

### **MAIN POINTS:**

The first part of the day will focus on how the brain is formed by trauma, how it becomes attuned to anxiety, fear, and anger, and how these fuel the very behaviors that result in mental health diagnoses. Fundamental to understanding the experience and behavior of the individual who experiences attachment difficulties is the understanding of brain function, the impact of trauma on the brain, and the ability of the brain to heal itself through specific parenting measures and therapeutic interventions. Recognition of the legacy of trauma on the brain, on the affect, on the behavior, and on the individual's ability to attach to others will be reviewed as the instructor describes how the brain is formed, structured and impacted by trauma. Specific ways of intervening in the impact of trauma will be explained. The participants will take part in a facilitated experiential exercise to help demonstrate the impact trauma has on an individual.

The second part of the day will begin with a description of healthy and dysfunctional attachment styles. A quick review of attachment disorder, its connection to complex developmental trauma, signs, symptoms, and the presentation of attachment disorders will be discussed. Short videos will be presented in order to improve the visceral experience of the participants and increase the understanding of the extreme and extensive behaviors of this population. The instructor will teach strategies specific to physical and sexual aggression in youth and sexually reactive behaviors in children.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Outcomes for participants will be to 1) understand the fundamental impact of trauma on the developing brain 2) begin to increase comfort level with specific strategies for improving brain function following trauma and subsequent attachment disturbances 3) identify differences between healthy and dysfunctional attachments, 4) be able to identify the symptoms of complex developmental trauma, 5) learn specific intervention strategies for working with children who exhibit sexual or physical aggression, or sexually reactive behaviors.

### **PRESENTATION FORMAT:**

PowerPoint presentation, lecture, short videos, small group work, interactive experiential exercises.

### **RELEVANCE TO ATTENDEES:**

The Center for Disease Control reports that 1 out of every 50 infants under twelve months of age has been traumatized. In Alaska, approximately 50 percent of all reports of harm are for children under the age of six, and the rate of substantiated or indicated maltreatment for Alaskan children is nearly 3.5 times the national rate. (Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Report, 2006). Shaw and Goode (2005) report that "Research shows that children who have experienced abuse or neglect are at high risk for a variety

of developmental problems, including for example, attachment disorders, social and emotional disturbances, cognitive deficits, neurobiological changes in the brain, and neglect.”

Children who are exposed to trauma are at a 65% increased risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder compared to adults. The younger the child is at the time of the trauma, the greater the potential impact. Their limited experiences alter their ability to process and heal from trauma, creating possibly permanent brain damage and behavioral difficulties. Understanding the impact of trauma, abuse and neglect on the young child is imperative in treating or parenting children who have been wounded.

Attachment difficulties in particular are becoming increasingly understood a type of complex, prolonged Post Traumatic Disorder that begins in early childhood and can persist throughout the lifespan if not properly (and often intensely) treated. New research is expanding the professional knowledge base, and on-the-front- data from parents and children themselves is improving working skills in the advancement and treatment of attachment difficulties.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

The primary target audience for this presentation is foster/adopt parents and other caregivers of children who experience attachment disorder; therapists, case managers, and other counselors or professionals who work with children and youth who experience attachment difficulties.

**LENGTH OF TIME:**

8 contact hours

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:**

Flip chart and screen, lap top and projector (if available)