

Trauma Webinar Handout

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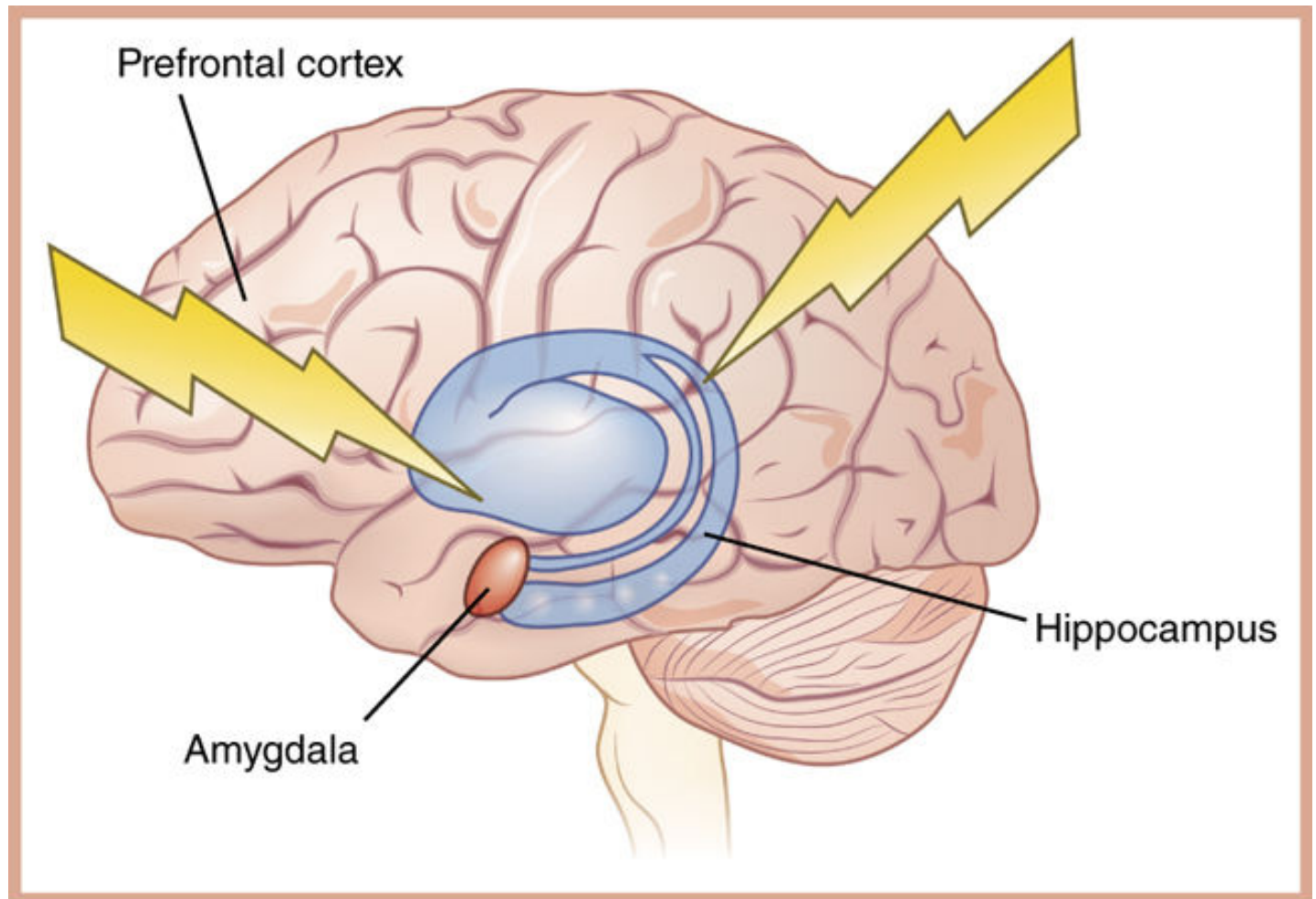
Definition of Trauma

The psychological response to events which

1. Are experienced as physically OR emotionally harmful or threatening
AND
2. Have lasting effects on a person's functioning and physical, emotional, social or spiritual well-being

Trauma may be caused by exposure to violence, physical/sexual abuse, neglect, natural disasters, accidents or ANY other event which causes a person to feel powerless, fear or recurrent hopelessness and/or a state of alert.

Neuroscience of Trauma



Amygdala

The Amygdala acts as our alarm system and triggers the *fight, flight or freeze response* when we feel like we are in danger. When trauma happens, the amygdala is deeply affected and causes us to seek danger everywhere and more frequently. In some cases, the amygdala has been shown to grow.

Hippocampus

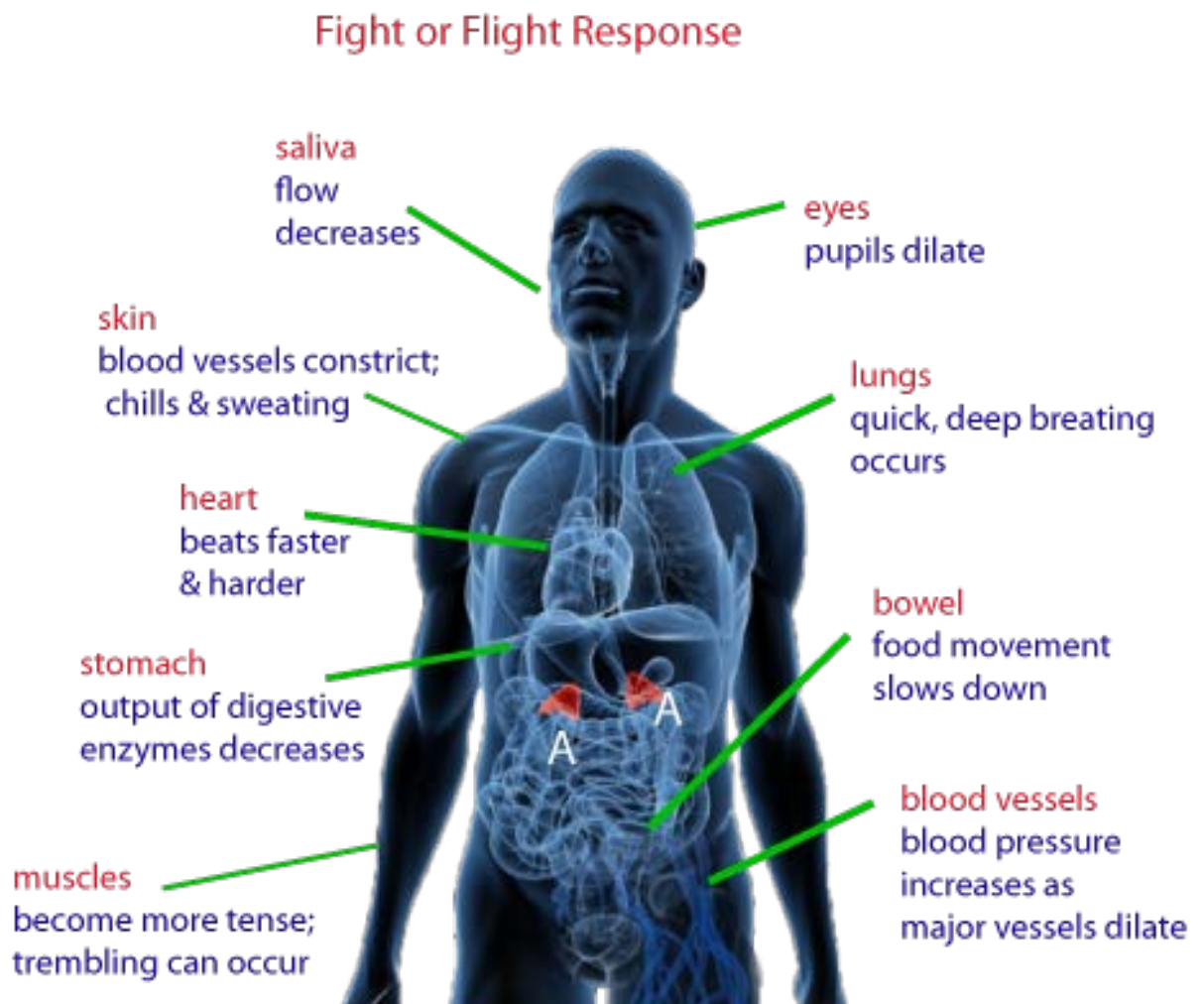
The memory center. This is where our brain stores memories however when storing memories during the time in which the Amygdala is activated, sometimes it can store information in the 'wrong place.' When we have a memory surface from the past, this can make it feel as if we are re-living the memory. This is because trauma 'hijacks' the regular process of memory storage and keeps the memories active in our brains. In some cases, the hippocampus has been shown to shrink.

Prefrontal Cortex

This area of the brain allows for us to make rational choices as opposed to reacting in survival mode and modulate emotional responsiveness, however after trauma occurs, the lower brain functions can override the prefrontal cortex (intended to allow us to make survival choices). When the lower brain functions override our rational brain, we live in survival mode, constantly alert and with heightened awareness.

Responses to Trauma

1. Fight
2. Flight
3. Freeze



ACE Survey

The ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Survey was developed to determine the long-term impact of childhood trauma. 17,000 people participated in a survey to measure adverse childhood experiences.

Correlations between childhood trauma and health issues, mental health issues, and death

The most important thing to remember is that the ACE score is meant as a guideline: If you experienced other types of toxic stress over months or years, then those would likely increase your risk of health consequences.

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
5. Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
7. Was your mother or stepmother:
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
No__If Yes, enter 1__
10. Did a household member go to prison?
No__If Yes, enter 1__

Now add up your "Yes" answers: This is your ACE Score

Intergenerational Trauma

Definition

The transmission of historical oppression and its negative consequences across generations.

The research suggests similar symptoms present which are also associated with childhood trauma: substance abuse, health issues, mental health issues, and death.

Intergenerational Trauma – 3 parts

1. Dominant culture perpetrates mass trauma on a population
 - Genocide, colonialism, slavery, war
2. Affected population shows signs and symptoms of trauma
 - Changes in norms such as eating habits, changes in how others are viewed, feelings of safety, increased fear, hypervigilance, substance abuse, depression, flashbacks, mental health or physical health issues and even suicide.
3. Initial population passes trauma responses to subsequent generations
 - Parenting
 - Trust and intimacy issues
 - Attachment
 - Violence/substance abuse in the home
 - DNA and epigenetics
 - Epigenetics definition: the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself.
 - Experiences make changes within the body and in genetic structure which has been shown to be passed down to future generations.

Complex Trauma

Describes individuals' exposure to multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature, and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure.