



Caregiver Education Session

Psychoeducational Session Handout

Our Vision

At Sophie's Place, we strongly believe in empowering parents and caregivers to help children to reach their full potential. It is important to us that everyone has access to resources and information to support themselves and their families.



What is Trauma?

Trauma is the lasting emotion response that often results from living through a harmful or distressing event. The harm can be:

- Physical or emotional.
- A real or *perceived* threat to the child or someone close to them.
- Single event or multiple events.
- Short- or long-term exposure.

“ Traumatic events are extraordinary, it’s not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. ”

Judith Herman



Parents as Guides

Research tells us that the love and support of the primary caregiver is the most important factor in a child's recovery.

- Parents are often children's only available supports.
- The parent is the child's natural guide.

Research has also shown that treatment for parents can directly impact the functioning of children.



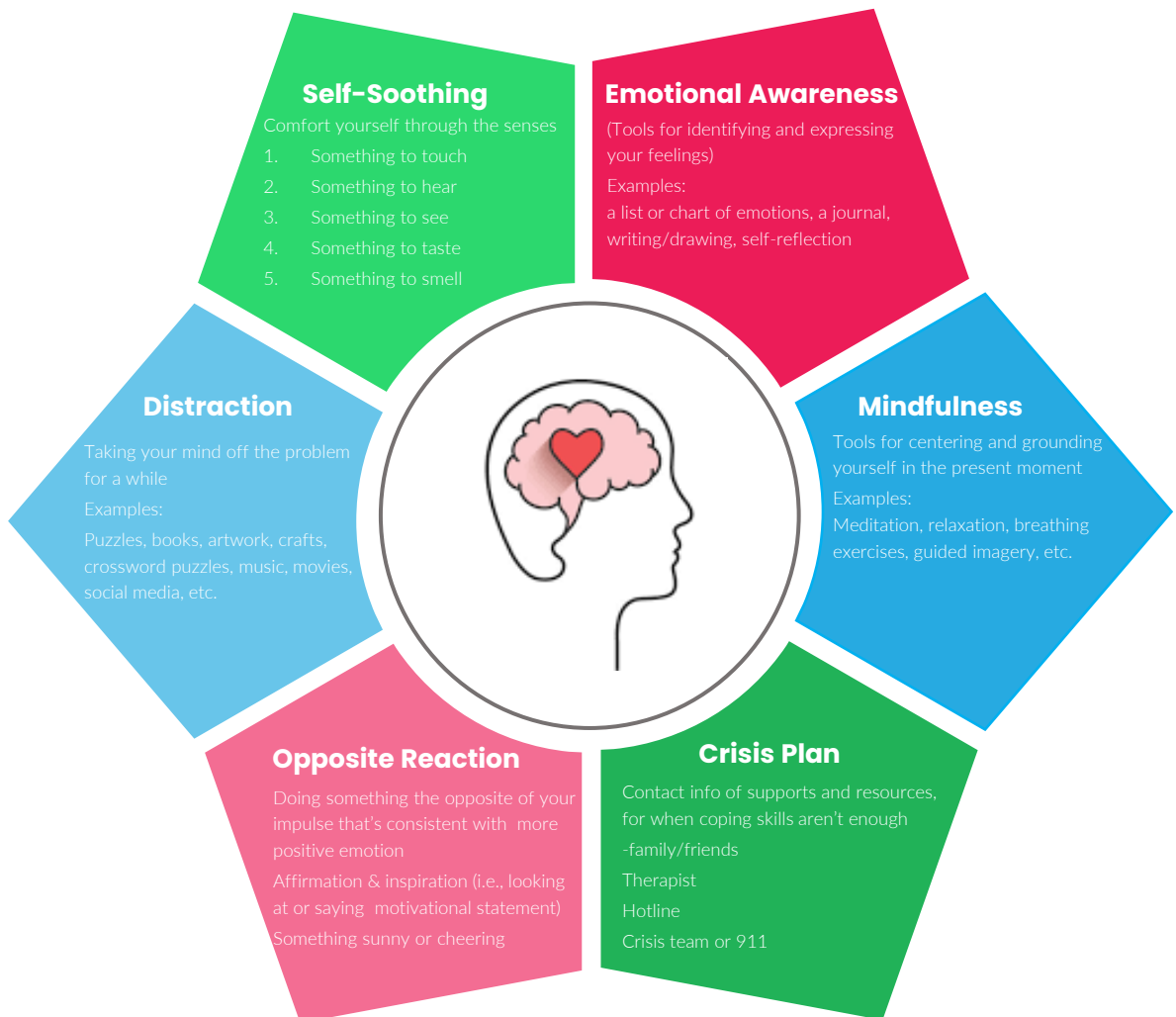
Caregivers may be experiencing PTSD, dealing with their own trauma history or other related disorders (i.e., depression, anxiety).

Focusing on caregiver wellbeing is an important aspect to supporting your child through their journey.

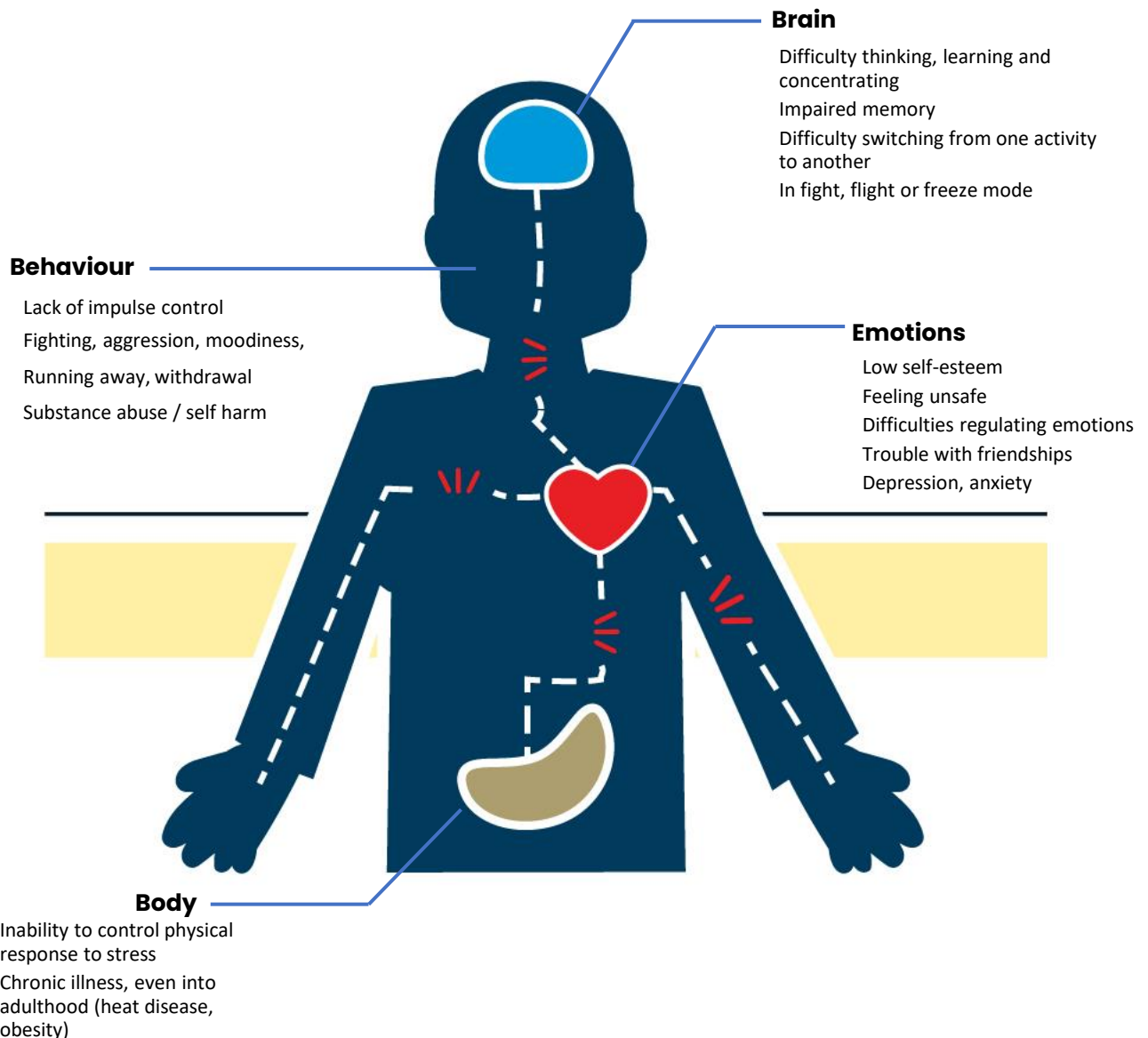




Caregiver Wellbeing



Effects of Trauma





Trauma Symptoms

The chart below shows symptoms and behaviors that children who have experienced trauma might exhibit at different stages of development.

Young Children (Ages 0–5)	School Age Children (Ages 6–12)	Teens (Ages 13–18)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irritability or fussiness• Activity levels that are much higher or lower than peers• Repeating traumatic events over and over in dramatic play or conversation• Delays in reaching physical, language, or other milestones• Clinginess, reluctance to explore the world• Starting easily or being difficult to calm• Challenges playing with peers or social relationships• Defiance, oppositional, or reactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behaviours common to young children (thumb sucking, bed wetting, fear of the dark)• Talking often about scary feelings and ideas• Changes in school performance• Fighting with peers or adults• Wanting to be left alone• Frequent headaches or stomach aches with no apparent cause• Difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next• Being quiet or withdrawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being tired all the time, sleeping much more (or less) than peers, nightmares• Risky Behaviours• Using drugs or alcohol, running away from home or getting into trouble with the law• Talking about the trauma constantly, or denying that it happened• Refusal to follow rules, or talking back frequently• Not wanting to spend time with friends• Difficulty paying attention

Source: Child Bureau | www.childwelfare.gov

It is also important to remember that these signs alone do not necessarily indicate that your child has experienced trauma.



Changes to the Relationship

A child's main attachment relationship, or the adult they're most connected to, will be their model for managing their emotions.

If we respond calmly, they'll feel calm; but if we are reactive, we can't help support their emotions.

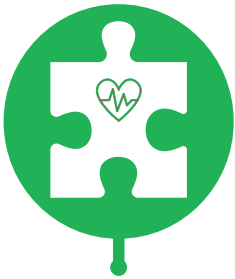
An experience of trauma can shift the connection between a caregiver and child:

- Your child may push away and resist your help.
- Your child may cling to you and be reluctant to be apart from you.

You might feel guilty about what has happened, and this might affect your relationship.

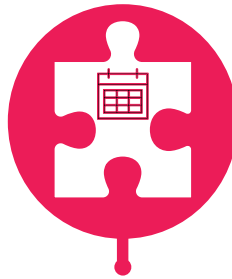


Supporting Your Child



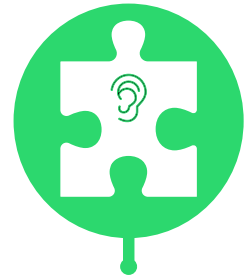
Respond, Don't React

Your reactions may trigger a child or youth who is already feeling overwhelmed. When your child is upset, do what you can to keep calm: lower your voice, acknowledge your child's feelings and be reassuring and honest.



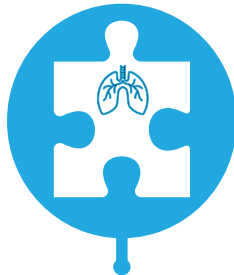
Be Consistent & Predictable

Develop a regular routine for meals, play time, and bedtime. Prepare your child in advance for changes or new experiences.



Listen

Don't avoid difficult topics or uncomfortable conversations. Let children know that it's normal to have many feelings after a traumatic experience. Take their reactions seriously, correct any misinformation about the traumatic event, and reassure.



Coping Skills (for you and them)

Encourage your child to practice slow breathing, listen to calming music, or say positive things ("I am safe now"). This does not have to define me/our family.



Be Patient

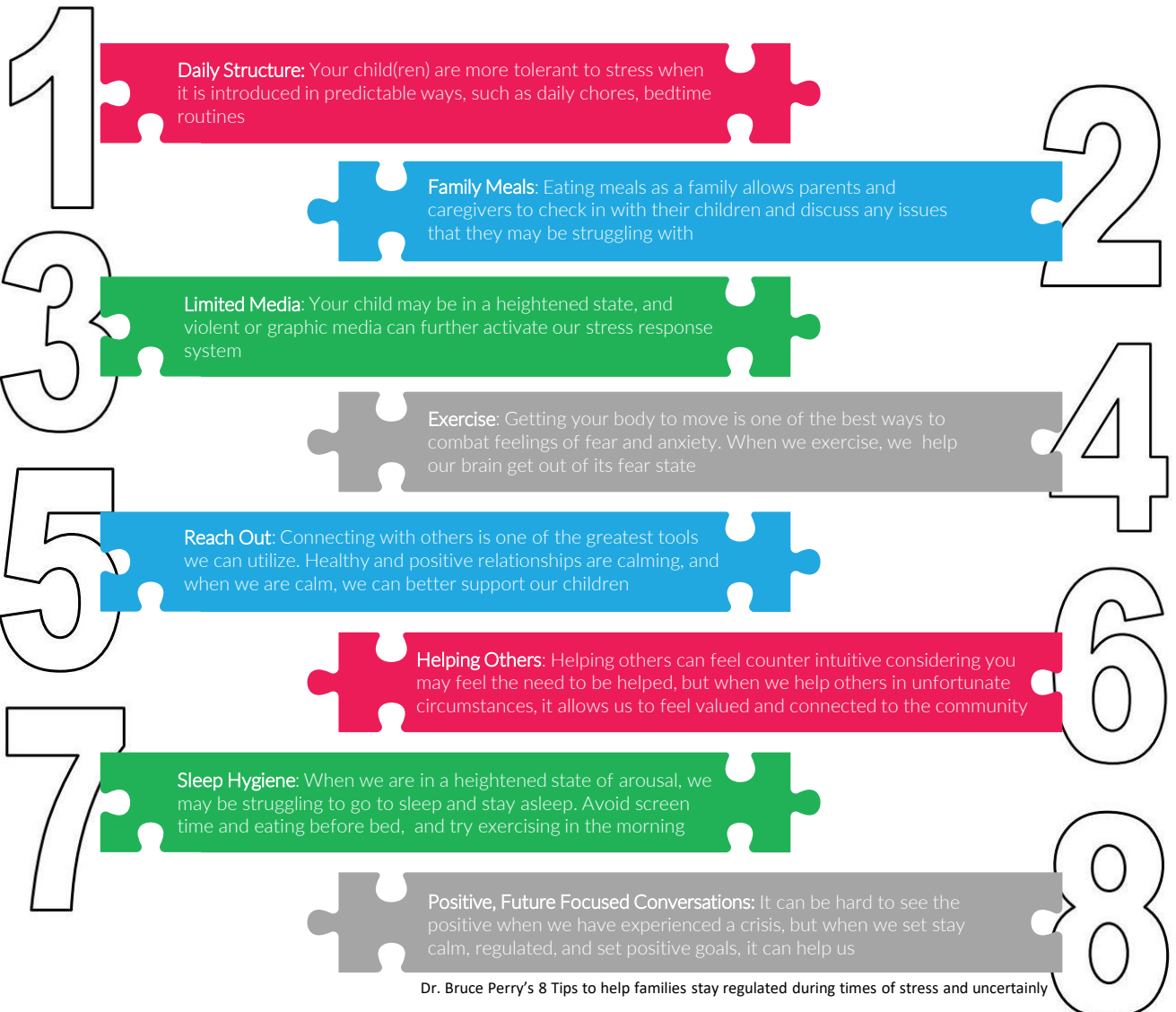
Everyone heals differently from trauma, and trust does not develop overnight. Respecting each child's own course of recovery is important.





Supporting the Family

Although a traumatic experience may have only affected one child in the family, it can extend towards the entire family unit. When we focus on the entire group, families will come of this experience with greater personal strengths and resilience as we practice self-care, rely on others, and connect with others.





Resources

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Kids and teens access to a professional counsellor by phone 24 hours a day. Live Chat Counselling available Wednesday-Sunday 3pm to 11pm

Fraser Health Crisis Line: 604-951-8855

Free emotional support, crisis intervention, community resource information for all ages 24 hours

Indigenous Child and Youth Mental Health: 604-586-4200

Serving youth 12 years and older located in Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen area

BC Crisis Centre: 604-872-3311

24-hour support for immediate crisis

National Child Traumatic Stress Network: www.nctsn.org

YouthInBC.com: 604-872-3311

24-hour crisis line for youth and live chat from noon to 1am

