

Building Resiliency: Working with Youth Exposed to Trauma

Sound Discipline 2017

Objectives:

- Participants will gain an understanding of the neuroscience behind trauma and attachment
- Participants will have knowledge to enhance their "radar" about trauma and attachment
- Participants will have three tools to respond to individuals exposed to trauma
- Participants will explore approaches for supporting the development of internal motivation.

"Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love." - Bruce Perry, MD, PhD

"Students often exhibit behaviors that are a result of trauma but that can be *misinterpreted* by a teacher as willful disobedience, or that the child has greater controls over his/her behavior than he/she does. Potentially further complicating interpretation of behavior are cultural factors which may be difficult for the teacher to identify and understand."

Teachers' Strategies Guide for Working with Children Exposed to Trauma p. 4

Data from the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEstudy.org)

San Diego Kaiser:

Middle class population, 26K consecutive people invited into the study, 71% agreed - 17.3 K
70% college attended, 80% White / Hispanic, 10% African American, 10% Asian, 46% Men

Abuse

Psychological -11%
Physical -28% (30% M)
Sexual 28 W, 16 M (22%)

Neglect

Emotional 15%
Physical 10%

Household dysfunction

Alcoholism 27%
Loss of parent before age 18 23%
Depression or mental illness in home 17%
Mother treated violently 13 %
Imprisoned household member 6%

ACE score:

0 - 33% 1 - 25% 2 - 15% 3 - 10% 4 - 6% 5 or more: 11%

ACE score of 6 or more - 30-51x more risk suicide attempts

Ace score 5 or more - 5x more likely to be in intimate relationship that is violent 8x being raped

Ace score 4 or more - 32 x less likely to succeed in schools

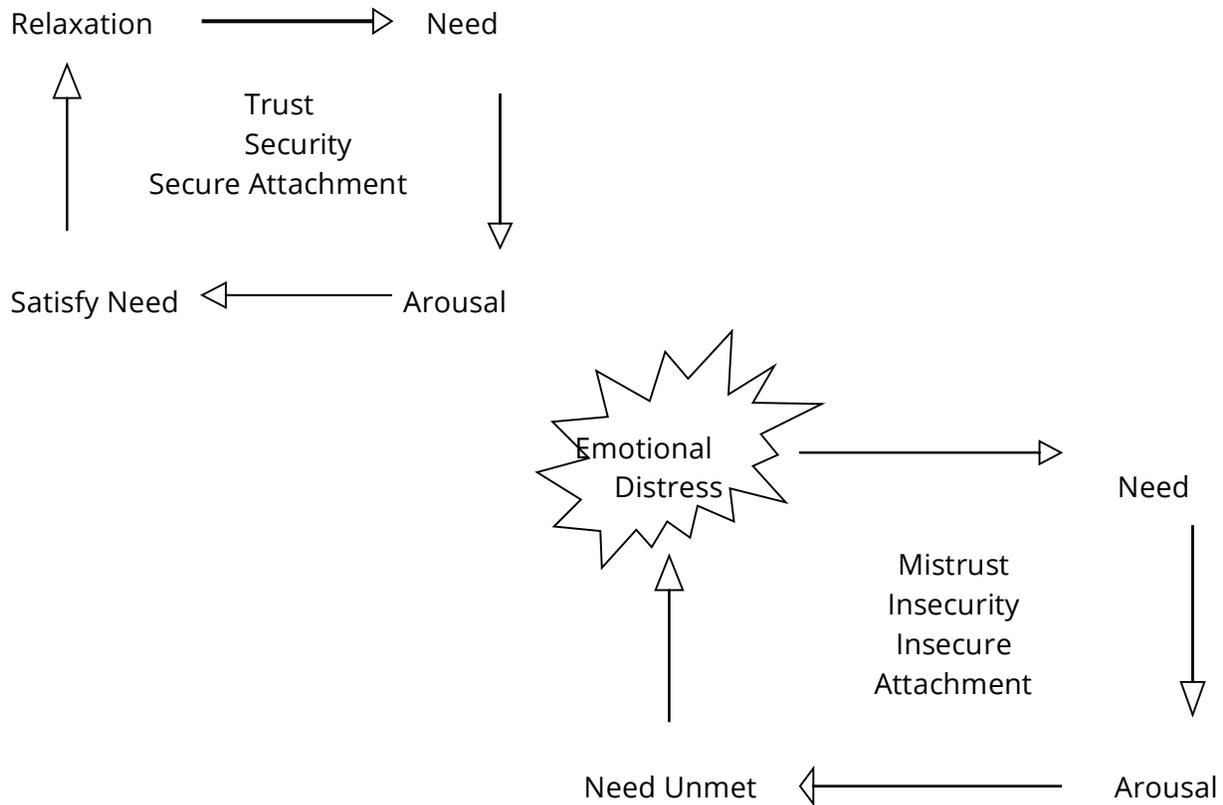
Trauma: A psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience, often involving a sense of intense fear, terror and helplessness. From: *Helping traumatized Children: A brief Overview for Caregivers.* By Bruce Perry http://www.childtrauma.org/images/stories/Articles/attcar4_03_v2_r.pdf

It is important to keep the developmental/environmental perspective: How a child is able to make meaning of the event and their network of "safe" connected adults influences the impact on the child.

Understanding Attachment and the Development of Beliefs

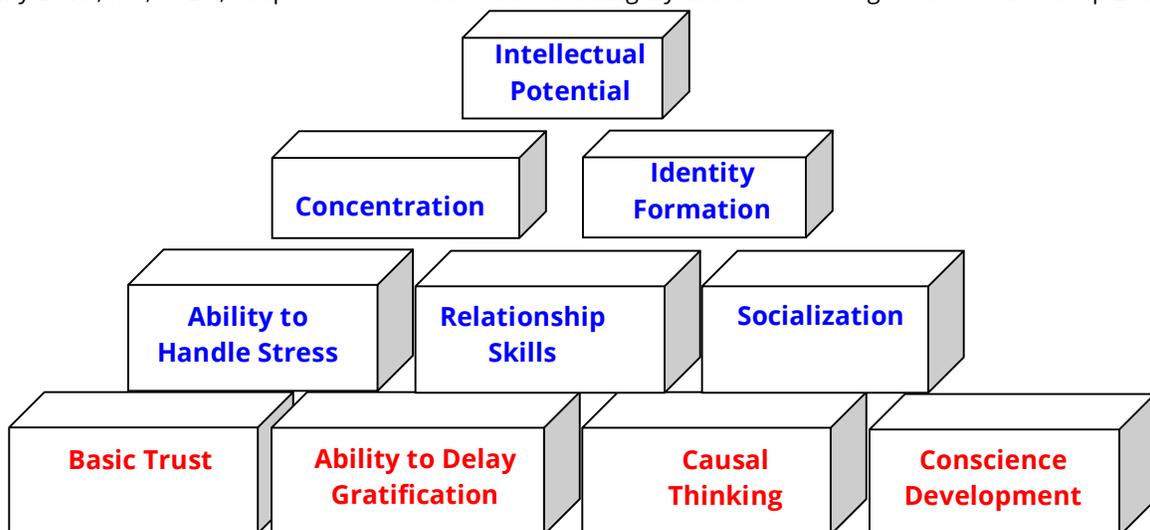
Penny Davis, MA, CPDT, adapted from 'Attachment Parenting' by Grossmont College Foster and Kinship Education

AROUSAL/RELAXATION CYCLE



Attachment Building Blocks

Penny Davis, MA, CPDA, adapted from 'Attachment Parenting' by Grossmont College Foster and Kinship Education



Steps for Growth: Tools for Supporting Young People with Insecure Attachments

Basic Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting a sense of <i>safety</i> by being predictable, consistent, honest. • Consistency and reliability in the relationship. • Patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines (including class meetings meetings) • Relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind) • Listening to their story
Causal Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What” and “how” questions • Limited choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on solutions (Consequences don’t make sense without causal thinking).
Ability to handle stress (profoundly impacts ability concentrate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De- escalation tools (modeled, taught, expected) • Teaching students about their own brain (brain in the palm of the hand). • Using I statements • Learning language for emotions • Consistency and routines • Model problem solving for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for “chilling out” (Positive time out or Chill Down Time – CDT) • Class meetings to be heard, validated and recognize that others have similar feelings. • Mistakes are opportunities to learn • “It seems like you feel..... because...”
Relationship skills and Socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind) • Class meetings • Problem solving skills <i>with practice</i> • Focusing on solutions – not consequences (not understood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel of choice • Opportunities for play and practice and making mistakes • Mistakes are opportunities to learn
Conscience Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What and how questions • Routines • Class meetings – working with peers • Gradual building of empathy (being listened to, feeling felt) • Ability to delay gratification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency • Relationships built on dignity and respect (firm and kind) • Mistakes are opportunities to learn • Skills for understanding and respecting differences
Identity formation and Intellectual potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom jobs and responsibility • Being able to contribute in meaningful ways • Using “I” statements and learning language for emotions • Opportunities to practice during play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning how to make amends and fix mistakes instead of “paying for them” • “It seems like you feel..... because...”

The Brain in the Palm of your Hand

(From *Parenting from the Inside Out*, by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell)

Your Wrist and Palm: Brain Stem. Responsible for survival instincts: flight, freeze or fight; Autonomic (“automatic”) functions

Your Thumb: Mid brain. The amygdala (our brain’s safety radar), memories, emotions.

Your Fingers over your Thumb: Cortex. Perception, motor action, speech, higher processing and what we normally call “thinking.”

Your Fingernails: Pre-frontal cortex – a primary integration center for the brain, almost like a “switchboard” that makes sure messages get where they need to go. Documented functions of the pre-frontal cortex are: attuned communication, emotional balance, response flexibility, fear modulation, empathy, insight, moral awareness, and intuition.

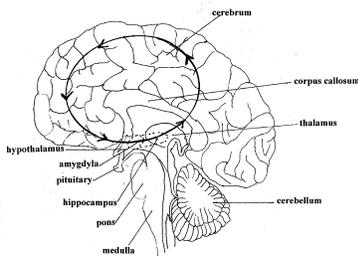
What happens when you are stressed, overwhelmed, or trying to deal with traumatic or painful memories? The pre-frontal cortex shuts down; it no longer functions. (This is temporary, thank goodness!) You have flipped your lid. You can’t use most of those 8 functions above. And you can’t learn without them. To engage, to learn, you need to calm down and bring the prefrontal cortex back into functioning. Watch Daniel Siegel explain it: Watch Daniel Siegel explain it:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-lfP1FBfk>

Mirror Neurons: The “see it, do it” neurons that play a key role in social interaction, connection and learning. Go to: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/3204/01.html> to see an excellent 14 minute Nova episode on **mirror neurons**.

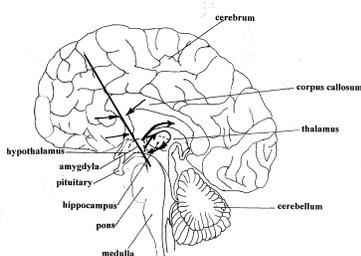
Your brain, when the prefrontal cortex is working:

Integrative functioning (the high road)



Integrative functioning: “A form of processing information that involves the higher, rational, reflective thought process of the mind. High-road processing allows for mindfulness, flexibility in our responses and an integrating sense of self awareness. The high road involves the prefrontal cortex in its processes.” Siegel and Hartzell, *Parenting from the Inside Out*.

Non-integrated function (flipping your lid, the low road)



“Low road functioning involves the shutting down of the higher processes of the mind and leaves the individual in a state of intense emotions, impulsive reactions, rigid and repetitive responses and lacking in self reflection and the consideration of another’s point of view. Involvement of the prefrontal cortex is shut off when one is on the low road.” Siegel and Hartzell, *Parenting from the Inside Out*.

Drawings adapted from Siegel and Hartzell, *Parenting from the Inside Out*. P. 157

De-escalation tips: For when the mid brain takes over.....

We refer to this as “having a flipped lid” or “flooding”

Tips for when YOU have flipped your lid:

- **Recognize what it feels like physically:** fast heart beats, pounding head, a sense of urgency etc. Learn your own body's warning signs.
- **Recognize what it feels like mentally:** a sense of urgency, thoughts that keep repeating or going in circles, an inability to think calmly and clearly (or do mental math). Learn your own body's warning signs.
- **Take a time out from the situation to calm down.** Recognize that continued engagement isn't going to help.
- **Focus on your breathing.** Do belly breathing.
- **Use large muscles:** walk, do isometrics, do windmills with your arms.
- **Try to engage your cortex.** Do mental math, spell things backwards, list facts...and slow the pace.

Tips for when the OTHER person has flipped his/her lid (child or adult):

- **Watch for signs in the other person:** Irrational action, flushed face, intense emotion, disjointed sentences.
- **Notice your own body.** Remember that mirror neurons work quickly. Don't let the other person's flipped lid “catch you.”
- **Remember safety.** People who are using their mid brain and not their cortex do not act rationally and can be physically dangerous. Stay calm, move slowly and be aware.
- **Use your mirror neurons.** The more you stay calm and connected, the easier it is for them to calm down.
- **Acknowledge feelings:** using few words and calm empathetic tone.
- **Don't talk at them.** Don't touch them, and don't make fast movements. If they want to leave (and it is safe) let them.
- **Don't crowd them.** Don't demand from them, don't give complicated directions (they cannot process them).
- **Invite them to take a time out (non punitive) or “cool down time” (CDT)** This works best if it is an option, not a command.
- **Simple tasks may engage their cortex.** You might ask them to remind you how their name is spelled, to count to ten, ask if they remember how to spell your name.
- **Ask for their help.** When they have begun to de-escalate, change the subject by asking for their help. “I can tell you aren't ready to engage in work yet, but are you calm enough to help me by.....?” “I can tell you aren't quite ready to play to help me by...?”

Regulate

Relate

Reason

A Brief Introduction to the Thought of Alfred Adler

Terry Chadsey terry@chadsey.us

Core ideas

1. Behavior is purposive
2. The goal of behavior is belonging (sense of connection) and meaning (significance). Mis-behavior is from "mis"-taken belief about how to find belonging/meaning.
3. People are continually making decisions based on how their world is perceived.



4. Horizontal relationships: Everyone is worthy of equal dignity and respect.

Implications

1. The "problem" is really a "solution" to another problem that is unstated or out of awareness.
The mis-behaving child is a discouraged child.
2. Gemeinschaftsgefuehl (Community feeling)
 - Being part of a community (belonging/connection)
 - Being able to make a contribution to the community (significance/purpose)

Basic tools and principles that flow from Adler's thought

1. Teach life skills
2. Pay attention to the power of perception
3. Focus on encouragement. (Connection and presence, not rah-rah)
4. Hold the tension of Kindness AND Firmness at the same time
5. Look to Mutual Respect
 - Respect for yourself and the situation (firmness)
 - Respect for the needs of the child and others (kindness)
6. Assume mistakes to be opportunities to learn.
7. Look to solutions rather than punishment

Five Criteria for Effective Discipline

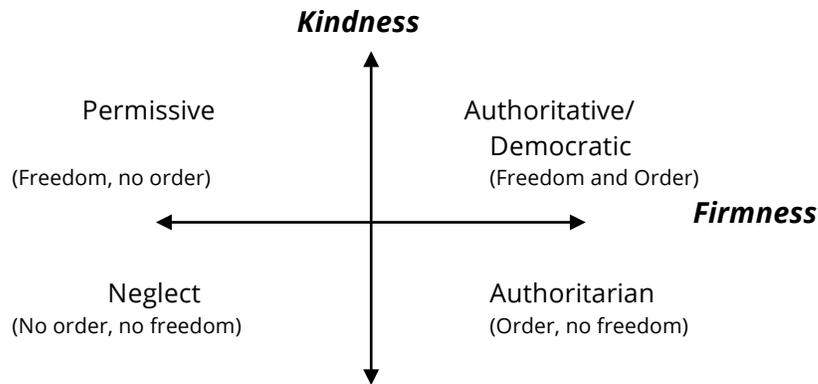
Effective Discipline:

1. Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance.)
2. Is mutually respectful and encouraging. (Kind and firm at the same time.)
3. Is effective long - term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive.)
4. Teaches important social and life skills. (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community.)
5. Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.)

Source: Jane Nelsen, www.positivediscipline.com

Developing Relationships with Children According to the Dimensions of Kindness and Firmness

(Terry Chadsey)



Two Opposing Schools of Thought on Human Behavior

Chart by Terry Chadsey and Jody McVittie

	Dominant and Traditional Practice in American Schools	The Democratic (Solution Focused) Approach
Theory based on:	Common practice Pavlov, Thorndike, Skinner	Adler, Dreikurs, Dewey, Glasser, Nelsen, Lott, Dinkmeyer, Albert.
Behavior is motivated by:	People respond to rewards and punishments in their environment.	People seek a sense of belonging (connection) and significance (meaning) in their social context.
We have most influence on the behavior of others:	At the moment of response to a specific behavior.	In an ongoing relationship founded on mutual respect.
The most powerful tools for adults are:	Control, rewards, and punishments	Empathy, understanding the perspective of the student, encouragement, collaborative problem solving, kind AND firm follow through.
"Respect" is:	Obedience and compliance in relationships in which dignity and respect of the adult is primary	Mutual, in relationships in which each person is equally worthy of dignity and respect.
"Appropriate" response to inappropriate behavior:	Censure, isolation, punishment	Naming without shaming and blaming, identifying the belief behind the behavior, focus on solutions, follow through.
"Appropriate" response to dangerous and destructive behavior:	Censure, isolation, punishment	Maintaining safety for all, holding the student accountable for their action, followed, at a later time, by solution focused planning and clear follow through.
Student learning is maximized when:	The adult has effective control over student behavior	The student feels belonging and significance in the classroom

Working with Students Exposed to Trauma

Children exposed to trauma struggle to:

- Accurately perceive safety (over perceive danger)
- Self-regulate (attention, behavior, emotion)
- Hold a self image that includes the belief that they matter
- Succeed academically and or socially at school

What trauma can look like in the classroom (and school)

Adapted from: *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*

Trauma may:

- Disrupt the ability to process verbal information and use language to communicate. (May make it difficult to follow instructions.)
- Be less skilled in using language to forge social relationships and more skilled using language to build walls between themselves and those perceived to be dangerous or threatening.
- Have limited problem-solving skills.
- Struggle with sequential ordering and therefore not be able to organize (thoughts, feelings, if-then events, multi-step tasks) which in turn results in difficulty reading, writing and with critical thinking. Interfere with a student's understanding of behavior and consequences.
- Not have internalized cause and effect relationships. This means that they cannot easily predict events, sense their power over events or make meaning of "consequences."
- Struggle to see the world from the point of view of another.
- Struggle to focus and attend to what is happening in the classroom because their brains are preoccupied with ensuring safety /warding off danger.
- Struggle to self regulate his/her own attention.
- Struggle to self regulate and recognize emotions. This results in poor impulse control, trouble reading social cues, and lack of a predictable sense of self. (Self regulation is a predictor of academic success)
- Have low executive functions.
- Be slow to trust adults or peers
- Struggle to engage with academic material effectively

Thinking Through Student Intervention Team Meeting

For students who have experienced trauma

- How do you establish trust? (Who should be there? Who will be the advocate for the student? What kind of practice is necessary?)
- How do you establish safety? (What are the ground rules? How will the student be supported – *always*?)
- What are the student's strengths?
- What doable piece of the challenge needs to be addressed?
- How can the student use his/her strengths to meet the challenge?
- How do you work with family/care givers to frame things in a helpful way and invite them to see the student's best side?
- What is a reasonable amount of change to expect? (Small steps for success)
- What skills will be needed for the student to be successful?
- Who is going to be responsible? And for what?
- What is the follow through going to look like? (Who, when, how, next meeting?)

Remember to take care of yourself. Vicarious trauma is real.

Encouragement or Praise?

Adapted from Positive Discipline by Jane Nelsen, Ballantine Books

Encouragement

1. To inspire with courage
(Courage < Old French corage, < Latin cor heart)
2. To spur on: to stimulate

Self-evaluation

("Tell me about it")
("What do you think?")

Addresses Deed

Appreciation, Respectful
("Thank you for helping.")
("Who can show me the proper way to sit?")

Empathy

("What do you think and feel?")
("I can see that you enjoyed that.")

Self disclosing "I" messages

("I appreciate your help")

Asks questions

("What is an appropriate noise level for the library?")

Effect:

Feel worthwhile without the approval of others.
Self confidence, Self reliance
Self esteem

Questions you might ask:

Am I inspiring self-evaluation or dependence on the evaluation of others?

Am I being respectful or patronizing?

Praise

1. To express a favorable judgment of
2. To glorify, especially by attribution of perfection.
3. An expression of approval

Evaluation by others

("I like it.")

Addresses doer

Expectation, Patronizing
("You are such a good boy.")
("Good girl!")
("I like the way Suzie is sitting.")

Conformity

("You did it right.")
("I am so proud of you.")

Judgmental "I" messages

("I like the way you are sitting.")

Should statements

("You should be quiet like your sister.")

Feel worthwhile only when others approve.
Dependence on others
"Other" esteem

Am I helping them discover how to act or trying to manipulate their behavior?

Am I seeing the child's point of view or my own?

Would I make this comment to a friend or neighbor?

Words for practice. Remember to leave out the judgments (good, bad, perfect, nice).

Descriptive encouragement: "I notice...." (without any value judgment – good, well etc)

Appreciative encouragement: "I appreciate....", "Thank you for...."

Empowering encouragement: I noticed , with [characteristic] like that....."I trust you...", "I know you can..."

Courage: (from the root word: *cor* – latin, heart) is the very small step you take in the direction in the direction of becoming your best self

Encouragement: The space we make for others to become their best selves

More Tools: repair, relationships and solutions

Teach and practice *repair*: Recovery from a mistake (adapted from Jane Nelsen, Positive Discipline)

Re-gather: Self calm and find your rational self before starting the “repair”

Recognize: “Whoops, I made a mistake.”

Reconcile: “I’m sorry.”

Resolve: (Re-Solve): “How can we work on this together to make it better?” (or some variation)

Developing a healthy sense of self happens in the *context of relationships*:

Connection – “I belong”

Capable – “I can do this”

Contributing – “I have something to offer”

Courage – “Who I am is worth risking for”

Use *solutions* instead of consequences. Solutions:

Are Reasonable, Related, Respectful *AND* Helpful.

Teach what *to do* instead of what *not to do*.

Maintain dignity.

Teach causal thinking respectfully.

Move from Laddership to Leadership.

Leaders are stewards of the shared vision. In your classroom, the shared vision comes from a set of jointly constructed classroom guidelines or a classroom charter. Following up with, “How are we doing on our guidelines?” is essential for long term success.

Vicarious Trauma

Working with people exposed to trauma creates vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma is characterized by a range of experiences that look remarkably similar to the symptoms of the trauma-surviving student.

It is important for teachers, social-workers, health care providers, foster parents and all others working with trauma exposed students to practice self –care and be aware of the risk of vicarious trauma.

Resources

Books:

Greene Ross: *Lost at School: Why our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them.*

Jensen, Eric: *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*

Nelsen, Jane: *Positive Discipline*

Perry, Bruce: *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*

Siegel, Daniel and Mary Hartzell: *Parenting from the Inside Out*

Steele, Claude: *Whistling Vivaldi*

“Violence arises when we do not know what else to do with our suffering.”

Parker Palmer

Online: (note that some of the links do not work on all browsers)

ACE study www.acestudy.org Turning Gold into Lead (summary of ACE study)
http://www.acestudy.org/files/Gold_into_Lead-Germany1-02_c_Graphs.pdf or

Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Helping Traumatized Children Learn
<http://www.massadvocates.org/download-book.php>