

Trauma and Young Children

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Universal Signs of Trauma

- Hyperarousal: biologically hard-wired survival mechanism
- Constriction – emotional numbing
- Dissociation – emotional numbing
- Feelings of numbness and shutdown (of “freeze”): biologically hard-wired survival mechanism
- Anxiety – thought pattern of “what if” followed by worst case scenario.

Resulting in a sense of helplessness and hopelessness

Adult vs. Child Trauma

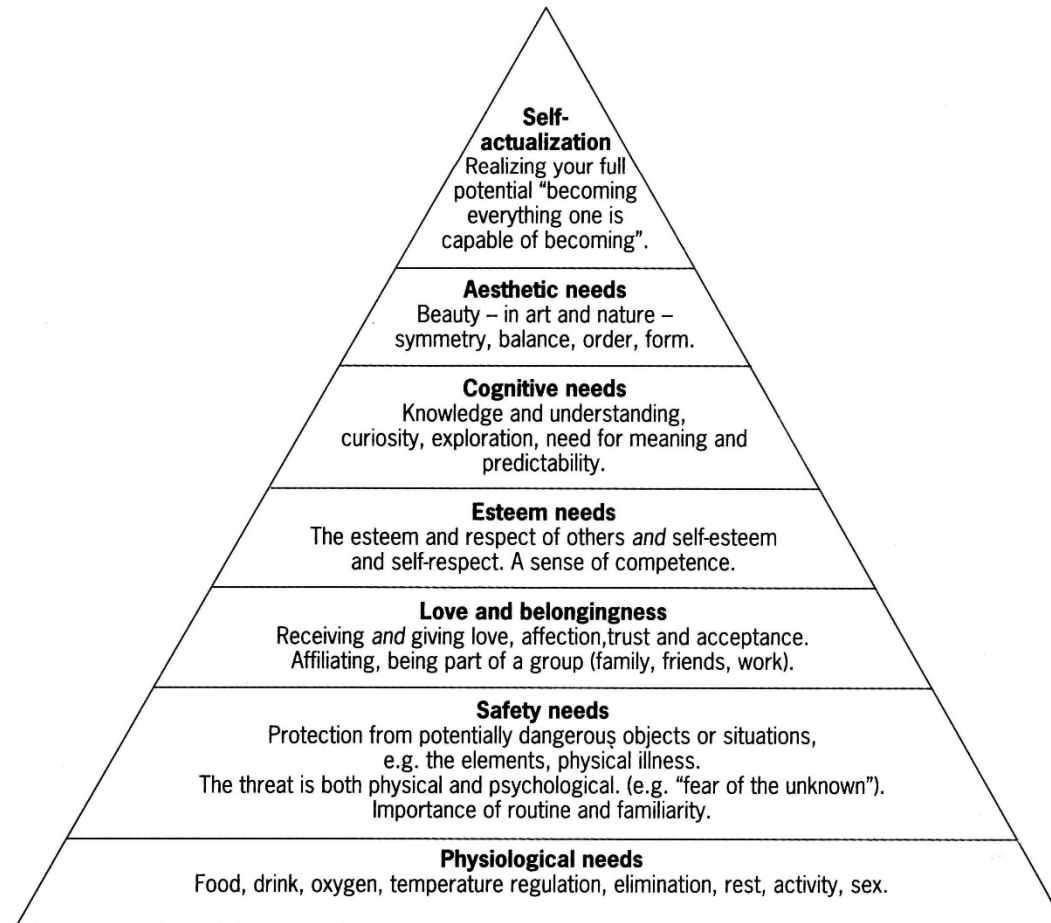
- Adults have the ability to reduce stress and anxieties by filling their self-care and wellness toolbox.
- Children have limited capacity to fuel their mind, body and spirit without an adult's help.
- We can be their power of one helping with processing events (miniature play), giving meaning to experiences, protect from re-traumatization, self-regulation skills.
- So how, as adults, do we help to fill their toolboxes
 - Meet needs for safety, belonging, support, nurturance, self-regulation, and reassurance

Self-regulation skills

- Self-regulation precedes self-discipline
 - Self regulation: ability to manage emotions/behaviors appropriately
 - Self-discipline: ability to pursue what one thinks is right despite temptations to abandon it.
- Emotions regulation: Happy, sad, mad and afraid
- Identify the emotion, modulate the emotion, make it a habit
- Behaviors are not regulated through reward systems or ignoring the behavior.

Safety and Belonging:

- Belonging is more essential to humans than our most basic needs



Love Languages

1. Gifts
2. Words of Affirmation
3. Acts of Service
4. Physical Touch
5. Quality Time

Proactive and responsive strategies to trauma:

- Expect unexpected responses
- Employ thoughtful interactions
- Be specific about relationship building
- Promote predictability and consistency
- Teach strategies to “change the channel”
- Give supportive feedback to reduce negative thinking
- Create islands of competence
- Limit exclusionary practices