Trauma and Parental Engagement, Even When A Practitioner Does Not Have Support

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Trauma Iceberg

A person’s history and emotional/relational foundation is represented by the part of the iceberg that is underwater and not visible.

https://lakesidelink.com
Types of Trauma

- Ethnoviolence
- Acute traumatic events
- Early childhood trauma
- Complex trauma
- Community violence
- Secondary trauma
Brain Research

Brain Basics

• Cortex: Thinking
• Limbic: Feeling
• Midbrain: Reacting
• Brainstem: Survival
General Approaches

Regulate
Relate
Reason
Regulate

• Show attentiveness
• Speak in a calm, monotone voice.
• Slow things down. “I want to hear what you are saying but I can’t keep up. Can you slow down?”
• Let the person finish speaking before you speak. If you need to interrupt, lead with: “I’m sorry to interrupt you…” or “Please hold on a second. I want to make sure you tell your story to the right person.”
Relate

• Validate their experiences
• Express empathy, especially if you have to repeat yourself. “This sounds like an awful situation…” or “I see that you are upset, and I would be too…”
• Agree with the person. “You’re right. That doesn’t sound fair. Let me see what I can do.”
Reason

• **Lead with the right question.** “How can I help you?” or “Where can I direct your call?” or “What is your legal problem?” or “Do you have an open case or are you looking to apply for services?”

• **State your goal.** “I want to get you to the right place.” or “I want to make sure you get the help you need. To do that I need a little more information.”

• **Make concrete, clear action statements.** “I will contact the attorney.” or “I will make copies for you in 5 minutes.”

• **Add context.** “You know, there are a lot of problems I cannot solve. But, here’s the thing I can do to help you in this situation.”
Combined Approaches

Behavior --> functioning --> technique

Listen for insight into client’s brain state.

Use the appropriate response.

Move from one brain state to the next.

Help client make reasoned decisions.
## Brain States Paradigm

(Dr. Bruce Perry, www.childtrauma.org)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain States</th>
<th>Brain Part</th>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Sense of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Prefrontal Cortex</td>
<td>Abstract/ Creative</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Subcortex</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Week/ Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarmed</td>
<td>Limbic</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Hours/ Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>Midbrain</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Minutes/ Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terror</td>
<td>Brainstem</td>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>Loss of Sense of Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Terror

Fight or flight. Client can be close to complete shut-down. Techniques used here should be explicitly supportive and non-confrontational.

**Regulate:** Provide supportive environment. Remove client from stressful situation.

**Relate:** Simply breathe. Offer tissues.

**Reason:** Questions might exacerbate the situation.
Fearful

These clients are **defiant**. They are angry. They can be unwilling or unable to accept rejection or “no”. The emotions are overwhelming still but they can be more lucid.

**Regulate:** Turn down the physical response.

**Relate:** Address the reason for defiance.

**Reason:** Difficulty with instructions. Write them down.
Alarmed

These clients are resistant. They often appear ready to just “give up”. These are also those clients who rage against the injustice of their situation and say things like “you just don’t understand”.

Regulate: Narrow the focus of the interaction.

Relate: Name the emotion.

Reason: Smaller, easily attainable goals are best.
Alert

These clients are **vigilant**. These clients are trying to tell you the whole story in one breath. They might have been to other places and been rebuffed.

**Regulate:** Ask directed questions with limited answers. Then ask questions to sequence the information.

**Relate:** Reassure that you want to know all the information (but will interrupt if it’s getting confusing).

**Reason:** Do not use multi-part, multi-idea questions.
Calm

Client able to understand questions.

Can ask multi-part questions.

Can extrapolate from earlier situations.
Shame

*If trauma was a broken vase, shame would fill the cracks*
Questions?
Regulate → Relate → Reason

Regulate:
Show attentiveness

Speak in a calm, monotone voice.

Ask parent if they have had anything to eat. Have a bottle of water and protein bar or shake to give to them.

Slow things down. “I want to hear what you are saying but I can’t keep up. Can you slow down?”

Let the person finish speaking before you speak. If you need to interrupt, lead with: “I’m sorry to interrupt you…” or “Please hold on a second. I want to make sure you tell your story to the right person.”

Relate:
Validate their experiences

Express empathy, especially if you have to repeat yourself. “This sounds like an awful situation…” or “I see that you are upset, and I would be too…”

Talk about visitation getting things set up for parent start trying to demonstrate what you’re going to do for the parent

Agree with the person. “You’re right. That doesn’t sound fair. Let me see what I can do.”

Reason:
Lead with the right question. “How can I help you?” or “Where can I direct your call?” or “What is your legal problem?” or “Do you have an open case or are you looking to apply for services?”

State your goal. “I want to get you to the right place.” or “I want to make sure you get the help you need. To do that I need a little more information.”

Make concrete, clear action statements. “I will contact the attorney.” or “I will make copies for you in 5 minutes.”

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<tr>
<th>Brain State</th>
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<th>Thought Processes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Can answer most questions and make reasoned decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>Giving a lot of information at once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarmed</td>
<td>Resistant</td>
<td>Resistant to advice and feelings of injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>Defiant</td>
<td>Overwhelmed by physical response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terror</td>
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