

NCAPPS Webinar: Trauma Informed Thinking and Practice

November 2019

Questions for Presenters

Q: “We know that when people have any kind of challenge that pushes them to the margin, that their voice is often seen as less important, and their experience is often seen as less than...” What research or resources can you provide that discusses the mechanisms and impact of trauma?

Karyn: There are many great resources – I recommend “The Boy who was raised as a dog” by Bruce Peryy and “The Body Keeps the Score” by Bessel Van der Kolk. I also wrote a book specifically about Trauma and ID published by AAIDD – Trauma Informed Behavioral Interventions.

Q: Can you say more about the difference between uncovering trauma and knowing about trauma?

Karyn: I believe strongly that the actual trauma does not need to be uncovered, and, with people with disabilities, often cannot be uncovered but we are able to see the signs of trauma and the symptoms of PTSD. When those signs and symptoms are recognized it is crucial to identify triggers and create a safe environment to the best of our ability.

Q: When organizations which provide direct support are struggling just to keep staff, do you have any advice for how best to implement (or maybe just introduce) Person-Centered and Trauma-Informed perspectives?

Karyn: Great question! Staff are smart – opportunities to receive person -centered and trauma informed support trainings do make a difference, especially when the message comes from the top that this is the valued approach.

Q: How [do you] get your employer to take you seriously, when you ask that they consider the cultural trauma we experience when working with well-intentioned authority figures?

Karyn: Not sure what is really being asked. Involving human resources is critical when someone does not feel emotionally safe in their workplace.

Q: How can we teach and support positive love (i.e. romantic) relationships for those we support when there are conservators who are adamant that the person supported should not be taught or allowed to have those types of relationships?

Karyn: Great question on a difficult issue! Conservatorship does not mean total control over every aspect of the person's life. The team can empower the person to speak up to the conservator. They can also get legal assistance as some have successfully done.

Q: Aimee, did the matching profile for your son's support cost you money? How accessible is this solution for families with a limited income?

Aimee: The only investment was my time to discover the personality characteristics of the people that work well with my son, the characteristics of those who do not work well with them, what supports/skills the paraprofessional need and which shared interests were most important. Click [here](#) to watch a video of Michael Smull explaining matching support.

Q: Aimee, how do you handle the pushback from people, especially from teachers, who believe they cannot act out all your suggestions for accommodating your son's needs – especially if there are other students who may need a similar amount of attention from that one teacher?

I have friends who are elementary school teachers and several students have another staff, in the classroom that specifically supports one student, but this can sometimes cause feelings of exclusion or being pointed out as a student of extra need. How are these teachers meant to do what you are asking of them while also dealing with the needs and attention of so many other students in the classroom without needing another staff member assigned to only your son?

Aimee: What I tell them is that by making these adjustments in the way they support my son they are in fact creating a welcoming environment for all students. I can guarantee you that he is not the only one who is triggered by sounds or adults raising their voice. What we want is for his teachers to understand fight/flight, know when it's ok to talk and strategize and know when it's best to be quiet and let him cool down. It works for all humans! The fact that a teacher can look at him and say "today he needs time to draw and calm down. I'll help him catch up tomorrow" is huge this early in the school year!!

We also use a [communication chart](#) to explain some of the situations that cause anxiety to build and how to respond if they occur. The staff is usually impressed when they see the information they receive and find that it makes it easier to provide support because they have all the "cheat sheets." I always get feedback from his teachers at the end of the year to find out what they do to help him have a good day in his class and what may lead him to have a bad day. This helps the

teachers be a part of the discovery process. I ask my son what he thinks of their input and if he'd like to add it to his to his one-page profile and person-centered description.