



Providing Individualized and Developmentally Appropriate Services: Neuroscience and Trauma- Informed Care

Module 6 Glossary Terms

Adaptation: The process of the person’s brain attending to the environment, appraising it, and responding to conditions.

Amygdala: An almond-shaped brain structure that is involved in emotional reactions and the emotional processing of memories.

Contingency plan: Strategy designed to respond to challenging circumstances that is devised *prior* to an event that may produce challenges.

Corpus callosum: Connective body of tissue in the brain that links the right and the left sides of the brain.

Cortisol: Hormone that prepares the body to respond to stress.

Epigenetics: Scientific field that investigates changes in the expression of our genetic endowment that are produced by our environment.

Executive functions: Thinking processes that are involved in planning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making.

Hippocampus: Brain structure central to memory and learning.

Hypervigilance: Sustaining high levels of awareness about possible sources of threats in the environment, and scanning surroundings for these threats.

Myelination: Process of building the protective coating of neurons. This coating increases the efficiency of communication between neurons.

Neuron: Nerve cell

Neuroscience: Branch of science that studies the brain and the nervous system.

Plasticity: The brain’s ability to change across the life span.

Prefrontal cortex: The center for emotional regulation and executive functioning in the human brain.

Proliferation: The process of growth of connections between nerve cells in the brain.

Pruning: Reduction in the numbers of neural connections in the brain.

Reactivation avoidance: Efforts by a person who has experienced trauma to avoid circumstances that would bring about a similar traumatic experience.

Trauma-informed care: “A program, organization, or system that is trauma informed: realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 9).

Traumatic experience: “an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 7).

Traumatic stress: Emotional distress that occurs when a person is overwhelmed by a traumatic experience.

Trauma trigger: A stimulus in the environment that reminds a person of a traumatic event, and produces a trauma response.

Universal precaution: Measures taken by service providers to ensure that all people engaged in services do not get re-traumatized in the service environment.