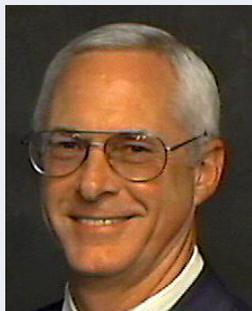


Stonebriar Psychiatric Services News & Views

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Services We Offer

Individual Therapy
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Medication Management
Speaking
Evaluations/Assessments

When Love is Not Enough

Kids and teens who come from hard places such as abusive homes, trauma, orphanages, and foster systems all share a secret friend. This friend is both bully and familiar companion. He will hold you hostage yet predictably never abandon you. He is both informant and confidant to the emotionally wounded and the disenfranchised. His name is Fear.

Fear holds a strange alliance with the children of hard places. They know his voice and it is louder than all the others. His voice is a siren to warn them of danger, of who to be wary of, and a signal to prompt them to sabotage relationship when someone draws too close. Kids from hard places know the empty nothingness of abandonment, they know the erasing nature of rejection, and they know the bitter isolation of neglect. Pain drives them into the Fear's arms. Who else could they trust?

Learning through Pain: Survival Strategies of the Fearful

Just as a turtle has a hard shell to protect from predators, these children and teens develop a hard shell to shield them from the cruelty of others. Inside the turtle shell, Fear keeps them safe, informing them of potential danger and when to strike out to protect from certain attack. When they are safe and sound in their shells, they can appear emotionally distant, disconnected, avoidant, aloof, vacant, or even lacking intelligence. When Fear prompts them to strike out because a person desiring connection gets too close, they tend to make one or more convincing snaps before retreating back into their dark hiding place. When they snap, they may appear angry, rageful, ungrateful, deceptive, chaotic, reactive, hurtful, hateful, or stonewalled. Their difficult snapping behavior makes it hard to understand that they are not really trying to hurt; they are simply trying to defend. Fear is a master at blurring reality.

The Context of Wounding: Why Love is Not Enough

Survival strategies can be activated when fear-filled kids and teens from hard places encounter loving adults who want to provide protection, shelter, and healing. To the rational person, this may seem illogical. After all, why wouldn't orphaned or traumatized kids seek the safe shelter of loving, caring adults? Why wouldn't they want this? There are two assumptions in these questions that cause many an adoptive or foster parent to stumble. The assumptions are the following:

Assumption #1: If you want help, you will seek help.

Assumption #2: If help is offered, you will take it (because that is the logical thing to do).

These assumptions may fit well for the normal child who grew up in a safe, structured, and nurturing environment free of major trauma or loss. Such children learn that safety and connection are possible and predictable. These assumptions also fit well with kids without any biological, neurological, traumatic, or relational stumbling blocks that would impair their ability to emotionally attach to caregivers. However, these assumptions do not fit with kids and teens who have suffered severe pain and loss in the context of relationship. This is because relationships with adults (and others) have become the context for pain, not healing.

The Elements of Healing: Trust-based Parenting Relationships

Validated research in the areas of neuropsychology, psychiatry and medicine, interpersonal neurobiology, and attachment/relationships inform us of the best practices in how to help children from hard places. At the Texas Christian University Institute of Child Development, Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross

Treatment for

Depression
Anxiety / Panic Attacks
Eating Disorders
Bi-polar Disorder
Obsessive –
Compulsive
Disorder
Compulsive Behaviors
such as sexual
addiction
Post-traumatic Stress
Disorder from past
abuse
Ryotional issues
Adjustment to life
changes

Ages Served

Adult
Adolescent
Children ages 10 & up



have developed an intervention model to address childhood behavioral problems called Trust-Based Relational Interventions® (TBRI®). On the Institute's TBRI website, Drs. Purvis and Cross explain about the interventions, as well as related training (<http://www.child.tcu.edu/training.asp>). Over the past ten years, they have been implementing and evaluating TBRI®; significant gains have been found in response to their strategies in creating healing environments for children.

TBRI® is a relationally-based intervention that is grounded in a solid base of neuropsychological theory and research; the TBRI® principles esteem the value of every person. The TBRI® interventions “were designed for children who have experienced relationship-based traumas such as institutionalization, multiple foster placements, maltreatment, and/or neglect” (<http://www.child.tcu.edu/training.asp>). TBRI® has been applied in a variety of contexts such as therapeutic children's camps, therapeutic family camps, home programs, and residential treatment facilities and has been proven effective where other interventions have failed.

Relationships: The Place of Wounding, the Place of Repair

Drs. Purvis and Cross explain on the TCU website that with children from hard places, “much aberrant behavior is driven by fear” (<http://www.child.tcu.edu/training.asp>). In an educational DVD explaining the principles of TBRI® (*Trust-Based Parenting: Creating Lasting Changes in Your Child's Behavior*, 2011), Dr. Cross explains why trust-based relational interventions are integral to addressing the fear-based behavioral disorders of children:

Problems that are formed in the context of relationships can only be healed in the context of relationships. The relationship is the focus. The relationship is the context. Without the relationship, we can make no progress whatsoever...so that has to be the focus – the central focus of what we do...and relationships are based on trust. What we are asking children to do is give up strategies. These are strategies that they've lived their entire life and they've survived...and we are asking them to give those strategies up for new strategies. Well, why would they do that if they don't trust us? So that trust has got to be the foundation for real change...and that trust is based upon not perfection in us as parents, but in our wanting what's best for that child (*Trust-Based Parenting: Creating Lasting Changes in Your Child's Behavior*, 2011).

Drs. Purvis and Cross further explain how the context of a safe, nurturing relationship is the vehicle by which trust is communicated intentionally. Through known helpful interventions, a child begins to experience safe availability of the parent and is enabled to trust. TBRI® interventions address essential physiological, sensory, emotional, social, and environmental needs of children (Purvis & Cross, 2012). Boundaries are taught in the context of relationship and the children learn how to self-regulate emotions through structure and support.

Drs. Purvis and Cross are not alone in their understanding of the necessity of relationship as the context for change. Dr. Daniel Siegel, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and the Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute, likewise teaches that the context and quality of the parent-child relationship directly influences a child's structural brain development (Siegel, D.J. & Hartzell, M, 2004). Relationship can be the context of tremendous healing, when the integrity of the relationship space is characterized by authentic, intentional nurturance and safety. Love is not enough, but as the actionable driver behind trust-based parenting, it is the defeater of Fear.

Wendy completed an intensive, week-long training course with Drs. Purvis and Cross in May of this year.

Purvis, K.B. & Cross, D.R. (2012). What is TBRI®? TCU Institute of Child Development. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.child.tcu.edu/training.asp>

Purvis, K.B. & Cross, D.R. (2012, May). TBRI® Professional Training Program presented by TCU Institute of Child Development. Training conducted at Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, TX

Siegel, D.J. & Hartzell, M. (2004). *Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.

TCU Institute of Child Development (Producer), & TCU Institute of Child Development (Director). (2011). *Trust-Based Parenting: Creating Lasting Changes in Your Child's Behavior* [DVD]. United States. Available from TCU Institute of Child Development, TCU Box 298920, Ft. Worth, TX 76129.



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