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## Trauma, Emotional Dysregulation and Delinquency

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# About TLC

- Training
- Trauma Certification
- Books and Tools
- Parent Trauma Resource Center
- Online Courses  
(Continuing education credits)

Summer Conference

July 14 – 18, 2014

The Lansing Center

[www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org)



# Agenda

- Brief Review
- How trauma has a significant impact on emotional regulation
- Why trauma/dysregulation leads to delinquency
- What can we do to help?
- Case Examples
- Activities to use



# Review

Being trauma informed means asking:

“What has been this child’s life experience?”

NOT

“What is wrong with this child?”



# Review

## TRAUMA

- Any incident or experience that leaves a person feeling hopeless, helpless and unable to do anything about their safety, situation or life can be traumatizing.
  - **The incident/experience can involve either REAL or even PERCEIVED threat.**



# Review

## THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA (Psychophysiology of Trauma)

- The most adverse impact following trauma is the disruption the body's physiology that impairs emotional regulation.
- The stress response impacts the brain in ways that make controlling emotions and behavior difficult.



# Review

## WHAT HAPPENS?

Trauma sends an alarm throughout the body, tensing muscles for action.

Surges in stress hormones impact the ability to cope with stress, manage emotions and control impulses.

This doesn't just happen and then stop – it is an exaggerated and prolonged response and that is why it is so harmful!





# Review

## Impaired Regulation

Impaired emotional regulation → → → Development of dysfunctional coping mechanisms that take the form of and present as:

- Oppositional behaviors
- Defiant behaviors
- Aggressive behaviors
- Substance abuse
- Rule-breaking behaviors





# Review



It is hard to access language when we are stressed and even more so when we are experiencing extreme and chronic trauma.





# Review

It is hard to access higher level thinking (problem solving, impulse control and decision making) during stress and trauma.





i don't think.  
i feel.



# Trauma and Delinquency Link

- Some propose that the links between trauma and delinquency are a function of EMOTIONAL NUMBING as a strategy to regulate overwhelming distress.
- This in turn causes an increase in the likelihood of behaving in maladaptive ways and can result in adjudication (Lansford et al, 2006; Ford et al, 2008).

**The prevalence of post traumatic stress among delinquent youth is up to 8 times higher than in community samples (Wolpaw & Ford, 2004).**



# Trauma and Delinquency

Over 90% of delinquent youth have experienced an average of 14 distinct traumas in his or her lifetime (Abram et al., 2010).

Significant relationship between maltreatment and delinquency was found in data collected from 1,200 youth.





# Trauma and Delinquency

Interpersonal violence exposure increases risk for PTSD symptoms, depression, binge drinking and delinquency (Cisler et al., 2012).

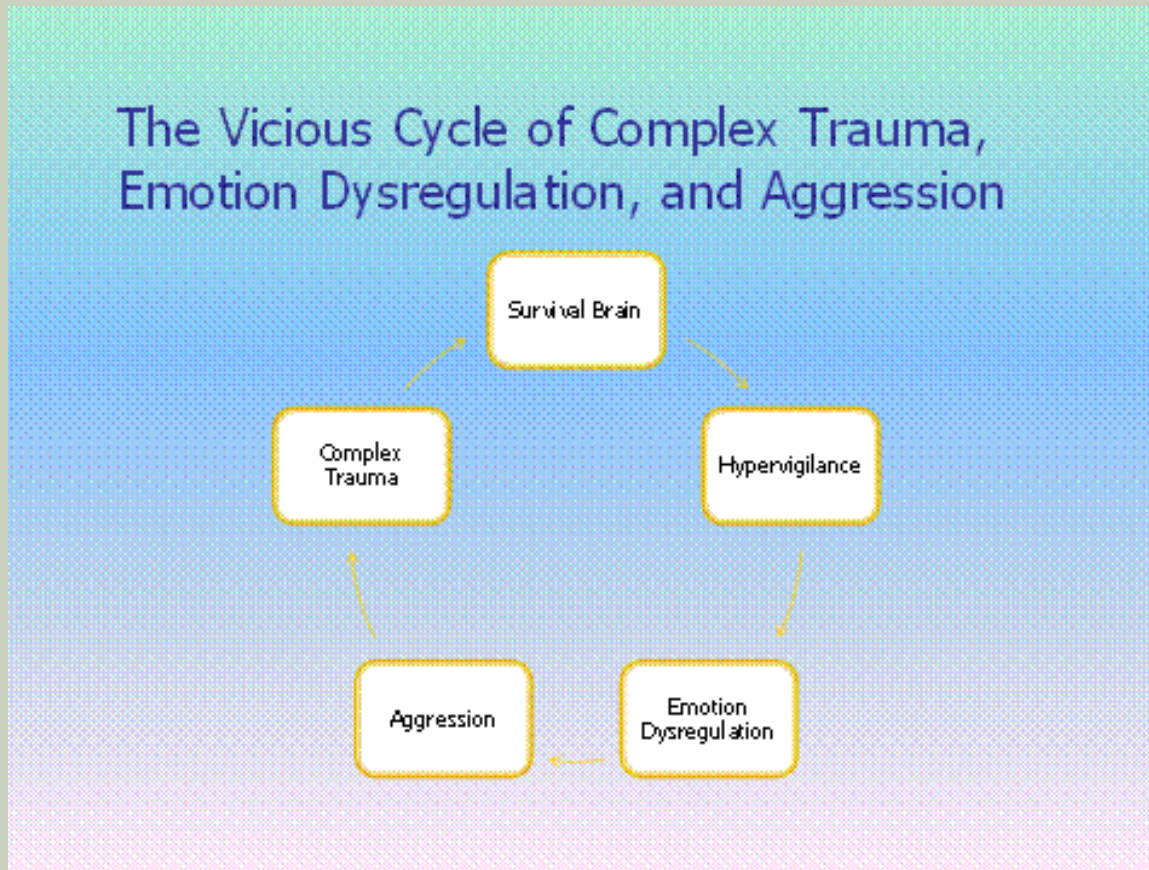
Multiple trauma exposure → increased risk for violence perpetration (Duke et al., 2010).

Family conflict, school isolation increase vulnerability to delinquency (Ford et al., 2006).

**The disruption in emotional regulation can result in increased delinquency rates.**



So, you are beginning to see the cycle, right?





# Trauma and Juvenile Delinquency

**“While this survival coping may appear callous and defiant, it is often a cry for help”  
(Ford et al, 2006)**







# Emotional Dysregulation

- **Alexythymia**
  - Difficulty identifying and labeling emotions.
  - Difficulty communicating feelings to others.
- **Heightened emotional states**
- **Limited understanding about emotions**
- **Reactivity and sensitivity to stressors**
- **Maladaptive management tactics for emotional episodes**



# Dysregulation and Trauma

Ford et al., 2006 – Study

Describes the common pathway from trauma to delinquency based upon research and data from over 50 research studies.

**...findings suggest court ordered sanctions and services that address emotional dysregulation can play a vital role in helping children...**

**Recover from trauma...Reduce future recidivism...**



# Emotional Numbing

Emotional numbing is a common way to cope with the intensity of dysregulation.

**What is the number 1 way  
youth numb out?**



# Substance Abuse

- Over half of all adjudicated youth with posttraumatic stress have two or more types of comorbid disorders
- **Substance abuse** is the most common comorbid disorder among youth posttraumatic stress.
- **Substance abuse** in youth is related to severity of offenses and is often implicated in the arrests.
- 4/5 youth arrests involve adolescents who are under the influence of drugs and alcohol (Kerig & Becker, 2010).



**This is the basic cycle..**

**How can we interrupt this?**

Trauma → →

Dysregulation → →

Delinquency



# Do not focus on Behaviors

We need to focus on what is **driving** the behaviors.

Underneath the behaviors is the worry, hurt, fear, anger, lack of safety and victim thinking from the trauma.

We need to focus on the **themes of trauma** – these overwhelming feelings and sensations are what is driving the behavior.

## How do we do this?

# EMOTIONAL REGULATION!!!





# Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation can play a vital role in helping youth

- RECOVER from trauma victimization
- REDUCE the likelihood of recidivism

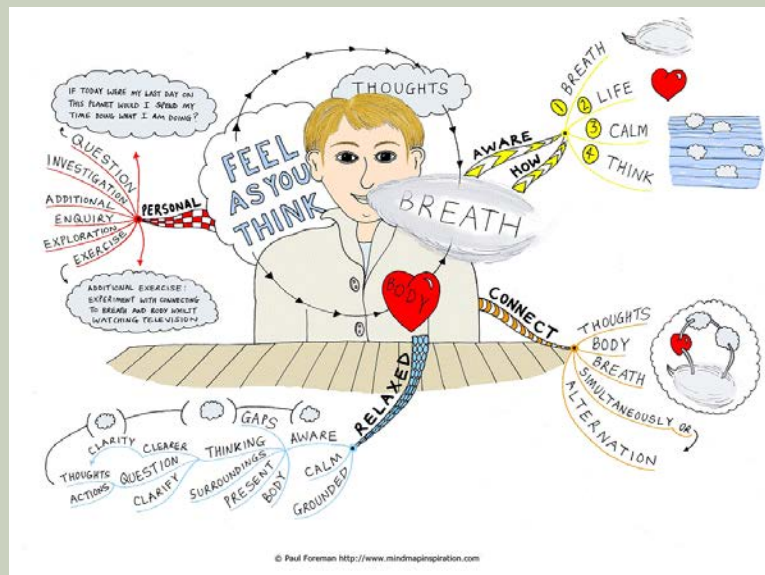




# Mind-body integrated therapies = Emotional Regulation

Techniques to engage both the body and the mind.

- Sensory-based, Mind body treatments engage clients – they don't focus on TALKING.

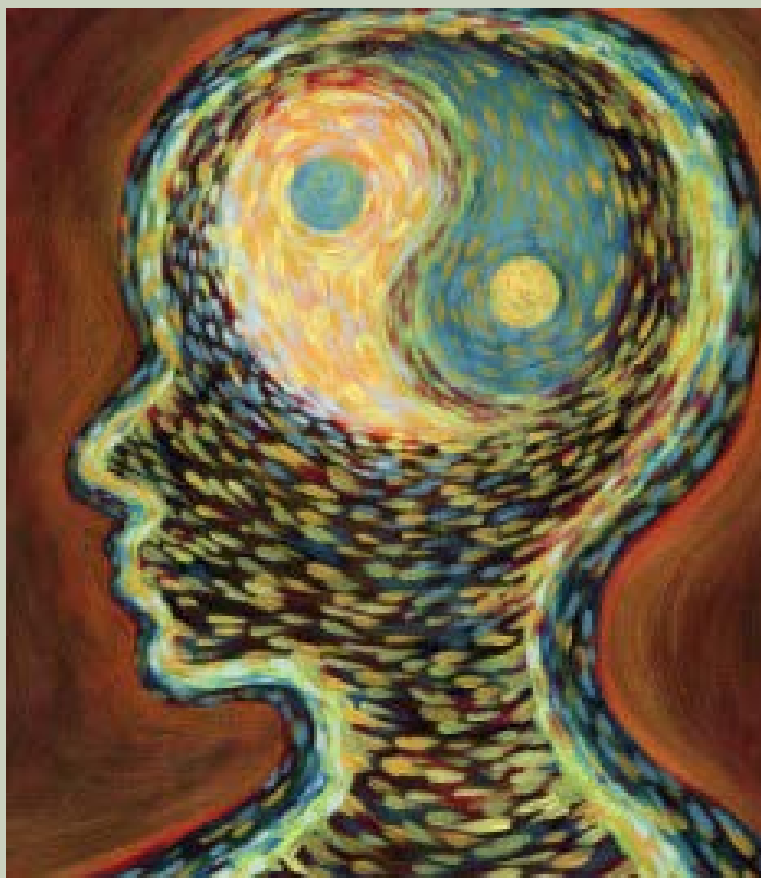




# Mind-Body Skills

There is evidence that using mind-body interventions help develop overall regulation in the brain (Corcoran et al, 2010; Farb et al, 2010; Siegel, 2007)

**Teaching traumatized youth to observe and name their body sensations, *which are the first signs of emotion*, improves regulation.**





# Mind Body Skills

Mind Body Skill activities include:

- Breathing
- Mindfulness
- Guided imagery
- Expressive arts (sensory based activities)

**ALL integrated with Trauma Themes**





# Breath work

Conscious alteration of breathing, such as connecting the inhale and exhale

- **Increased heart rate variability**
- **Decreased blood pressure rates**
- **Decreased respiratory rates (Forfylow, 2011)**
- **Reduction in anxiety (Kozasa et al, 2008)**
- **Reduction in depression, anxiety and PTSD symptoms (Descilo et al, 2010)**



# Breath work Activity Ideas





# Mindfulness

The moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment

When you are in the present, helps move away from re experiencing, you move towards becoming unstuck.

Decreases rumination, worry about what happened in past and what might happen later....

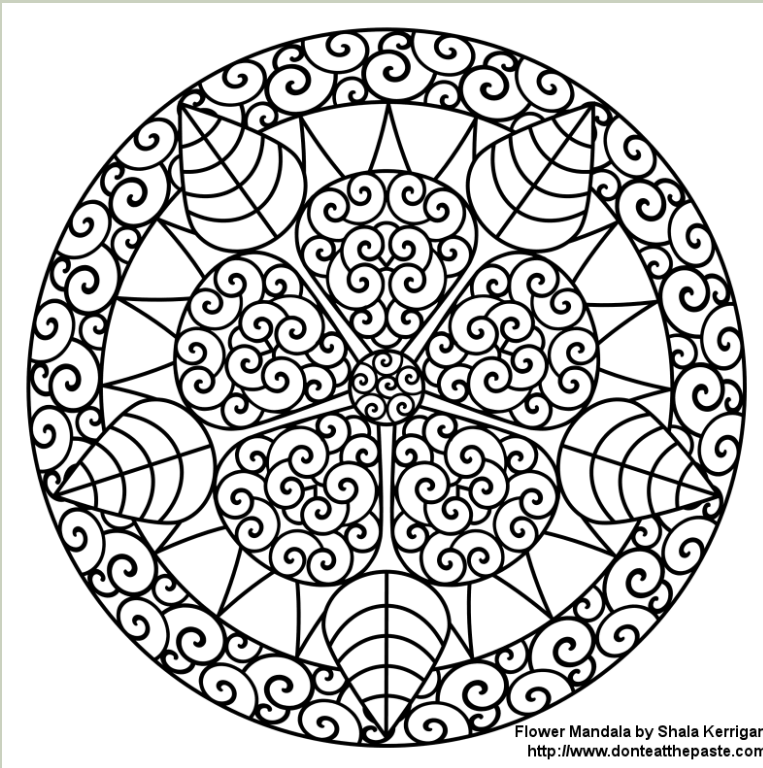


# Mindfulness

- **Develops affect regulation (Davis & Hayes, 2011).**
- **Cognitive flexibility, enhanced emotion regulation, reduced rumination (Kimborough, 2010)**
- **Improves emotional awareness, tolerance and acceptance of distressful symptoms (Borman et al., 2012)**
- **Improves self-regulation and emotional flexibility (Carmody et al., 2009)**
- **Improves emotional awareness and higher levels of emotion differentiation for both positive and negative emotions (Hill & Updegreff, 2011)**



# Mindfulness Activity Ideas







# Guided Imagery

**The use of relaxation and mental visualization to improve mood and/or well-being.**

- **Helps children interrupt intrusive, distressing thoughts (Miller & Johnson, 2012).**
- **Teaches children that they can gain control over their thoughts and feelings (Margolin, 2007).**



# Guided Imagery

- Combine the guided imagery activity with a drawing or expressive art activity





# Expressive Arts

**Drawing, painting, collage, music, drama...**

- **Reduction of hyper-arousal (Irwin, 2006)**
- **Facilitates expression of emotion (Hayes & Greco, 2008)**
- **Improves self awareness and emotional regulation (Coholic, 2011)**
- **Decreases in hopelessness (Staples et al., 2011)**



# Expressive Arts

## Sculpture of HURT





# Journaling

ABC Poem: A Is for Affirmation.  
Jeffrey Scott-Turner

Answer me this and be  
Brave in your reply  
Candid to admit  
Doubts  
Express  
Fears or  
Grievances you may be  
Harbouring  
Inside  
Jealously  
Keeping away  
Loving kindness from  
Moulding you to a

New  
Open  
Person  
Quite assured and  
Resilient  
Self-confident  
Tenacious  
Upstanding and  
Victorious.  
Who has that  
X-factor to achieve  
Your  
Zenith.

me some socks and let  
me only upstairs and  
downstairs, for being  
grounded. But anyways me  
and my brother, Colin, took  
my cat, Molly, and threw  
him behind my chair, but  
Molly caught on to the  
plug and broke my  
grandmother's lamp! But  
we told my mom that  
Molly was just laying  
on the chair and fell  
behind it and broke \*



# Recent Research

Trauma Intervention Program combined with  
mind-body skill activities

Traumatized and Adjudicated Youth

Wayne County

Michigan



# Recent Research Results

Youth were screened using the TLC Life Event Checklist (LEC) – all had multiple trauma exposure and experiences

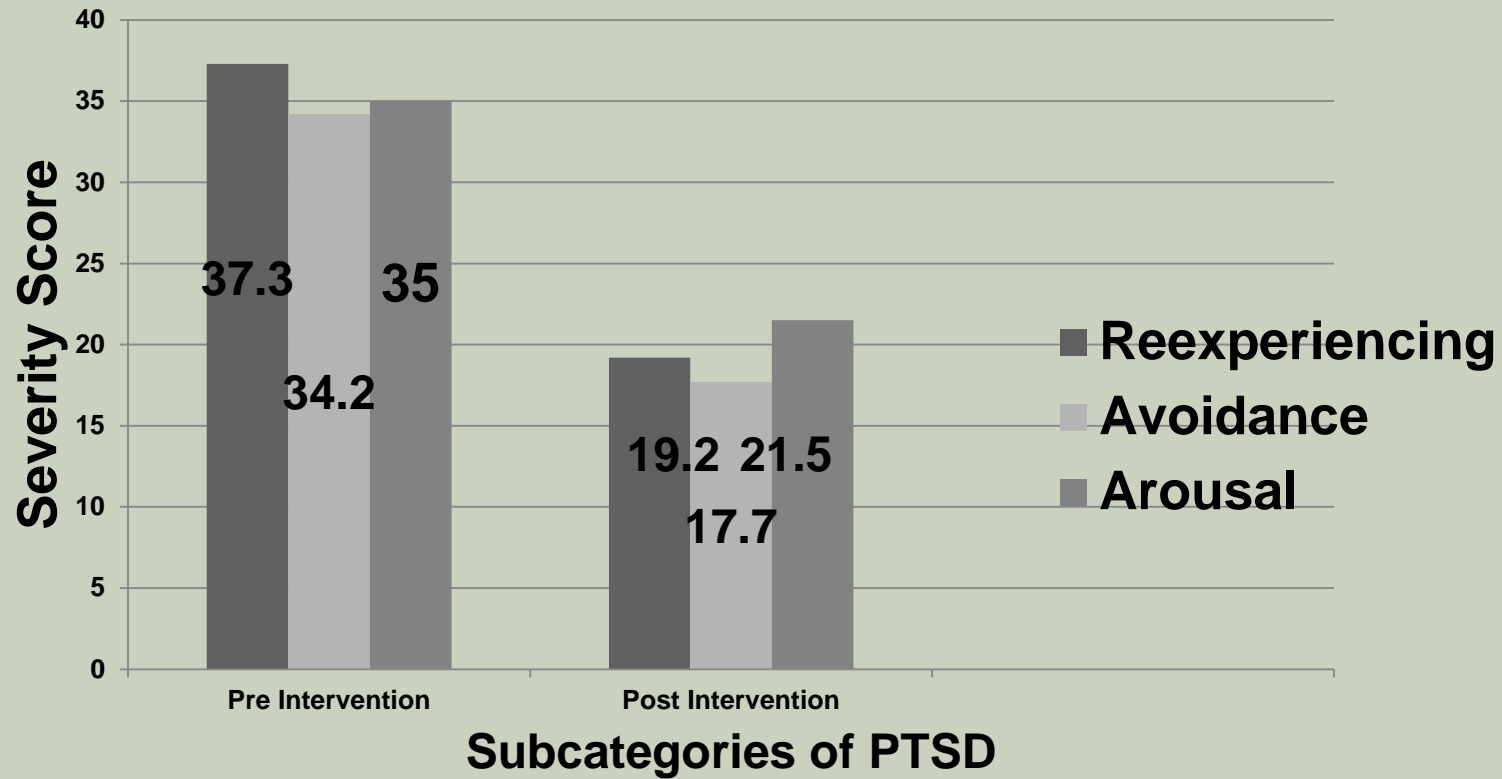
At intake and discharge, youth completed:

- TLC PTSD Adolescent Questionnaire (CAQ)
- Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale – Adolescents (SEARS-A)
- Scale of Body Connection (SBC)

At discharge and then again two months after completion of program youth were asked to identify recidivism since intake.



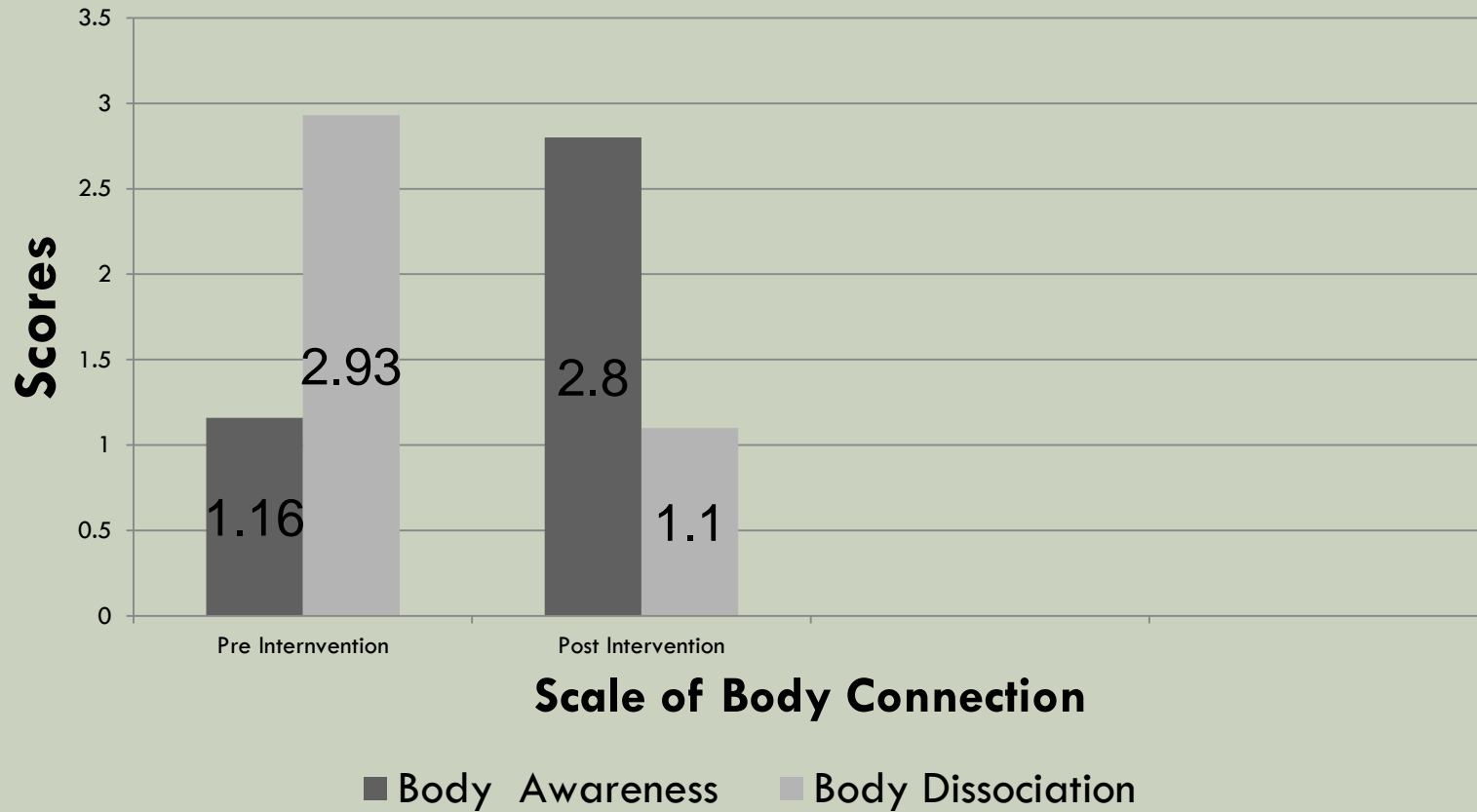
# Findings - CAQ





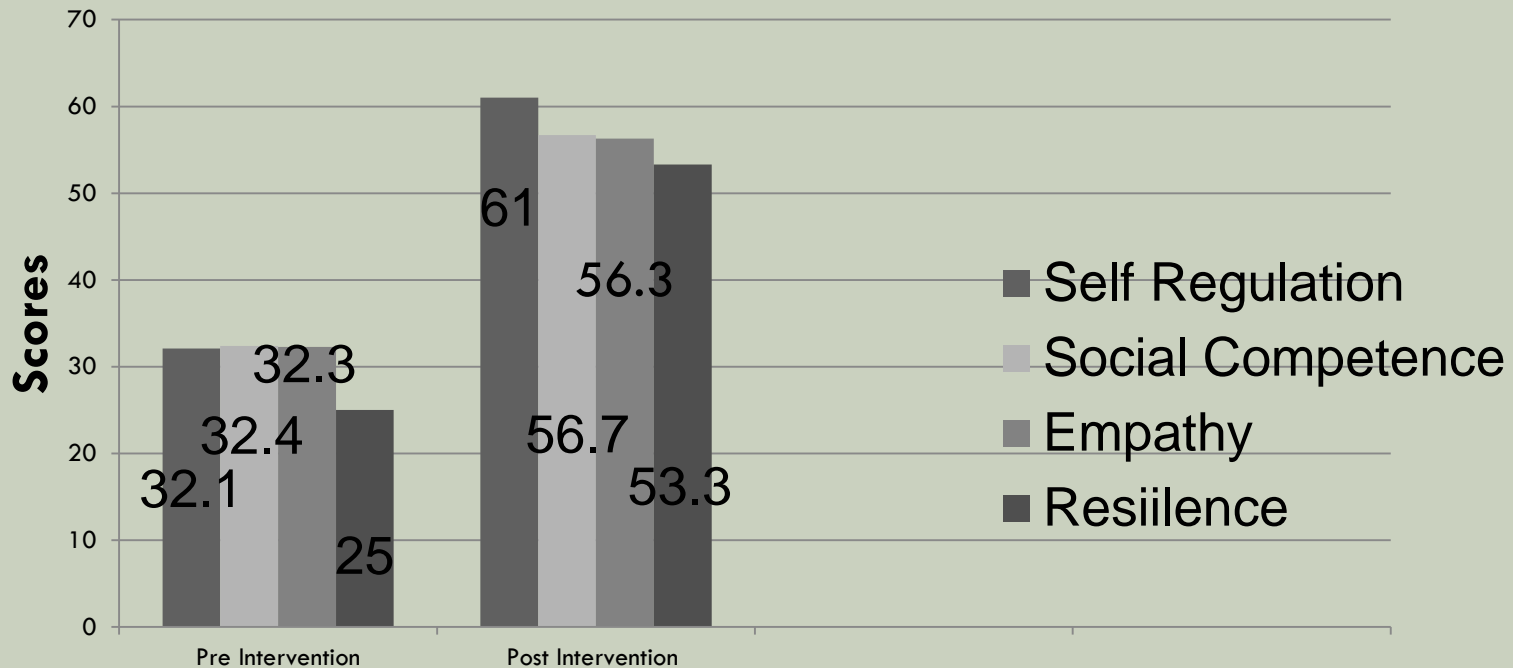


# Findings – Scale of Body Connection





# Findings – SEARS-A



**Social Emotional and Resilience Scale Categories**



# Recidivism - Findings



Recidivism rates were improved by 90% of participants.

Self-reported at two-month post intervention no further contact with the juvenile justice system.



# Summary

- Trauma Symptoms decreased
- Self-Regulation improved
- Body Awareness improved
- Body Dissociation decreased
- Recidivism rates reduced



# Case Examples





# Michael's Story

15 year old male

Contact with court:  
incorrigibility, stealing,  
fighting, truancy.

One of 8 biological children

Parental rights of Michael's  
mother terminated when  
Michael turned 8 years old

It is unknown where Michael's  
father is

Birth – 8 years old: significant  
poverty and neglect

8 years – current: separated  
from siblings, multiple foster  
care placements

Living in a foster home now



# Michael's Story

Michael's self report:

“I am always the target...I am jumped by members of a gang I didn't want to join.”

“I skip school because I really don't want to get jumped.”

“I smoke weed some but I do because it helps me to relax and escape from the worry of being beat down.”



## What do you think your strengths are?

“I am really good with kids – I’m patient with my younger siblings in my foster home.’

“I pray, I am close with God.”

“I believe that God keeps me and my real family connected.”





# Michael's Pre/Post CAQ

CAQ	PRE INTERVENTION	POST INTERVENTION
Re-experiencing	46	12
Avoidance	64	13
Arousal	44	10



# Michael's Pre/Post Briere TSCC

TSCC	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Anxiety	12	1
Depression	10	0
Anger	9	2
Traumatic Stress	16	1
Dissociation	9	0



# Michael's Pre SEARS-A

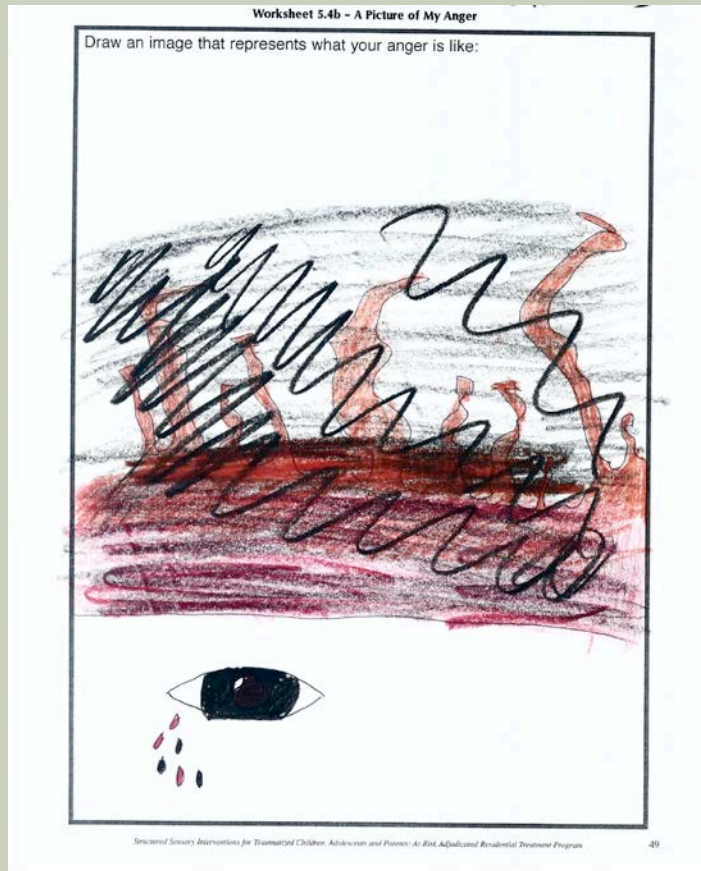
Scale	Score PRE	Score Level
Self Regulation	5	High Risk
Social Competence	4	High Risk
Empathy	2	High Risk
Responsibility	12	At Risk
Total Score	23	High Risk



# Michael's Pre/Post SBC

Scale	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Body Awareness	.5	1.9
Body Dissociation	2.8	1.1

# Michael's Anger



Flames, burning and tears.

“This is my anger about my sister and I being removed from our mother’s home.”

“Then, I was so angry but also very scared and confused.”

“Now, I am really just mad – I am so mad that I can’t see my sister – I don’t even know where she is.”

# How Michael coped in the past

“See this tattoo?”

Michael showed me a tattoo on his right arm of hands in the prayer position.

“It covers up all the scars I have on my arm from when I used to cut my arm with razor blades.”  
“I don’t cut anymore, I’m lucky I didn’t die from cutting.”





# How Michael copes now

*Smoking makes me feel chill.*

*I smoke blunts with my friends.*

*It helps me to stay calm and not think about my worries.*

**What are your worries?**

*That my mother is glad we all got taken away*

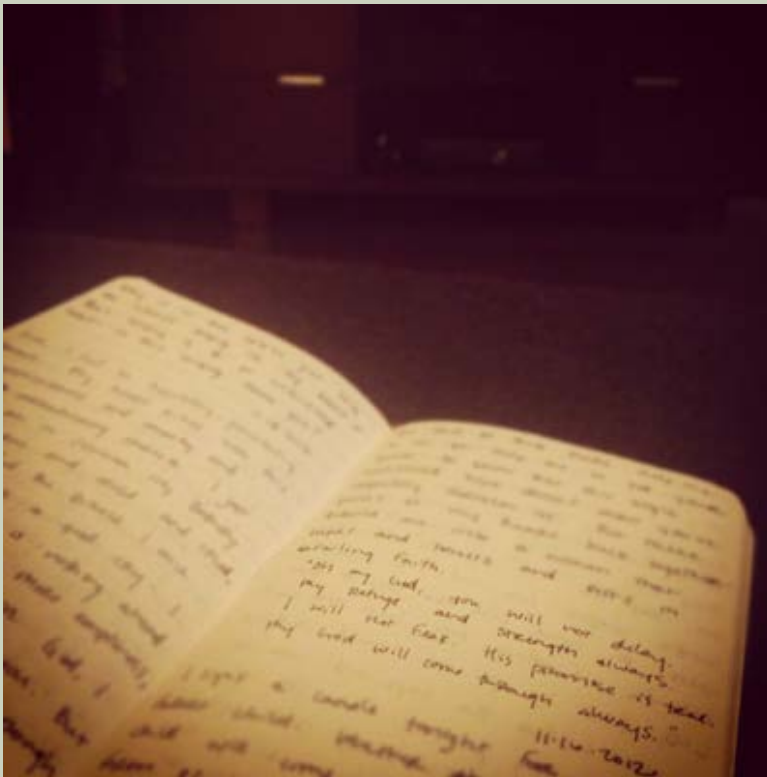
*I worry about getting jumped anytime*





# Interventions Michael Liked

Writing (mostly prayers)



Tense/Relax Activities

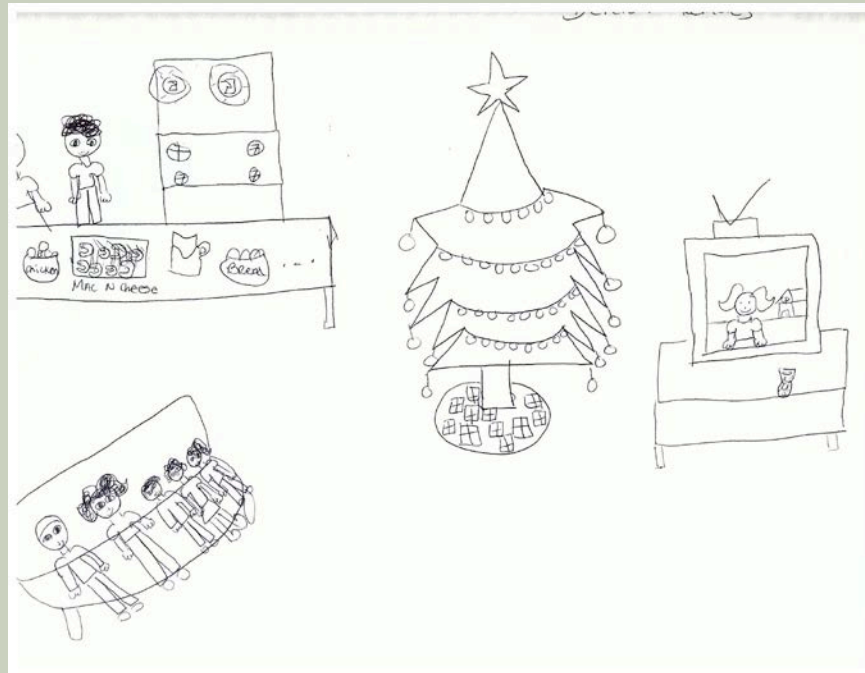






# Happy Memory: Christmas

“The best memory of my life”





# Michael's Pre/Post CAQ

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Avoidance	64	13
Arousal	44	10



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TSCC	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Anxiety	12	1
Depression	10	0
Anger	9	2
Traumatic Stress	16	1
Dissociation	9	0



# Michael's Post SEARS-A

Scale	Score PRE	Score Level
Self Regulation	27	Average
Social Competence	8	At Risk
Empathy	9	At Risk
Responsibility	22	Average
Total Score	66	At Risk



# Michael's Pre/Post SBC

Scale	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Body Awareness	.5	1.9
Body Dissociation	2.8	1.1



# Shayna's Story

14 year old, only child

Court contact: Charged with multiple possessions and selling of marijuana, school/home truancy

History of abuse, neglect. Mother is a drug addict.

Currently lives with Grandmother.

Mother is in treatment for her addiction and they have little contact with one another.



## What do you think your strengths are?

“I’m really pretty.”

“I have a great body.”

“I’m smart but nobody really knows that about me.”

“I have a great imagination.”

“I know how to read people.”



# Shayna's Pre/Post CAQ

CAQ	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Reexperiencing	37	12
Avoidance	47	14
Arousal	39	13





# Shayna's Pre/Post TSCC

TSCC	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Anxiety	10	6
Depression	14	4
Anger	22	5
Post Traumatic Stress	17	4
Dissociation	20	5



# Shayna's Pre SEARS-A

Scale	Score PRE	Score Level
Self Regulation	9	At Risk
Social Competence	4	High Risk
Empathy	2	High Risk
Responsibility	12	At Risk
Total Score	27	High Risk



# Shayna's Pre/Post SBC

Scale	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Body Awareness	1.1	2.8
Body Dissociation	1.7	1.1

# What happened/Who caused it?

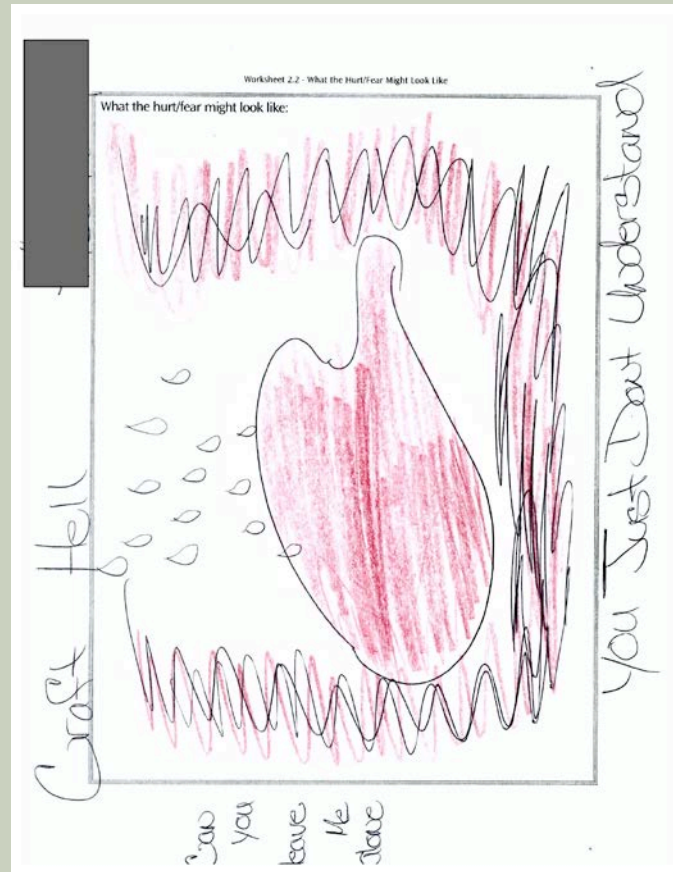


My uncle raped me when I was 5 years old.

I could not escape.

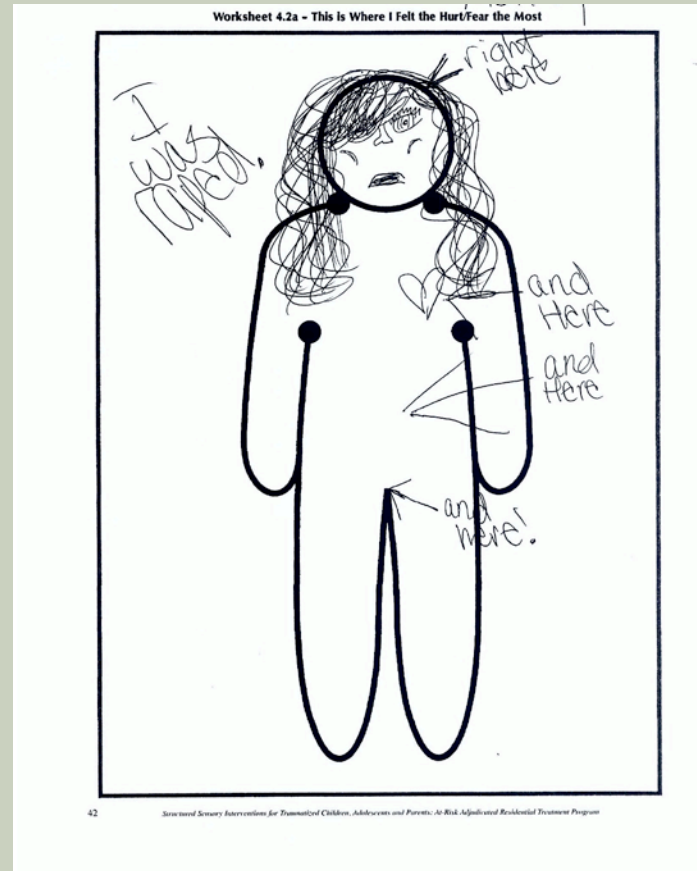
This is actually not my uncle, it is my Dad – it is his fault because if he would have been in my life, none of this would have ever happened

# What the hurt is like





# Where the hurt is in my body



# Shayna's Anger/Sadness





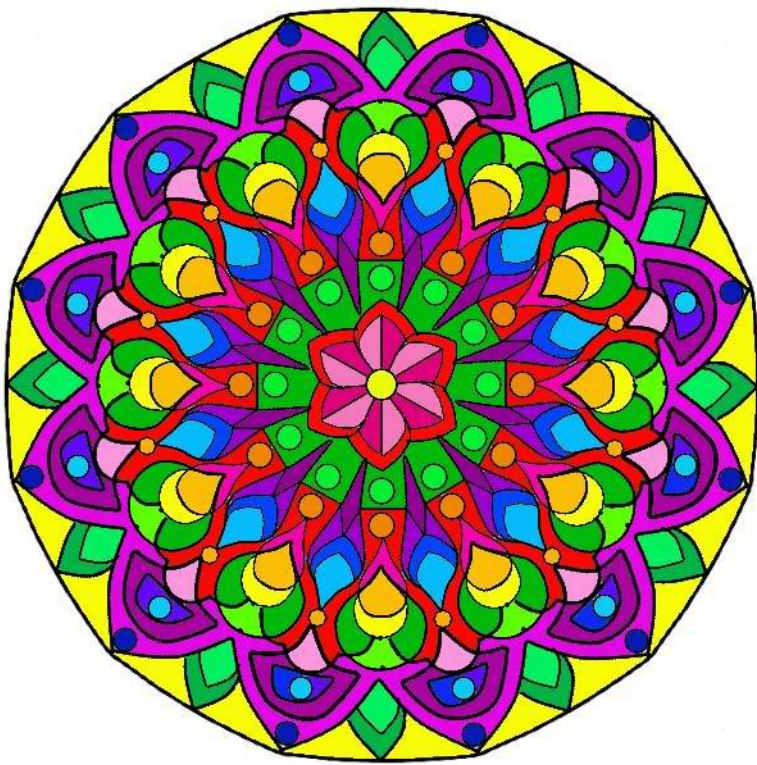
# How Shayna Copes

Shayna smokes marijuana and cigarettes to “escape”.

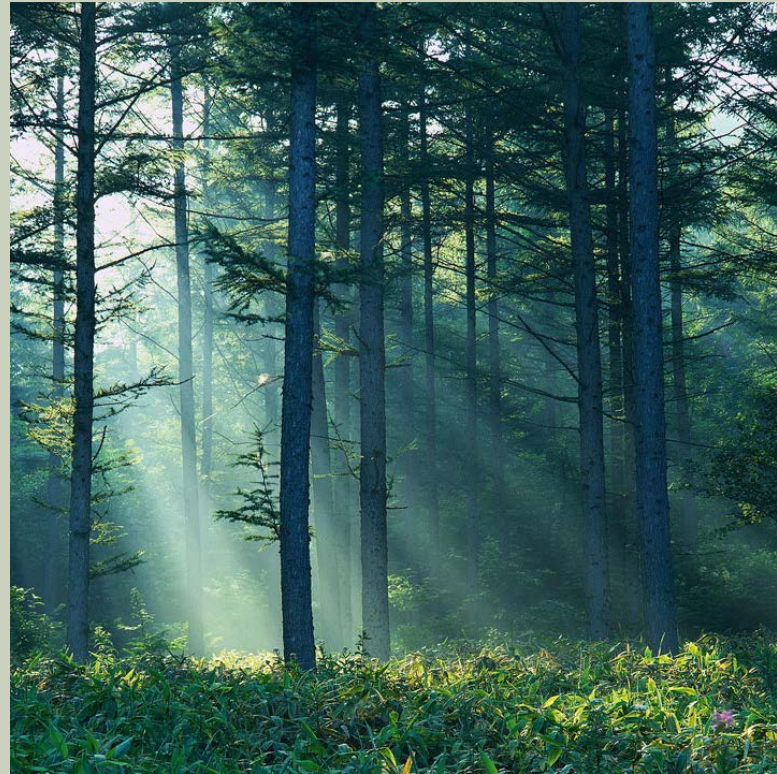


# Interventions Shayna Liked

Mandalas



Guided Imagery with Drawing





# Shayna's Pre/Post CAQ

CAQ	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Reexperiencing	37	12
Avoidance	47	14
Arousal	39	13



# Shayna's Pre/Post TSCC

TSCC	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Anxiety	10	6
Depression	14	4
Anger	22	5
Post Traumatic Stress	17	4
Dissociation	20	5



# Shayna's Post SEARS-A

Scale	Score POST	Score Level
Self Regulation	33	Average to High Fxn
Social Competence	12	At Risk
Empathy	11	At Risk
Responsibility	19	Average
Total Score	74	Average



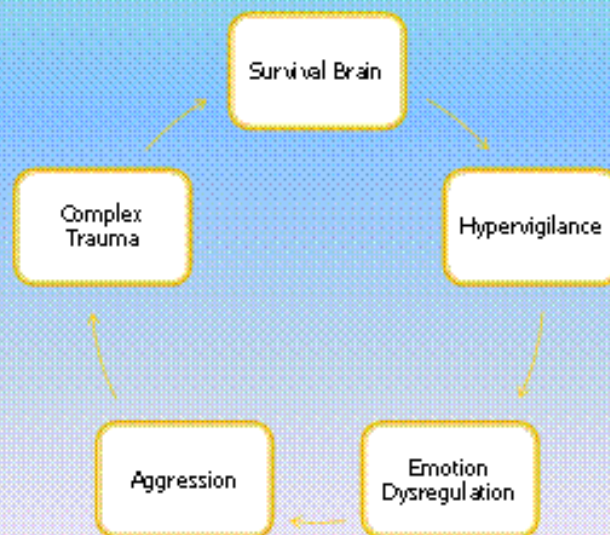
# Shayna's Pre/Post SBC

Scale	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Body Awareness	1.1	2.8
Body Dissociation	1.7	1.1



# Summary

## The Vicious Cycle of Complex Trauma, Emotion Dysregulation, and Aggression



# Summary

