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Integrative Parenting: Strategies for Raising Children Affected by Attachment Trauma

Class 4 (of 5)
Becoming a Happier Parent



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THE ATTACHMENT AND TRAUMA CENTER OF NEBRASKA

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This powerpoint is based on the following parent guide:

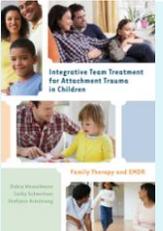
“Integrative Parenting: Strategies for Raising Children Affected by Attachment Trauma”
by Debra Wesselmann, Cathy Schweitzer, & Stefanie Armstrong
(W.W. Norton, New York, 2014)



Slide 3

Accompanying Treatment Manual for Therapists:

Integrative Team Treatment for Attachment Trauma in Children: Family Therapy and EMDR”
by Debra Wesselmann, Cathy Schweitzer, & Stefanie Armstrong (W.W. Norton, New York, 2014)



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At the end of this class, you will be able to...

- Find healthy ways to lower your stress.
- Recognize your triggers and rewire your responses.
- Pull out your own “negative thought dominoes” and replace them with more helpful ones.
- Replace your emotion-driven responses with more *Integrative Parenting* responses to your child’s meltdowns and big behaviors.

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“What do I Need to Stop or Change When Dealing With my Child’s Meltdowns?”



Image 1

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The Parent Dominoes

- As a parent, you experience your own dominoes. One leads to the next, very quickly:
- Vulnerability factors
- Triggering situations and events
- Your upset emotions
- Your upset thoughts
- Your reactions

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The Parent's Dominoes Merge
With the Child's Dominoes

- Your child's dominoes become your triggers, and your dominoes become your child's triggers. There is not a good outcome when the parent and child dominoes join together!



Image 2

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Parent Vulnerability Factors

Do you identify with any of these vulnerability factors?

- Sleep Issues
- Physical Illness
- Work Related Stress
- Financial worries
- Demands from other family members



Image 3

Encourage class identification of their own vulnerability

Slide 9

Parent Vulnerability Factors



Image 5

- Relationship conflict
- Major changes
- Depression/Anxiety
- Addictions
- Grief
- Parent's traumatic past

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Address Your Vulnerability Factors

- Counseling/support groups
- See your doctor
- Set up respite and engage in fun or social activities outside of the house
- Hobbies (knitting, reading, sports)
- Other healthy self-care activities that calm your brain and body (walking, meditation, massage, prayer)

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Identify Your Biggest Triggers

- Child misbehavior
- Child arguing
- Calls from child's school
- Repeated meltdowns
- Poor grades
- Lying
- Stealing
- Sexualized behaviors



Image 6

Slide 12

Identify Your Biggest Emotions

- Shame and guilt
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Frustration
- Powerlessness
- Hurt
- Grief



Image 7

Slide 13

Identify Your Negative Thought Dominoes

- Hopeless thoughts
- Embarrassed thoughts
- Judgmental thoughts
- Misguided thoughts



Image 8

Slide 14

Replace Your Judgmental Thoughts

Judgments:	Rational Thoughts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I'm a bad/worthless parent."• "I have a bad/worthless child."• "My family is shameful."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "My child and I are both just scared inside."• "These struggles are typical when parents are raising traumatized children."

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Replace Your Embarrassed Thoughts

Judgments:	Rational Responses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "This is humiliating."• "Others are looking down at me/judging me."• "Others think I'm a failure."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Others don't have the appropriate knowledge or insight."• "I don't need validation from others to know I am doing the right thing for my child."

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Replace Your Hopeless Thoughts	
Hopeless Thoughts:	Rational Thoughts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My child will never get better!”• “I have ruined my life by raising this child!”• “I will never be happy!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I am learning strategies that will help integrate my child’s brain.”• “Helping my child heal gives meaning and purpose to my life.”• “I can learn to take better care of myself to feel better.”

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Replace Misguided “Emotion-Driven” Thoughts	
Emotion-Driven Thoughts:	Rational Responses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My child needs to learn her lesson.”• “He is just a spoiled brat.”• A good spanking will teach her!”• “I need to hear him admit he is to blame!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My child feels unsafe in the world and needs my help to learn that he can trust me and that I will keep him safe.”

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Misguided Thoughts Regarding the Child’s Motivations	
Misguided Thoughts:	Rational Thoughts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My child is disrespecting me.”• “My child is out to get me.”• “My child hates me.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My child is afraid of letting me get close, because he has been so hurt.”• “My child wants to be close deep down, but his brain is in survival mode.”• “My child is terrified of rejection.”

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Sensations in the Body

- Heavy chest
- Headache
- Tension in neck and back
- Sick feeling in stomach
- Trembling



Image 9

Slide 20

As the Parent's Dominoes Fall, They May Lead to...

- Yelling
- Punishing
- Threatening
- Avoiding
- Arguing
- Taking it out on my partner



Image 10

Slide 21

Leading to...

- More child dominoes
- I feel badly about myself.
- I feel all alone.
- I feel like a failure.



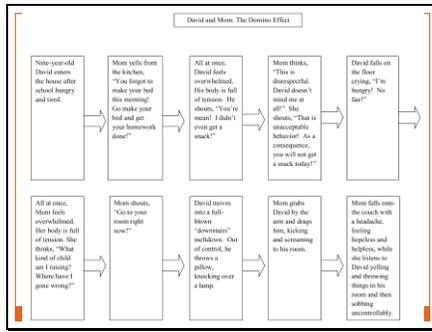
Image 11

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Practicum

- Let's look at a sample Domino Effect.
- Where might the parent have stopped the cascade of falling dominoes?

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"What Can I Do in a Crisis Moment?"

- Slow, deep breaths. Keep the focus on your breath.
- Self-talk: "This isn't about me. This isn't personal. My child's brain is stuck in survival mode. I must stay in my calm brain to help my child heal."

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Calm Your Brain and Body With Regular Self-Care Practices

- Incorporate walking, regular meditation, yoga, relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing or other stress-relief activities on a regular basis. Over time, you will find a greater sense of calm and self-control.



Image 12

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Calm Your Brain and Body With Regular Self-Care Practices

- Experiment to find what works for you, and what you most enjoy.



Image 13

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Raising a Traumatized Child Can Create Trauma for Couples

Common Couple Issues:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each parent feels emotionally depleted and unable to be supportive to the other.• Parents come from different backgrounds and have different styles of parenting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a plan for respite and regular time alone to have fun together.• Learn "Integrative Parenting Strategies" together.• Attend relationship counseling.

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Extended Family Issues	
Common Extended Family Issues:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended family lacks important knowledge.• Extended family think they are helping by giving misguided advice.• Their own issues lead them to say and do hurtful things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide extended family with reading material.• Remind yourself, "They are misguided. It's not my job to make them happy. It's my job to help my child heal."

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Grief Issues	
You may be grieving due to...	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infertility• The loss of your previous lifestyle• The difference between your child and the child you had imagined raising• The loss of other significant people in your life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Journal• Seek a support group• Talk with a counselor• Find a counselor who can help you process your grief with EMDR

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The Inner Child and You	
<p>Raising traumatized children is especially difficult for parents who had difficult childhood circumstances.</p>	
<p>Image 14</p>	

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**Your Child's Difficulties May Subconsciously
Trigger Your Past**

- If your own parent was rejecting, the push-pull from your child may trigger your past feelings of hurt.
- If your own parent was angry, your child's anger may trigger your old feelings of fear.
- If your own parent was controlling, your child's need to control his environment may feel abusive to you.
- (Reference: ***The Whole Parent: How to Become a Terrific Parent Even if You Didn't Have One*** by Wesselmann)

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Seeking Your Own Therapy

- Can help you disconnect the present day situation from the past.
- Can help you stay out of your "survival brain."
- Can help you feel better about yourself and find healthy ways to nurture yourself.
- EMDR can help you remove your stored, negative emotions related to old memories and develop more positive feelings about yourself, life, and others.

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It's Your Turn...

- When you notice yourself getting triggered, draw a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper and write your upset thoughts on the left side.
- On the right side, write down helpful, logical thoughts in response.
- Make a list of healthy self-care activities you wish to incorporate into your life.

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Feel Free to Share This Presentation...

and visit us at
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Works Cited

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- Wesselmann, D. (1998). *The whole parent: How to become a terrific parent even if you didn't have one*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

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