

Core Story of Brain Development

Foundations of Caregiver Support

Course Description

This course will provide you with a solid understanding of the Core Story of brain development and how early experiences affect the development of brain architecture. Participants will be introduced to the 3 central concepts of the Core Story, the basics of brain architecture, learn how relationships shape the brain, the impact of stress on the developing brain, and the role of executive functioning and resilience.

This 'Core Story of Brain Development Training' is one of the five introductory trainings within the Foundations of Caregiver Support Training Series. The five trainings include:

- Colonization, Historic Trauma and Healing Training.
- Childhood Trauma, Stress and the Developing Brain.
- Core Story of Brain Development.
- Child Development and Wellbeing.
- Through the Lens of Loss & Grief.

Learning Objectives

There are six learning steps in this training; each learning step is a core concept or idea that connects with the next core concept:

- First, we want you to have a better understanding about 'the Core Story' and what this means.
- Describe the three central concepts of the core story.
- Understand the basics of brain architecture.
- Understand 'serve and return'.
- Understand how stress can impact the developing brain and.
- Describe the connection between executive functioning, self-regulation, and resilience.

Key Messages

- The earliest experiences of childhood reach long into adulthood...Early experiences establish the architecture of the brain and the developmental trajectories for the learning, behaviour, and health of individuals and populations.
- A fundamental concept in the core story is the idea that experiences in early life interact with genes to affect the developing brain and influence health outcomes throughout life, including those relevant to mental health and addiction.
- Enhancing the development of executive functioning involves sensitive, responsive caregiving and individualized teaching in the context of situations that require making choices, opportunities for children to direct their own activities with decreasing adult supervision over time, effective support of early emotion regulation, promotion of sustained joint attention, and the availability of adults who are not under such pressure that they cannot make time for children to practice their skills.
- There are numerous opportunities in every child's life to experience manageable stress—and with the help of supportive adults, this "positive stress" can be growth promoting; over time, we become better able to cope with life's obstacles and hardships, both physically and mentally.
- The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.
- The science of resilience can help us understand why some children do well despite serious adversity.

- Resilience is a combination of protective factors that enable people to adapt in the face of serious hardship, and is essential to ensuring that children who experience adversity can still become healthy, productive citizens.
- A key ingredient in building resiliency are the supportive and nurturing relationships formed between children and caregivers and other adults.
- Brain development is altered by all experiences and influences mental and physical health over the lifespan.
- By understanding brain development and how relationships and serve and return interactions promote neural development we now understand why responsive caregiving is so vital to healthy child development.
- And because we understand the importance of responsive caregiving we need to maximize everyday opportunities to promote brain development.

Resources

Video Brains: Journey to Resilience

Link: <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/brains-journey-to-resilience>

Video Seven Slide Series: The Human Brain

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOsgDkeH52o>

Video Building Core Capabilities for Life

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NehuwDA45Q>

Video Coping with Early Adversity and Mitigating its Effects - Core Story: Resilience

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS13oNQNAOg>