

Part 2: Preventing Trauma in Children with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities



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About SAFE

Vision: A just and safe community free from violence and abuse

Mission: To stop abuse for everyone

**24/7 SAFEline for support &
access to all services**

Hotline: 512-267-7233

Textline: 737-888-7233

Chatline: safeaustin.org/chat

SAFE | stop abuse for
everyone

Training for people with disabilities on topics including personal safety, healthy relationships, and safer sexuality

Information, technical assistance, and training for:

- disability service organizations
- victim service professionals (domestic & sexual violence)
- criminal justice staff
- family members and other stakeholders

Working with community partners to recognize and address gaps in services for people with disabilities

Trauma and trauma responses in children

Abuse of people with disabilities

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Violence is most often perpetrated by someone people know and trust

- 97-99% of victims with intellectual disabilities knew and trusted their abuser
- 44% had a relationship specifically due to the disability

Abuse can occur anywhere, but the risk is much greater in closed, institutional settings



(Baladerian, 1991)

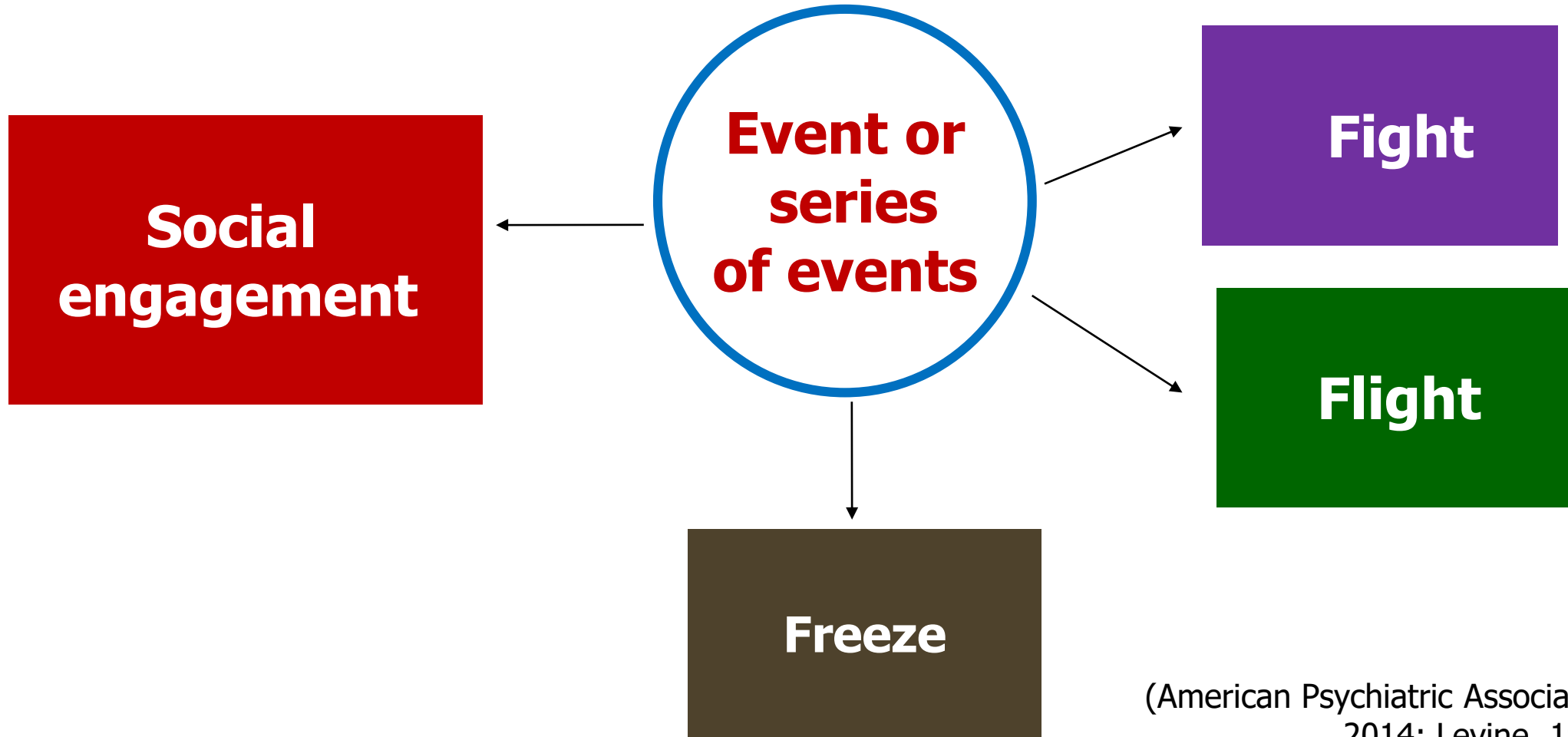
At-risk for other trauma

- Traumatizing incidents of physical restraint & seclusion
- Higher rates of serious injury compared to peers without disabilities
- Increased risk of emotional distress due to medical procedures



(Sullivan, 2006; Sedlak, et al., 2010; Sullivan & Knutsen, 2000.)

TRAUMA: WHEN TOO MUCH HAPPENS TOO FAST



(American Psychiatric Association, 2014; Levine, 1999)

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What can *fight & flight* look like behaviorally?

- Oppositional
- Engaging in power struggles
- Aggressive
- Explosive
- Hands clasped in fists
- Hitting, kicking, spitting, throwing things



What can *fight & flight* look like behaviorally?

- Angry outbursts- screaming
- Overly talkative
- Hyperactive
- Restlessness or excessive fidgeting
- Leaving/running
- Darting eyes



What can *freeze* look like behaviorally?

- Daydreaming,
- Difficulty paying attention
- Holding breath
- Headaches, stomach problems
- Low energy, flat affect, not responding to interaction
- Isolating, withdrawn
- Extreme sensitivity to noise



(Levine, 2012; Kline, & Downing)

A trauma response can be the result of a trauma reminder... SAFE|

- Hunger or Thirst
- Sudden change
- Transitions (place or activity)
- Sensory overload
- Unpredictability
- Feeling lack of control or chaos
- Feelings of vulnerability or rejection
- Loss
- Loneliness
- Lack of attention
- Confrontation
- Getting “in trouble”
- Praise or Attention
- Calm

All behavior is communication

Pay attention to possible abuse indicators:

- Signs of physical abuse
- Physical ailments: headaches, stomach aches

Pay attention to behavioral indicators:

- Increase in fear (places/people) & distrust
- Changes in mood, appetite, sleep patterns
- Loss of skills previously gained
- Angry outbursts (fight)
- Withdrawing, isolating (flight/freeze)



Trauma-informed care in practice

Trauma-informed values

Safety: Will I be safe here and with you– physically *and* emotionally?

Trustworthiness: Can I believe in you to tell me the truth and be honest?

Choice: Will I be able to make decisions or are you making all of the decisions for me?

Collaboration: Will you tell me what to do or will you work with me?

Empowerment: Will you support me to find and use my own voice?

(Fallot, 2011)

Ingredients for recovery

Safety

Empowerment

Connection

Keys to safety: Meeting needs



- Predictable day & people
- Staff: responsive, caring, kind
- Providing physical & emotional comfort
- Physical safety (from others and self)
- Engagement
- Safe person
- Build trust with honest communication

Keys to empowerment: Choice

- Provide options and give time to make decisions
- Provide *real* choices, not fake ones.
- Real input into daily life

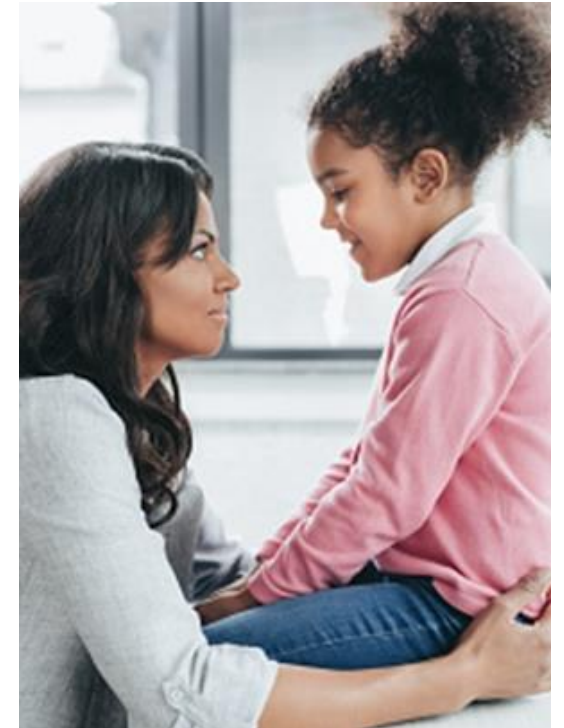


Making choices helps develop the frontal cortex of the brain.

(Harvey, 2012 & Campbell, 2012)

Keys to connection: Listening

- Listen: Verbal and nonverbal communication
- Consistent time
- Body language, eye contact
- Reflecting
- Attentive and responsive to interaction
- Follow through



(Harvey, 2012)

Interventions & supports

- Prevent sensory overload
- Grounding with animals/pets/nature/music/breathing
- Opportunities for creative expression
- Sleep



Strengthening protective factors

- Promote secure attachment
- Address the trauma of parents/caregivers
- Promote a healing and protective environment
- Partnerships between parents, other caregivers, and professionals to form a recovery team
- Families are connected with IDD and trauma-informed support and services



From: Road to Recovery: Supporting children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have experienced trauma. Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

Children's Justice Act Grants

Promoting Justice website

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Browser window showing the website <http://childabuseanddisabilities.safeaustin.org/>. The address bar indicates "Not secure" and the URL.

The website header features the URL <http://childabuseanddisabilities.safeaustin.org/> and the SAFE logo with the tagline "stop abuse for everyone".


PROMOTING JUSTICE

Responding to Abuse Against Children with Disabilities


Navigation menu: WHAT IS THE ISSUE? ▾ WHAT CAN I DO? ▾ CONSIDERING CULTURE ▾ ABOUT ▾ RESOURCES ▾ PORTALS ▾




[Criminal Justice
& Child Advocates](#)



[Families, Educators,
& Service Providers](#)



[Padres, Tutores,
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[About Disabilities](#)

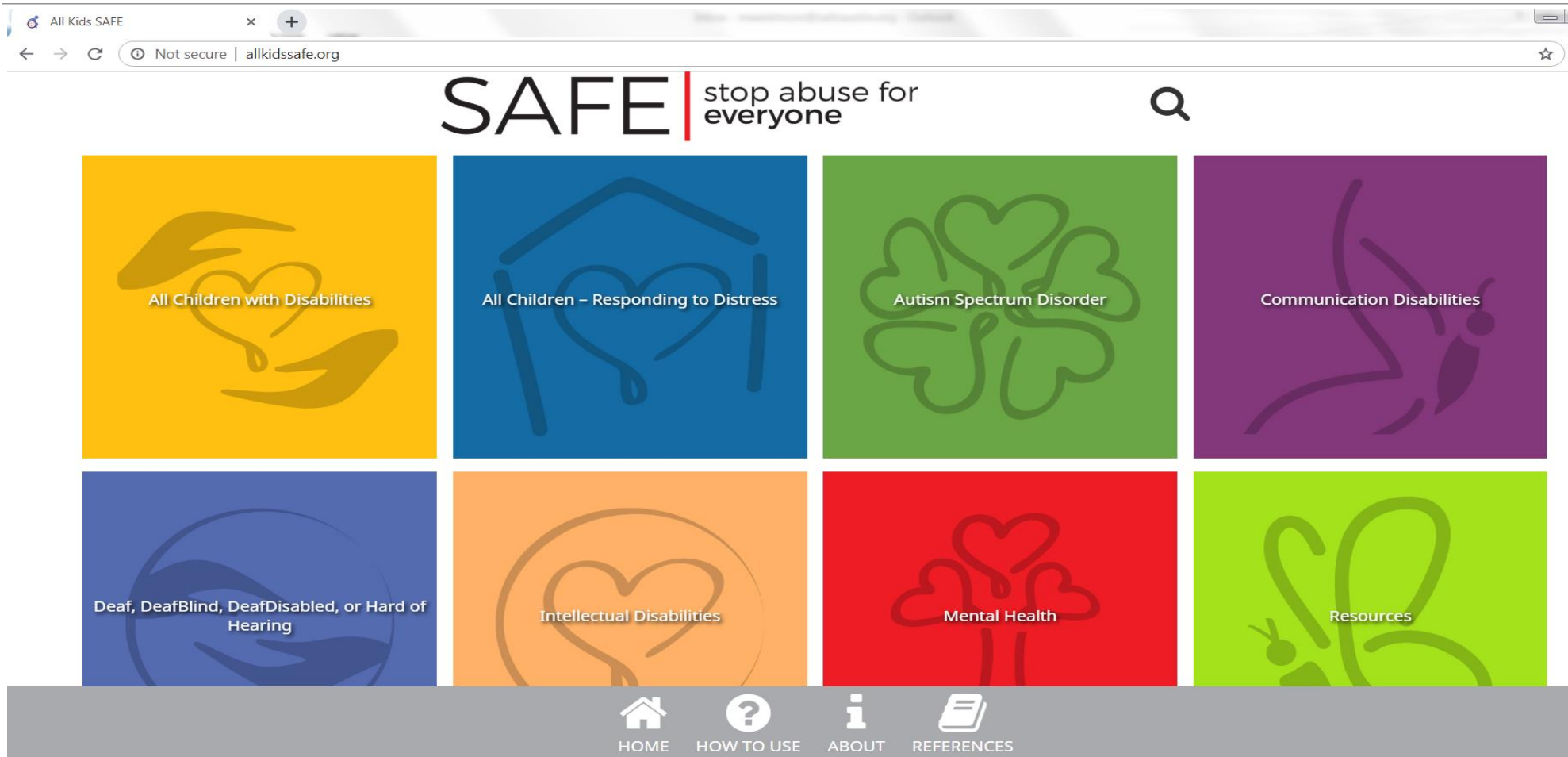
Children with disabilities are at high risk for abuse, but abuse against them is frequently not recognized, reported, investigated, or prosecuted.

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Children's Justice Act Grants

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Digital guide/smart phone app



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Self-care for caregivers and providers

Practicing self-regulation

Simple activities that can help us settle and be present:

1. Focus on your breathing
2. Notice where your body makes contact
3. Look around the room and see where your eyes naturally go – what catches your attention?
4. Chit chat for a moment – shift your attention to something pleasant
5. Check in with your body. What changed?

Take it easy on yourself!

1. Give yourself a hug – containment.
2. Talk with someone calm or someone you trust.
3. Find something you like to look at.
4. Take time to walk around, stretch, drink water.
5. Take time to notice how your energy is shifting and settling.
6. Stay connected to others
7. Don't isolate.



(Levine, 2012; Kline, & Downing)

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