

### **Three Guiding Truths for Building Regulation and Resilience in Children with Significant Trauma Related Needs.**

**Presenter:** Tiffany Sudela-Junker

Tiffany shared her story of adopting 2 children with significant trauma related needs at age 5 and 15 months. “We thought providing structure and providing nurturer would be enough. We became very focused on getting our children’s’ behavior in order, compliance chasing. As we focused on that, their behavior escalated, and our behavior escalated. We didn’t understand why their behavior was different. I didn’t know how to be an effective parent for my kid.”

Attending a workshop in 2005 with Dr. Bruce Perry changed the trajectory of her parenting journey.

“Implementing the neuroscience changed everything.” The workshop revealed 3 important truths:

1. Early trauma physically changes the developing brain.
2. Kindness and compassionate responses sooth the nervous system.
3. We need to re-define community, like our brains, communities need to adapt, because we now know what kind of relationships and environments heal trauma.

The brain develops sequentially. For children who experience early trauma, the back part of the brain can over develop, the survival part of the brain. The mid-brain can sometimes under-develop, this is the part that lets us know when danger is gone. This part of the brain needs safe adults to develop. The front of the brain is last to develop. It is responsible for judgement, learning and impulse control.

What I needed to know is - My child who experienced early trauma had a highly sensitized nervous system, so my child had a hyperactive treat response. That meant what I would see with my child was unexpected responses, big feeling floods, and big reactions. I needed to learn about state dependent functioning: function goes down depending on the state a child is in. When kids are in stress, they need *adults* to help them manage their brain states.

Tiffany’s daughter completed the Neurosequential Trauma Assessment with Dr. Bruce Perry. It assesses where in life did trauma occur and what developmental deficits might a child have based on the trauma at that specific age. “I started looking at behavior in an entirely different way. Children can’t do what they are neurobiological unable to do.”

“We had to help our children sooth their brains. We practiced co-regulation as a pathway to self-regulation. Our kids needed our brains – to share our calm with them.” The focus became soothing the nervous system. Correction was triggering the threat response. We replaced correction with empathy and connection first. We focused on relationship repair. Helping them feel seen, soothed, safe, secure, helps children manage their states.

Our kids needed help building tolerance for structure. Building a structure based on what the kids can tolerate now, giving structure in small tolerable doses. Tiffany also shared the power of dosing regulation. “If every couple of hours you “dose” regulation breaks you’ll help get kids using different part of the brain.”

When we put children in the environment that met her needs, which understand their development needs they are capable of amazing things and great empathy. The power of co-regulation is amazing, as we create that capacity inside our families, organizations and communities or kids’ resilience blossoms.