



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together / Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

THE NAS POST ADOPTION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- These materials have been developed for the National Adoption Service for adoptive families
- Their purpose is to provide a learning and development resource for adopters post placement
- These tools can be used by groups or by individuals.
- There is lots of information in the notes below each slide so it is important to read these too as they provide much more information, and some useful ideas for more reading.

Looking after yourself...

WHAT IS THIS MODULE ABOUT?

This module will help you to:

- Think about how living with an adopted child can impact on your well-being in surprising ways
- Understand what is meant by 'Secondary Trauma' and 'Blocked Care' and how self-awareness is really important
- Recognise if this is an issue for you or members of your family
- Consider ways for looking after yourself

CONSIDER THIS...

Sometimes living with a child who has poor early years experience can make you feel awful about yourself, feel different to how you usually feel, do things you would not normally do, lack the clear thinking you would normally have...

REFLECTION

Think back to when you were first considering adopting a child:

- How were you feeling?
- What were you hoping for?
- How was your child described?
- How were you picturing yourselves as a family?

STRESS FACTORS

- Expectations
- The emotional high of being matched and having a child placed
- The very unique stresses of the adoption process itself
- The lack of information shared with you about your child's history
- Feeling let down by your agency
- Reliving fertility issues
- Identifying with the birth family's feelings of loss
- Feeling angry about what your child has suffered
- The challenges of parenting a child who is traumatised and has life experiences that are not shared by the adoptive parents.
- The normal new parenting issues

- So you come to being an adoptive parent with hopes and expectations and we have talked about the stress factors.
- Why can living with an adopted child make you feel odd?
- The key to understanding this is to recognise that the way a child feels as a result of their adverse experiences will impact on how you feel as the adult caregiver

JUST A REMINDER:

Because of their poor early experiences your child may:

- struggle with feeling both physically and emotionally safe
- have great difficulty regulating their emotions
- struggle to find words and reasons for their feelings
- This may impact on you
- It will impact on lots of people in this way

EMPATHY

Being empathetic is a real strength, a key quality for an adoptive parent... however it can also be a risk factor for your own well-being when re-parenting a traumatised child



Empathy

Sympathy

Compassion

Think about the meanings of these words.

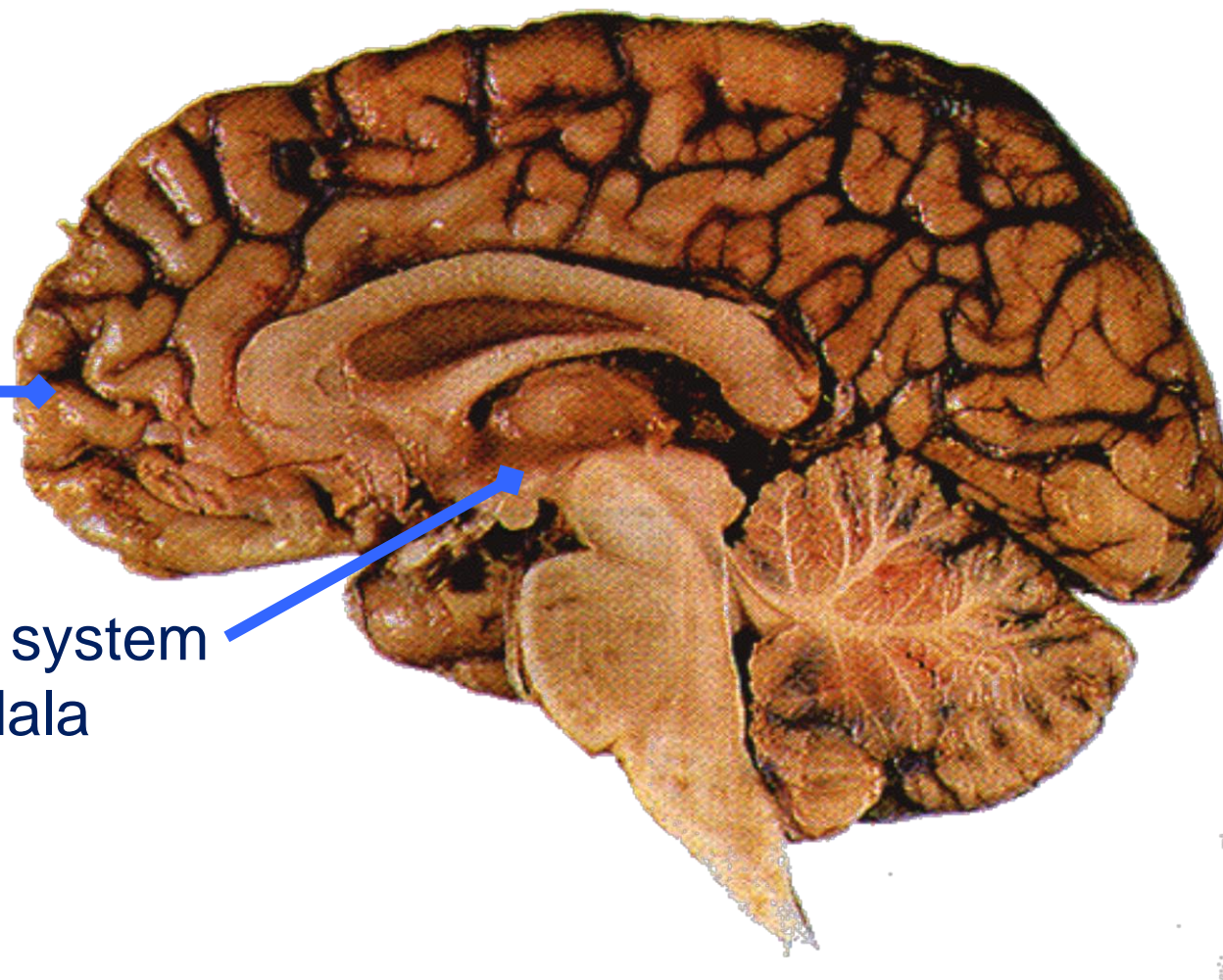
STRESS

- Automatic shutdown of pre-frontal cortex
- Not fault of parent
- Can be complicated by parents' own attachment history
- Can lead to defensiveness, feeling disconnected, hopelessness
- Loss of empathy

THE BRAIN

Pre Frontal
Cortex

Limbic system
Amygdala



TRAUMA IS CATCHING!

Secondary Trauma is –

“the natural consequent behaviours resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other.

It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person”

Kate Cairns

SECONDARY TRAUMA

- Kate Cairns suggests look out for changes in:
 - Emotional function e.g. Anger, tearful, disengaged
 - Health e.g. sleep pattern appetite, illness
 - Physiological arousal e.g. Nightmares, reduced concentration, impaired memory
 - Avoidance of engaging with the child's trauma

SECONDARY TRAUMA LOOKS LIKE:

- intrusive thoughts
- chronic fatigue
- sadness
- anger
- poor concentration
- second guessing
- detachment
- emotional exhaustion
- fearfulness
- shame
- physical illness
- Absenteeism

SECONDARY TRAUMA

Avoidance is an understandable response to stress.

It can mean:

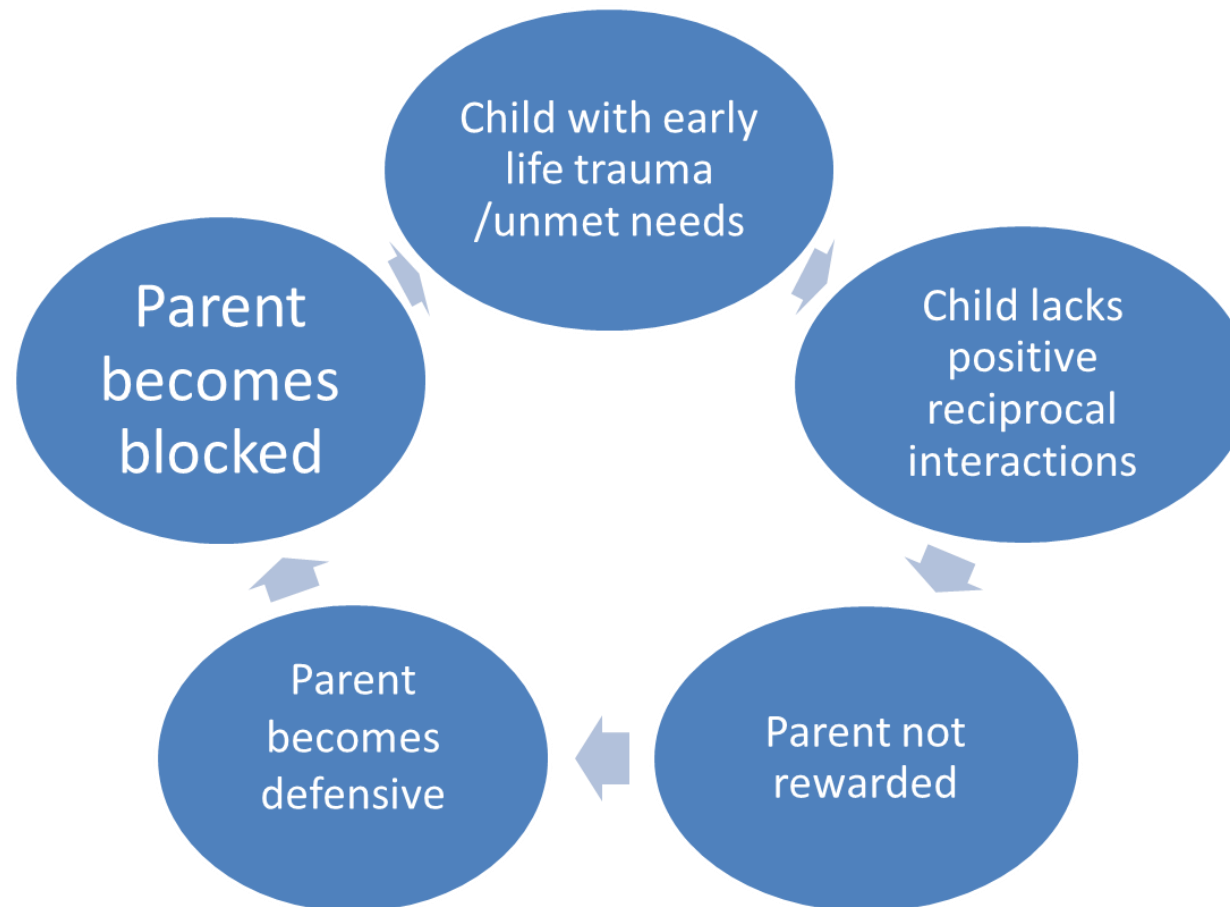
- Closing down sensitivity to the child
- Being unable to describe the child positively
- Denying aspects of the child's experience
- Avoiding talking about difficult emotions
- Avoiding situations or triggers that remind us of them

It can impact on performance and morale

BLOCKED CARE

- Blocked care is used to describe parent's emotional, physical and biological responses to children's insecure attachment behaviours resulting in parents no longer able to make a healthy connection to the child (Hughes & Baylin, 2012).
- 'Blocked care' describes 'how stress can suppress a well-meaning parent's capacity to sustain loving feelings and empathy towards his or her child'.
- It stems from a need for self-protection and defensiveness and fosters a reactive style of parenting that is narrowly focussed on the immediate behaviour and most negative aspects of the child.

BLOCKED CARE/COMPASSION FATIGUE



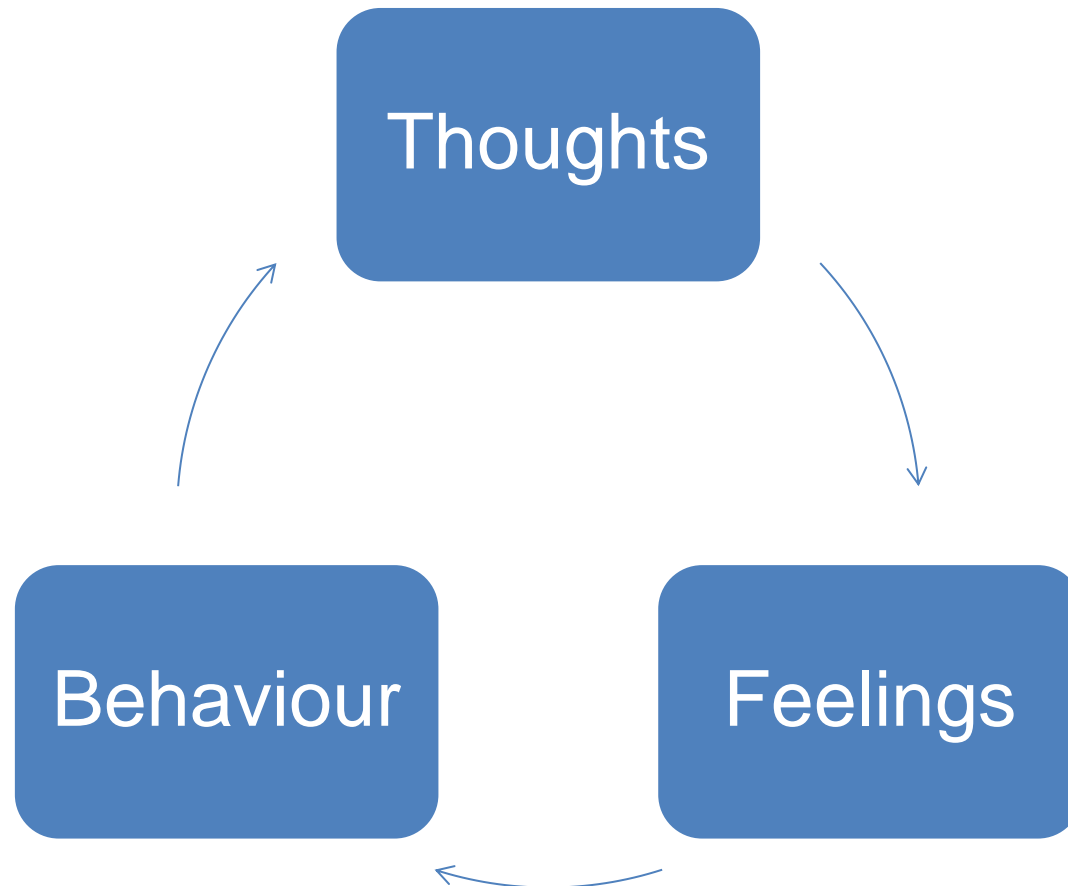
COMPONENTS OF BLOCKED CARE

- Burnout
- Primary trauma
- Secondary traumatic stress
- Inhibited Compassion satisfaction
- Compassion fatigue

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Learn about Secondary trauma and Blocked care: Be aware of impact of own feelings/thoughts on behaviour
- Stress management techniques e.g. Mindfulness
- Look after ourselves
- Use support systems: formal and informal
- Consider requesting support as a carer
- Consider therapy where necessary

THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

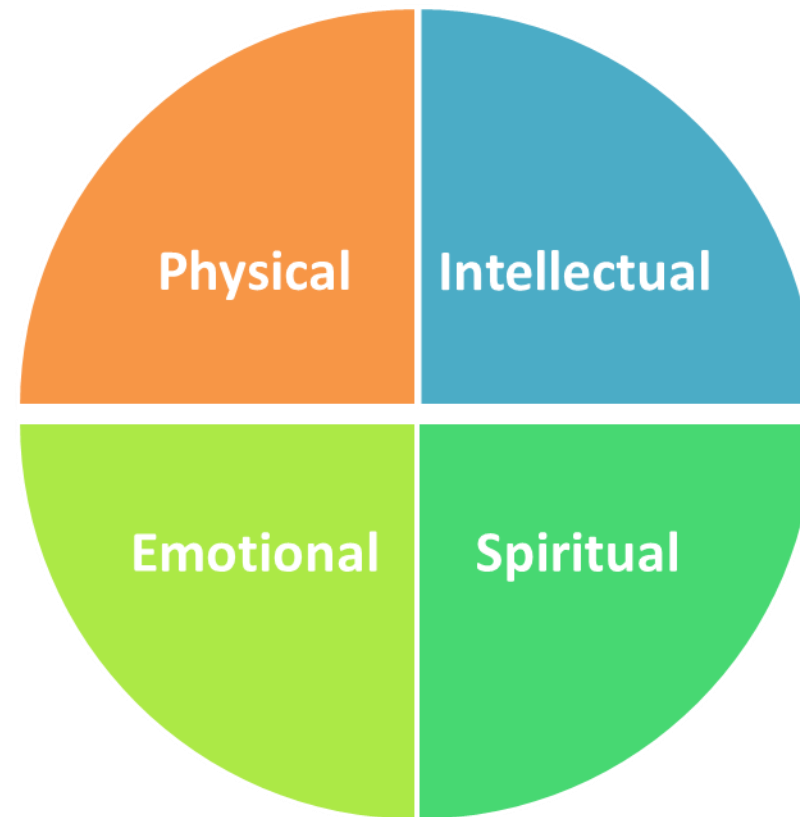


KEY MESSAGE

- Reacting is an emotional response
- Responding requires engaging our thoughts
- Stress will limit our ability to think

SELF CARE – 'PIES'

- How do you look after yourself?
- Think about the 4 dimensions and write down activities that work for you.
- Are the sections of your 'pie' the same size? Do they vary over time?



SUMMARY

- Caring for a traumatised child or a child who has suffered some early maltreatment is difficult.
- It can sometimes cause you to feel low, even depressed, possibly develop secondary trauma and cause you and your child to experience blocked care.
- It is important that if you identify with any of the issues raised in this module that you seek support.

- This course is part of a series developed by the National Adoption Service to support adopters after approval.
- These can be accessed at the National Adoption Service website.
- Please talk to your adoption support team for further information