Are Best Practices In Child Forensic Interviewing ‘Trauma-Informed’?

Patti Toth, J.D.

Seattle PD Lip Sync Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxZTjoID8
Objectives

• Discuss principles & components of adult-focused ‘trauma-informed’ interview approaches

• Compare with widely agreed best practices in child forensic interviewing to identify areas of agreement and differences

• Consider to what extent we should adopt (or substitute) adult-focused “trauma-informed” interview approaches in our child forensic interviews?

CAVEAT

• This workshop is not meant to be a comprehensive review of best practices in child forensic interviewing

• For basic understanding of current best practices in child forensic interviewing, see the following resources
Resources:

Current Best Practices In Child Forensic Interviewing

http://www.apsac.org/practice-guidelines

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children

Practice Guidelines

June 2012

www.apsac.org

http://www.apsac.org/practice-guidelines

Forensic Interviewing in Cases of Suspected Child Abuse
Additional Resources


• Articles, book chapters and other resources written by Tom Lyon:
  
  http://works.bepress.com/thomaslyon

• **Book:** *Interviewing Children: The Science of Conversation in Forensic Contexts*, by Debra Poole, Amer. Psych. Assn., June 2016,
  

• **Book:** *Handbook on Questioning Children: A Linguistic Perspective, 3rd Ed.* (2013); by Anne Graffam Walker, Ph.D. & Julie Kenniston; **ABA Center on Children and the Law**

• **Chapter 5:** “Investigative interviewing of the child,” by Thomas Lyon, in D.N. Duquette & A.M. Haralambie (Eds.) *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (3d Ed.)
Recent science suggests that ‘One protocol fits all’ approach may be too limiting.
Increasingly, interviewers may be trained in a variety of interview models or protocols and utilize a “toolbox” of evidence-based techniques, individualized to the needs of the child and the case.

“Trauma-Informed”

Why is it the New ‘Buzz Word’?

Current increased attention to sexual assault in society & the media

(esp. after allegations against Harvey Weinstein & many other famous people)
Trauma-Informed Care

• An incredibly broad concept
• “A framework of thinking and interventions that are directed by a thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological, and social effects trauma has on an individual, while recognizing that person’s constant interdependent needs for safety, connections, and ways to manage emotions and impulses”

Between Cosby and Kavanaugh –
810 High-Profile Public Figures Accused of Sexual Harassment

One Year after Weinstein, #MeToo Has Changed the Way We Handle Culture and Crisis, Temin & Company Index Finds

Comprehensive database of accused reveals scope of impact on organizations, individuals, and broader culture
“When you’re a star they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the p[arse error]

Bill Cosby
Comedian

Bill O’Reilly
TV asshole

Harvey Weinstein,
Producer

Donald Trump
So-called “president”

STOP SEXUAL ASSAULT.
NO MATTER WHO IT IS.
Here Are All the Public Figures Who’ve Been Accused of Sexual Misconduct After Harvey Weinstein

By SAMANTHA COONEY  Updated: August 30, 2018 3:16 PM ET  Originally published: November 9, 2017
There’s a Better Way to Interview Sexual Assault Survivors. We Didn’t See It Thursday.

Trauma-informed interviews help victims feel comfortable and elicit more details for investigators.

All this attention has exposed biases that are common in adult sexual assault investigations & rape cases

• Such as how victims should look & act
  – They should not drink or take drugs
  – They should not dress provocatively
• ‘She asked for it’ attitude
• These biases that often affect how victims are interviewed

99% of rape allegations from women are false.
Tracey Ulman video

• Laughter is an important component of effective TFCBT
• It can also be a good way of helping to focus professionals (esp. law enforcement) on issues related to how they interact with victims

What were you wearing?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51-hepLP8J4

We’re now paying more attention to what sexual assault and harassment really is

And the difference between truly consensual & non-consensual sexual activity
An excellent video that explains “consent” very clearly:

Tea Consent: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU

And the concern around these issues isn’t limited to adults; we’re hearing more about child sexual abuse that’s occurred for years

Examples
• Larry Nassar
• The Catholic Church
LARRY NASSAR

Aly Raisman and 140 sexual abuse victims make powerful speech at ESPYs

'We're here on this stage to present an image for the world to see, a portrait of survival, a new vision of courage'

Larry Nassar latest: 265 young women say they were abused by former USA Gymnastic doctor, judge says

It was previously believed the total number of victims was closer to 200

Andrew Buncombe New York | @AndrewBuncombe | Wednesday 31 January 2018 18:31 | 6 comments

4 shares
More than 300 accused priests listed in Pennsylvania report on Catholic Church sex abuse

By Michelle Boorstein and Gary Gates
August 14

Catholic Priests Abused 1,000 Children in Pennsylvania, Report Says

Victims of clerical sex abuse and their relatives reacted as Attorney General Josh Shapiro discussed the grand jury report at a news conference in Harrisburg. Matt Rourke/Associated Press
What do we know about the factors that influence charging decisions and jury verdicts in CSA (child sexual abuse) cases?
Case Characteristics That Predict Likelihood of Prosecution

- More severe alleged abuse
- Presence of additional evidence
- Defendant characteristics, such as being a “non-family” offender or having a prior police record
- Child victim age between 7 & 12

Does perceived emotional behavior of child affect prosecutors’ evaluations & decisions?

If prosecutors noted emotionality of child, those cases were more likely to be recommended for prosecution

Castellia, P., and Goodman, G.  
“Children’s perceived emotional behavior at disclosure and prosecutors’ evaluations,”  
Child Abuse & Neglect 38 (2014) 1521–1532
Does perceived emotional behavior of child affect prosecutors’ evaluations & decisions?

- **Visible emotional behaviors - rare in interviews**
- **Since most children don’t disclose abuse for 1st time during the forensic interview, this may affect perceived intensity of their emotional behavior**

  Castellia, P., and Goodman, G.  
  “Children’s perceived emotional behavior at disclosure and prosecutors’ evaluations,”  
  *Child Abuse & Neglect* 38 (2014) 1521–1532

Children’s perceived emotionality was generally not intense. Except for sadness, which 65% of the children were perceived to display at least “a little bit,” the majority of children were not judged to display any behavioral sign of emotions.
Relation between Evidence and Jury Verdicts

Type of evidence predicted outcomes

**Use of force:** 7 x more likely to convict

*Increased chance of acquittal if:*

**Cont’d contact w/defendant**

(3 x more likely to acquit)

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Relation between Evidence and Jury Verdicts

- Jurors may expect violence instead of seduction

- **Yet, only 10% of cases included references to grooming behaviors & other manipulation**

- There is a need for prosecutors to find ways to explain dynamics of sexual abuse

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It’s apparent that similar biases & expectations (on the part of prosecutors, judges & jurors) can affect child sexual abuse cases in the criminal justice system, making it more difficult to get criminal cases pursued in the first place, and successfully prosecuted when they are filed.

So that brings us to the current emphasis on being “Trauma-Informed”

What Does It Mean?
This video does an excellent job explaining how trauma (when you’re overwhelmed by something out of your control) may affect memory:

Trauma response causes the brain to go into survival mode and can trigger ‘fight, flight or freeze’ response

https://vimeo.com/126501517

“Trauma & the Brain”

“Trauma-Informed”

- Recognize the effects of trauma on the brain:
  - Victims may not remember everything that happened during the abuse/assault
  - Memories may be fragmented or incomplete
  - Victims may not be able to describe events in a clear chronological fashion
“Trauma-Informed”

These same effects have long been recognized as applicable to children being interviewed about suspected abuse, due to both developmental factors & trauma impacts.

There is now a lot that’s been developed regarding “trauma-informed” interviewing in adult sexual assault & domestic violence (DV) cases.
Basic Principles: “Trauma-Informed” Interviewing

• Allow the victim to “direct the narrative”

• Use the five senses to aid a victim in recalling the assault

• Take a victim-centered approach:
  – Consider your demeanor & the interview location
  – Allow a support person (adult cases)
  – Make victim feel as comfortable as possible

CFI Best Practices

• While not specifically described as “Trauma Informed,” best practices in child forensic interview (CFI) have incorporated almost all features on previous slide for a long time

• Possible exception = having an advocate present during CFI
  – Generally considered to be best practice to have only the interviewer & child in the room during an interview assuming the child is comfortable with the interviewer
  – Children much less likely to understand an advocate’s role: just one more person’s reaction for child to be concerned about
Trauma Informed Interviewing in Adult Rape & DV Cases

- Practitioners who have learned about the neurobiology of trauma from experts have tried to apply this knowledge to the development of “trauma-informed” interviewing techniques in adult rape & DV cases
- So these & other approaches are among a number of current different trainings & approaches advocating trauma-informed interviewing of adult rape and DV victims which share the same basic principles & characteristics
- With the exception of preliminary research on Utah’s TIVI, there appears to be no published field research on the use of any of these approaches (including no field research on the use of the FETI)

Recent Adult-Focused “Trauma Informed” Interviewing

Examples & Information

- US Dept. of Justice OVC Human Trafficking Guide
- International Chiefs of Police (IACP) training and other resources
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center
- End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) website w/webinars & other info
- SAKI (Sexual Assault Kit Initiative) webinars on Neurobiology of Trauma
- FETI (Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview)
OVC Definition: Forensic Interview

“A non-leading, victim sensitive, neutral, and developmentally appropriate investigative interview that helps law enforcement determine whether a crime occurred and what happened”
OVC: Trauma-Informed Interviews

• **Goals:** reduce trauma to the victim while maximizing information rec’d from the interview
• Uses an understanding of the neurobiology of trauma to gain information
• “Delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma”
• Survivor’s safety, choice, and control are prioritized
• Recognize disclosure is a process and traumatic memories are stored in the brain differently

http://www.theiacp.org/Trauma-Informed-Sexual-Assault-Investigation-Training

Approximately 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. However, around 67.5% of rape/sexual assault victims do not report their victimization to police.

The IACP is pleased to announce that the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) recently refunded the Trauma Informed Sexual Assault Investigation Training. The IACP conducted training for over 1,800 participants with 30 on-site training events held from 2014 to 2019 and we look forward to holding many more events over the next few years.
“The interview is a way to allow the victim to express what their experience was rather than just what they remember or do not remember. Capturing the trauma and the sensory and peripheral details of the event is compelling evidence.”
LOCAL RESOURCES

Rape Crisis Center:

Phone:

Contact:

Locations for Forensic Medical Examinations:

Additional Resources:

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Sexual Assault Incident Reports

TIPS

When writing a report:
- Approach every case with an open mind and without making assumptions.
- Document, preserve, and assign a tracking number for every reported sexual offense.
- Write a detailed narrative. Be careful not to use words that imply consent.
- Use the victim’s exact words and place those words in quotations.
- The supplemental report form should not be used as a substitute for a complete report.

When interviewing the victim and suspect:
- Interview, do not interrogate, the victim.
- Arrange unbiased, independent translation if English is not the first language of the victim, witness or suspect.

- Document in detail, using the victim’s exact words, any coercion, force, or threats used.
- Provide detailed descriptions of victim’s condition as observed. Clearly document the victim’s feelings as expressed by the victim.
- Document all actions and statements as reported by the victim and suspect including statements that may corroborate pre-meditation and/or grooming behavior.
- Due to the nature of trauma, it is normal for the victim not to remember all of the details of the sexual assault. These memories may unfold over time.
- Make sure the suspect is interviewed in person and allowed to speak freely about the incident.
- Victims of sexual assault may recant or decline prosecution for a number of reasons. A victim’s reluctance to participate is not reason to forgo a strong, evidence-based investigation.
- Provide the victim with resources on local counseling services early in the process and in writing if available.

When investigating:
- Do not polygraph victims.
- Identify and interview all outcry witnesses to whom the victim has disclosed.
- Collect forensic evidence up to 120 hours following a sexual assault. Additional physical evidence can be gathered and injuries documented beyond that time.
- Pursue a forensic exam to gather evidence from the suspect following local procedures.
- Be aware that suspects select vulnerable victims who may appear less credible and may be more reluctant to contact law enforcement.
- Understand that assaults often involve alcohol; it enables perpetrators to more easily commit a sexual offense while setting up the victim to be perceived as a less reliable witness.
- Schedule follow-up meetings with victims to build trust and gather additional information to further the on-going investigation.
- Keep in mind the co-occurring nature of violence against women crimes and identify and document all additional crimes (e.g. domestic violence, stalking, abduction, theft).
Additional Resources

Dr. Rebecca Campbell (BJA)

The following webinars feature Dr. Rebecca Campbell, a Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University presenting for the BJA Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Training and Technical Assistance (SAKITTA) project. She presents on the neurobiology of traumatic events, its emotional and physical manifestation, and how these processes can impact the investigation and prosecution of sexual assaults.

1. The Neurobiology of Trauma - Part 1
2. The Neurobiology of Trauma - Part 2
3. The Neurobiology of Trauma - Part 3

Dr. David Lisak (ACASA), Neurobiology of Trauma Presentation

Dr. Rebecca Campbell (Joyful Heart Foundation), Article on Fight, Flight, or Freeze Response (Tonic Immobility)

Anna Möller, Hans Peter Söndergaard, Lotti Helström, Study on Tonic Immobility During Sexual Assault
https://www.nsvrc.org/sarts/toolkit/5-2

**Sexual Assault Response**
Section Five

- Critical Issues in Responding to Reports of Sexual Assault
- Investigative Response by Law Enforcement
- Technology and Sexual Assault Cases
- Intimate Partner Sexual Violence
- Drug-Facilitated and Alcohol-Facilitated Sexual Assault
- The Use of Body-Worn Cameras in Sexual Assault Cases
- Lethality Assessment
- Strangulation
- The Sexual Assault Forensic Examination
- Closed-Circuit Television
- Victim Impact Statement
- Expert Testimony

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**How To Interact With Victims In A Way That Helps Them Feel Supported**

James W. Hopper, PhD
Instructor of Psychology
Harvard Medical School

https://www.nsvrc.org/sarts/toolkit/5-2
A trauma-informed interview is not —

- simply being nice,
- just asking non-leading and open-ended questions,
- focusing on who, what, where, why, when, and how,
- requiring a sequential narrative from the victim right away,
- expecting the victim to accurately remember peripheral details of the experience,
- requiring the victim to make a full and complete statement before they are ready or able, or,
- maintaining control of the interview.
Rather, a trauma-informed interview generally contains the following investigator strategies:

- Demonstrating genuine empathy.
- Ensuring a safe and comfortable environment (emotionally and physically); is the interview space welcoming inviting, and comfortable? Are there clear exits?
- Encouraging and allowing victims to ask questions.
- Allowing some time and space for the victim to process the experience.
- Providing the victim as much control over and during the interview as possible.
- Focusing on sensory memories.
- Avoiding asking “why” questions that can be perceived as blaming.
- Explaining why a difficult question is being asked.
- Asking the individual what they can remember.
Archived Webinar on Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI)

Also available is a 2-part webinar series by Russell Strand, entitled *Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview: A Trauma Informed Experience*. This webinar provides information on the neurobiology of trauma and the implications for successfully interviewing sexual assault victims.

**Archived Webinar on Victim Interviewing**

It is also worth mentioning that we have another archived webinar on *Effective Victim Interviewing*, presented by Roger Canaff and Joanne Archambault. While it does not specifically address the neurobiology of trauma and its implications, valuable guidance is provided for successfully interviewing victims of sexual assault with an eye toward criminal prosecution.

**Other Posted Webinars**

Dr. David Lisak provides training on *The Neurobiology of Trauma* in a webinar hosted by the Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Dr. Rebecca Campbell provides training in a webinar hosted by the National Institute of Justice, on *The Neurobiology of Sexual Assault: Implications for First Responders in Law Enforcement, Prosecution, and Victim Advocacy*.

**Published Articles**

One helpful article was written by David Lisak and Dave Harkel in *The Police Chief* magazine (2016, January). It is entitled, "Using science to increase effectiveness of sexual assault investigations."

Another helpful resource is a short article written by Dr. James W. Hopper entitled, "Why Many Rape Victims Don’t Fight or Yell." It appeared in the Washington Post on June 23, 2015, and provides an excellent and accessible summary of the neurobiology of trauma and the implications for victim behavior during a sexual assault.

Dr. Hopper also co-authored an article with Dr. David Lisak, entitled, "Why Rape and Trauma Survivors Have Fragmented and Incomplete Memories." This article was posted on Time.com, and it also provides a detailed yet accessible explanation of how trauma can impact behavior and memory. The article draws helpful parallels to the scenario where a police officer is "suddenly staring at the wrong end of a gun."

Finally, there is a short article posted on *State* that offers a practical description of the issues involved in trauma, neurobiology, memory, and police interview.

**Training Module on Victim Interviewing**

We also offer a training module in the *Online Training Institute (OLTI)* entitled, *Interviewing the Victim: Techniques Based on the Realistic Dynamics of Sexual Assault*. This module was written in 2007, and although we made some updates in 2013, we have not yet incorporated information on the neurobiology of sexual assault and the implications for conducting a trauma-informed interview. Nonetheless, we recommend this training module for the strongest possible terms, because it offers hundreds of pages with detailed information on topics such as:

- Strategic interviewing approaches based on case facts
- Planning and preparation
- Establishing rapport
- Gathering information
- Closing the interview and following up with the victim

For victims who have a disability, even more detailed guidance is provided in the training module on *Successfully Investigating Sexual Assault Victims with Disabilities*.

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**The Neurobiology of Trauma Part 1 - Archive**

Dr. Campbell presented an overview of the neurobiology of trauma as related to sexual assault. This presentation provided insight to how the body and brain respond to trauma and derives implications for improved investigation of sexual assault.

**Register Now**

In part one of the three-part series, The Neurobiology of Trauma, Dr. Campbell presented on how the brain and body react to major traumas, including sexual assault. This module has emphasized understanding victim behavior during an assault and the immediate aftermath.

**Speaker**

Dr. Rebecca Campbell

Dr. Rebecca Campbell is a Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University. She holds a Ph.D. in community psychology with a concentration in statistics, also from Michigan State University.

http://www.evawintl.org/PAGEID19/Best-Practices/Resources/Trauma-Informed

https://rticpub1.connectsolutions.com/content/connect/c1/7/en/events/event/shared/1182376668/event_landing.html? sco-id=1216305722&_charset_=utf-8
Law enforcement and victim advocacy co-present the key considerations and skills that can aid investigators conducting trauma-informed cold case sexual assault victim interviews.

https://efficientgov.com/blog/2018/05/30/saki-quick-take-5-keys-to-trauma-informed-victim-interviews/
SAKI 5 Keys (from previous slide)

All of these are considered best practices in the CFI field (w/modifications to be developmentally appropriate)

• **Eliciting Sensory Details:** “What did you see?” “What did you hear?” Etc.
• **Emotional Response:** “How did you feel (OR “what were you thinking…”) when ___ happened?”
• **Physiological Effects:** “What did you do/feel after?” “How do you feel now?”

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**DOs and DON’Ts**

• **Don't** interrupt the victim
• **Do** use their words (e.g., “rape” versus “sexual assault”)
• **Don't** zero in on discrepancies
• **Don’t** force victims to prematurely try to piece together fragmented memories
• **Don’t** interrogate
• **Don’t** take a judgmental, parental tone
• **Do** make sure they have eaten and slept
• **Don’t** give opinions in the initial report
SAKI DOs & DON’Ts

All of these have long been considered best practices in CFI

https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/public/interview_sexual_assault_victims/
TIVI: Trauma-Informed Victim Interview (Utah)

1. **Set the Tone** - explain interviewer & V advocate roles, purpose of interview, importance of sharing everything, OK to say “I don’t know”

2. **Listen to the Victim** - *shut up and listen* to the victim’s full account of what happened; don’t interrupt; be patient; use silence as a tool; ask sensory & feeling Qs

3. **Explain the Process**

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Preliminary research in Utah suggests the TIVI has resulted in increased rates of successful prosecutions & increased victim satisfaction

https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/public/interview_sexual_assault_victims/
So, that brings us to the “FETI”

What is it?

If you do an internet search the following slides show some of the results you may come up with

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**FETI**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In mathematics, in particular numerical analysis, the FETI method (finite element tearing and interconnecting) is an iterative substructuring method for solving systems of linear equations from the finite element method for the solution of elliptic partial differential equations, in particular in computational mechanics. In each iteration, FETI requires the solution of a Neumann problem in each substructure and the solution of a coarse problem. The simplest version of FETI with no preconditioner (or only a diagonal preconditioner) in the substructure is scalable with the number of substructures but the condition number grows polynomially with the number of elements per substructure. FETI with a more expensive preconditioner consisting of the solution of a subdomain problem in each substructure is scalable with the number of substructures and its condition number grows only polynomially with the number of elements per substructure. The coarse space in FETI consists of the nullspace on each substructure.

See also

- Balancing domain decomposition
- PETSc

References

**FETI**

In mathematics, in particular numerical analysis, the FETI method is an iterative substructuring method for solving systems of linear equations from the finite element method for the solution of elliptic partial differential equations, in particular in computational mechanics. In each iteration, FETI requires the solution of a Neumann problem in each substructure and the solution of a coarse problem. The simplest version of FETI with no preconditioner in the substructure is scalable with the number of substructures but the condition number grows polynomially with the number of elements per substructure. FETI with a preconditioner consisting of the solution of a Dirichlet problem in each substructure is scalable with the number of substructures and its condition number grows only polylogarithmically with the number of elements per substructure. The coarse space in FETI consists of the nullspace on each substructure.
**feti**

A fine **pasta** thought to have originated in the Calabria region of Italy. It is **cultivated** from only the **choicest** of women.

"**Gianluigi!** What is that delicious ingredient in my meal?"

"**Feti! Prima Feti!**"

I want to wish you a very **feti**, I want to wish you a very **feti**, I want to wish you a very **feti**, from the bottom of my **feti**!

#feti #prima feti #feti regazze #secunda feti #non-feti

by **IHEARTFETI** February 17, 2010

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**Feti**

A teenager who is **pre-occupied** with trivial things such as material possessions, celebrities, the opposite sex, and current fads and fashions. They usually have a low **literacy** rate, and little to no self-respect or respect of others. They may or may not smoke, and many **feti** remain feti long into adulthood.

"Good god, I went on a date with this **feti**, and he wanted for me to give him head! What a feti thing to do!"

"That girl over there, the one with the fake-tan, **bleached hair**, and **velour** tracksuit, looks like a complete feti!"

by **Kate Dalgleish** June 04, 2005
FETI: Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview

• One of the most well-known recent ‘trauma-informed’ adult-focused interviewing protocols
• Developed by Russell Strand, former US Army CID
• Strong proponent for widespread use of the FETI
• Embraced by victim advocates, who appreciate that it emphasizes not expecting adult victims to be able to provide ‘typical’ information expected from witnesses to crime

Russell Strand
https://www.strandsquared.com/
https://www.certifiedfeti.com/
http://www.evawintl.org/

We aim to address trauma

Strand² Squared
A Paradigm Shift Solution

https://www.strandsquared.com/

WE STRIVE AND WORK TOWARDS:

Our Mission: is to dramatically shift the cultural paradigm in order to improve societies response to individuals who have experienced trauma, victimization and other complex experiences.
CLICK HERE: AN AMAZING COLLECTION OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE TOOLKITS

NOTE: Here is a tool to get you started— that said, we are currently working on bringing all of the TIC tools together and updating.

This tools says to use “motivational interviewing”, we do not believe motivational interviewing is trauma informed because it is not rooted in the neuroscience. It also is manipulative in nature because its intention is to motivate someone to do something that they don’t want to do.

On Interviews:

Here at Strand² Squared LLC, we focus on trauma informed interview methodology, specifically Certified FETI, because we believe having access to “Justice and Voice” are essential to the healing process after a traumatic experience:

We believe:
Trauma informed interviews are not simply

• The use of open-ended questions
• Being nice and/or simply building rapport
The Certified FETI Program

Certified FETI is the only interview training endorsed by the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview creator, Russell W. Strand. It is a science-based methodology designed to educate professionals to use empathic listening and brain-based cues to facilitate collection of psychophysiological evidence from those that have experienced trauma or high stress. Certified FETI accurately captures an individual’s high stress or trauma enabling others to understand the experience.

Certified FETI requires practitioners to complete a rigorous certification process and meet an ongoing high standard of accountability providing others access to a worldwide database of certified FETI professionals. The certification process identifies professionals who have obtained the knowledge, skills and abilities to properly utilize the Certified FETI methodology.

THE STANDARD IN

SCIENCE-BASED
TRAUMA INTERVIEWING

Certified FETI® is the founding and governing body of the official Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview, a science and practice-based interviewing methodology informed by the latest research on the neurobiology of trauma and memory.

START YOUR CERTIFICATION

https://www.certifiedfeti.com/

What is FETI® (Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview)?

The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI®) provides interviewers with a science-informed interviewing framework that maximizes opportunities for information collection and accurately documents the participant’s experience in a neutral, equitable, and fair manner.

LEARN MORE ABOUT FETI  WHO IS FETI FOR?
The Interviewer

We train individuals of all disciplines who interview in some manner or fashion. It is important to note that FETI is for interviewing only.

Most of the interviewers we train work in the following areas:

- Law Enforcement
- Higher Education
- Criminal Prosecution
- Advocacy
- Government
- Journalism
- Healthcare
- Family Services

The Participant (Interviewee)

The most amazing part about FETI is since it is a science-based, impartial interviewing methodology, we can use it on any participant, no matter their background or trauma.

FETI focuses on the interview experience

Examples:
- INVESTIGATION
- PUBLICATION
- POLICY
“A Conversation with the Brainstem”

• Subtitle for earlier FETI presentations
• Can you do ‘trauma-informed’ interviews without being “rooted in the neuroscience”? 
• Strand seems to be saying “no” very strongly
A Closer Examination of the FETI

• Since it is arguably the most widespread & well-known “trauma-informed” approach
• And since the developer Russell Strand sometimes appears to support its use in child forensic interviews, although there have been mixed messages from him

Is FETI a good tool for interviewing children as well as adults?

“I believe FETI is an excellent approach for interviewing any victim or witness of a traumatic or highly stressful experience, & this includes both adults & adolescents, as well as younger children (i.e., under the age of 12). FETI has yielded some amazing results with children, but research & collaboration with child forensic interview professionals is needed before offering a wholesale recommendation for this practice. I believe child forensic interviewers must follow policy guidance & interview protocols of their respective agency & great caution in terms of deviation should be used when interviewing children under 6 years of age.”
Trauma informed interviews include...

From a Recent Presentation by Russell Strand
(Though the “RATAC” protocol was revised & is no longer being taught by those who developed it)

The Applicability of the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview with Young Children

Children who have been traumatized through abuse or any other high stress or trauma experience are often impacted by that experience(s) in a very substantial and meaningful manner.

Understanding and application of the science of the neurobiology of trauma and trauma memory is essential to conduct proper interviews of children.

Decades of research into appropriate strategies and child forensic interview protocols have greatly enhanced our ability to communicate with young children. Most of the research and development of child abuse interview protocols were developed long before our awareness of the neurobiology of trauma and understanding of trauma memory.

It’s time to take another look at scientific research and review current policies and protocols concerning the forensic interviews of young children. We can do better, and if we can— we should.

The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) has been recognized as a promising best practice working with adults and adolescents who experience high stress and trauma. This presentation will examine and include a discussion on the appropriateness of use of FETI with young children.
A Closer Examination of the FETI

The following slides contain information from the websites for "strandsquared" for "Certified FETI"

Strand Contends

• Current interview protocols (CFI?) pre-date current understanding of neuroscience & the impact of high stress & trauma on memory
• Most interview protocols require a narrative in a sequential or logical way
• Heavy reliance on “Who” “What” “When” “Where”
• Many professionals believe “being nice” or focusing primarily on open-ended Qs will make the response “trauma informed”
• “Being nice and utilization of open-ended questions are a good start but do not fully qualify the approach as trauma informed.”
**Strand² Squared LLC only endorses** Certified FETI as a “trauma Informed” interview methodology. We are working diligently to review research on other methodologies and practices to continue to improve our collective response to individuals who have experienced high stress and trauma.

**Certification Overview**

There are 3 levels of certification you can achieve on our platform.

- **Basic**
  - Course: In-person training
  - Introduction to the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
  - Practical Application of the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
  - Evaluation (on-site)
  - Blue Interview Submissions
  - Exam (online)
  - Blue Exam

  **Benefits**
  - Access to basic curriculum
  - Listed on public directory
  - Ability to present FETI training

- **Intermediate**
  - Course: In-person training
  - Interactive Learning of the FETI Silver syllabus
  - Skill Building (online)
  - Interactive Application of the FETI Methodology
  - Evaluation (on-site)
  - Silver Interview Submissions
  - Exam (online)
  - Silver Exam

  **Benefits**
  - Access to additional curriculum
  - Listed on public directory
  - Enhanced access to faculty

- **Advanced**
  - Course: In-person training
  - Advanced Application of the FETI Methodology
  - Innovation Submission (on-site)
  - Expansion of personal interest into the FETI Methodology
  - Evaluation (on-site)
  - Gold Interview Submissions
  - Retract and Exam (on-line)
  - Gold Exam

  **Benefits**
  - Access to all curriculum
  - Enhanced advising on public directory
  - Ability to apply for specialty assignment

www.certifiedfeti.com  Copyright © Varactus/PAC
Basic Certification Overview

**OVERVIEW:** Basic Certification provides you with the full framework for the official Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI®). When you complete the full certification, you should be able to conduct a FETI® consistent with the framework and guidelines presented in our methodology.

Total cost for Certified FETI® Blue Certification: $2,090 ($400 annual recertification)

**COURSES:**

1. Introduction to the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
2. Practical Application of the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
3. Interview Submissions for Evaluation and the Blue Exam

**BENEFITS:**

- Full profile in the Certified FETI® Directory
- Lifetime access to Blue curriculum (including updates)
- Lifetime free attendance at Introduction to Certified FETI®
- Authorization to present the Certified FETI® Primer within your organization

*To receive Blue Certification benefits, you must maintain active certification.*

Intermediate Certification Overview

**OVERVIEW:** Intermediate Certification provides attendees with a much more in-depth study of the Certified FETI Framework™ along with a deep dive into the neuroscience of trauma and memory.

Total cost for Certified FETI® Intermediate Certification: $1,495 ($895 annual recertification)

**COURSES:**

1. Interactive Learning and Application of the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
2. Silver Interview Evaluations and Intermediate Certification Exam

**BENEFITS:**

- Full profile in the Certified FETI® Directory
- Lifetime access to Silver curriculum (including updates)
- Authorization to present the Certified FETI® Primer outside your organization

*To receive Silver Certification benefits, you must maintain active certification.*
Advanced Certification Overview

OVERVIEW: Completing Advanced Certification shows Certified FETI® faculty that you have achieved the skills and knowledge that are needed to successfully work as a Certified FETI® instructor. In fact, after certification, you apply to a host of Certified FETI® positions from interview evaluator to Personal Experience Interviewer. The Gold courses put your Certified FETI® interviewing abilities to the test, but will also require you to innovate and add on to what you’ve learned while on your path to certification.

Total cost for Certified FETI® Gold Certification: $3,695 ($1,400 annual recertification)

COURSES:
1. Advanced Certified FETI® Live training
2. Innovation Submission
3. Gold Interview Evaluations and Advanced Certification Exam
4. Advanced Retreat

BENEFITS:
- Enhanced profile in the Certified FETI® Directory
- Lifetime access to Gold curriculum (including updates)
- Authorization to present the Certified FETI® Orientation Course
- Ability to apply to become a Certified FETI® consultant, evaluator, instructor or Personal Experience Interviewer

To receive Gold Certification benefits, you must maintain active certification.

Trauma Informed Interviews Include:

• Demonstrating genuine empathy
• Ensuring that interview location is neutral, comfortable, convenient, & safe - physically and emotionally
• Facilitating disclosure of the experience
• Encouraging and allowing the victim to do most (90%) of the talking
• Allowing time and space for the victim to process the experience
Trauma Informed Interviews **Include:**

- Providing the **victim** as much **control** over and **during the interview** as possible
- Conducting **progressive interviews** when appropriate
- Having a **working knowledge of trauma-related memory & impact of trauma** including freeze, flee, fight, tonic immobility, collapsed immobility, mental defeat, dissociation & other normal reactions to trauma

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**Trauma Informed Interviews **Should****

- Focus on **brain-based cues** such as **“tell me more”** & use of sensory questions
- Concentrate on **central rather than peripheral details**
- Collect information about **context** of the experience – **before, during & after**, and about impact of the experience
- **Avoid** asking **“why”** questions
- **Be recorded**
Comparison w/CFI Best Practices

• CFI best practices incorporate almost all of what’s listed on the previous 3 slides as to what a trauma-informed interview is and what it “should” do

• The one item child forensic interviewers might benefit from is “having a working knowledge of trauma-related memory & impact of trauma including freeze, flee, fight, tonic immobility, collapsed immobility, mental defeat, dissociation…”

• But, recognize that child victims may or may not exhibit these characteristics

Trauma Informed Interviews Avoid

• Re-traumatizing the victim through actions, improper questions, victim blaming, slut shaming or demeanor

• Judging victim behaviors or actions

• Focusing primarily on peripheral details and the primary use of who, what, where, why, when and how type questions

• In-depth interviews following acute trauma – we advocate waiting until after 1-2 sleep cycles
Trauma Informed Interviews **Avoid**

- **Focusing on a narrative or sequence** of events
- **Asking “Who/What/Where/When/Why/How” questions**
- Telling the person “it is not their fault”
- Telling the person **“tell the truth”**
- **Building rapport** as it may come off as “small talk” or “unauthentic”

**Comparison w/CFI Best Practices**

- CFI best practices avoid what’s listed on the first slide as to what a trauma-informed interview should **AVOID**
- The 4 highlighted items on the preceding slide are contrary to existing research regarding best practices in child forensic interviewing
So What Exactly is the FETI?

The following slide shows the questions that make up the FETI, from numerous presentations given by Russell Strand - found on the EVAWI website

A Paradigm Shift...
Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview

- Acknowledge their trauma/pain/difficult situation
  - What are you able to tell me about experience?
    - Tell me more about … or that…
  - Help me understand your thoughts when…?
  - What are you able to remember about…the 5 senses
  - What were your reactions to this experience
    - Physically
    - Emotionally
  - What was the most difficult part of this experience for you?
  - What, if anything, can’t you forget about your experience?
  - Clarify other information and details…after you facilitate all you can about the “experience” (FETI Funnel)
  - Closure – prep for future information sharing
“FETI Funnel”

- Shown on the next slide, from Mr. Strand’s presentations

- The concept of a ‘funnel approach’ to questions/prompts during an interview, as well as extensive use of “Tell me more…” prompts has been an integral part of best practices in child forensic interviewing for a long time
Despite the robust body of research and experience supporting best practices in CFI, some have argued that we should use the FETI & other trauma-informed adult-focused approaches to interview children.

So should we abandon our current CFI protocols & start using the FETI or other “trauma-informed” techniques developed for use in adult sexual assault & DV cases?

*My opinion is “no.” We should pay attention to, learn from, and support the work being done by our colleagues involved in adult sexual assault & DV cases, but it would not be a good idea to replace the CFI protocols to which we have already devoted much time & ongoing effort.*
Best Practices in Child Forensic Interviewing

- NICHD field research published since end of 1990s
- Influenced everyone & led to changes in understanding of best practices
- This research continues & has inspired others
- Nearly 2 decades of extensive laboratory and field research informs CFI best practices

Michael E. Lamb, Y. Orbach, I. Hershkowitz, P. W. Esplin & D. Horowitz
“A structured forensic interview protocol improves the quality and informativeness of investigative interviews with children: A review of research using the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol”

A Paradigm Shift...
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  - Clarify other information and details...after you facilitate all you can about the “experience” (FETI Funnel)
  - Closure – prep for future information sharing
Concerns

• Should we start interviews by telling children we’re sorry this happened to them?

The first thing = “Acknowledge their trauma”

• FETI training recommends that interviewers start by saying something such as, “I’m sorry this happened to you.”
• Such a statement during a CFI would likely be seen as compromising the objectivity of the interviewer since it could be argued it reflects a bias
• The book on the following slide recounts what happened in the 1980s & 1990s, when “Believe the Children” was a common refrain & how it led to skepticism about the results of interviews w/children at that time
Publisher:
Public Affairs
August 2015

Tell Me What Happened: Questioning Children About Abuse, 2nd Edition
Michael E. Lamb, Deirdre A. Brown, Irit Hershkowitz, Yael Orbach, Phillip W. Esplin
ISBN: 978-1-118-88124-8
July 2018
Wiley-Blackwell
Revised NICHD Protocol

- NEP before instructions
- Interviewers express interest in children's experiences, & echo, acknowledge & explore child's expressed feelings
- Provide positive reinforcement of child's efforts
- Communicate empathy re: expressed feelings about interview experience

““I really want to know you better.””
““You say you were [sad/angry/etc.].””
““I see/ I understand what you’re saying.””
““Tell me more about [the feeling].””
““Thank you for sharing that with me.””
““You’re really helping me understand.””
““I know [it’s a long interview/there are lots of questions/other difficulties the child expressed].””
Concerns About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs

**AVOID** Asking

**Who/What/Where/When/Why/How** questions?

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Concerns About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs

Open-ended use of “WH” prompts, especially when they reference **actions** described by the child, such as “**Tell me what happened**…” prompts, have been shown repeatedly by research to be especially beneficial in child forensic interviews

Ahern, Andrews, Stolzenberg & Lyon
“The productivity of wh- prompts in child forensic interviews,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (Nov. 2015)
Andrews, Ahern, Stolzenberg, & Lyon
**Most Productive Wh- Prompts**

- **“Happen” prompts:** referring to a sequence of events that take place over time
  - What happened?
  - What happened next?
  - Then what happened?
  - How did it happen?
- **Dynamic prompts:** referencing actions, often include the word “do”
  - E.g., What did he do?

**Concerns About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs**

- Advice to **AVOID** focusing on “a narrative or sequence of events” and to **AVOID** “building rapport” suggests that interviewers should avoid **Narrative Event Practice**, a critical component of best practice child forensic interviewing.
- This advice ignores the substantial & uncontroverted research evidence about the benefits of **Narrative Event Practice**.
Narrative Event Practice (NEP)

Explore a neutral non-abusive event from start to finish

- Elicits **episodic memory** (rather than script memory)
- Start w/: “Tell me everything that happened from the beginning to the end when _____.”
Narrative Event Practice

**Purposes:**
- **Teach** child type of prompts (open-ended) & type of responses (narratives w/lots of details) expected for rest of interview – child & interviewer practice this pattern
- **Engage** the child/Develop rapport
- **Assess** child’s use & understanding of language/Developmental level/Willingness to answer questions

Clear Scientific Evidence

- **When NEP is included in interviews, children’s later reports about their abuse experiences during the substantive phase are longer (contain more details) & more accurate**
- 1st published article in a peer reviewed scientific journal demonstrating this: 1997
- Many subsequent field research studies since then have been published and all support & strengthen the conclusion about the benefits of NEP in CFIs
"Desirable" Practice Narratives

Average number of details per open-ended prompt was almost 5 times higher

Done correctly, NEP should not come across as “small talk” or “unauthentic”

- Interviewer should exhibit genuine interest in the child (as more than just a victim)
- Possibilities for how to introduce NEP to an older child:
  
  Before we talk about the reason you’re here...

  - I want you to know how I ask questions and want you to answer, OR

  - It might be helpful for you to know how I ask questions, so I’m going to ask you to tell me about your morning.

Possibility for how to introduce NEP to a young child:

I have a different way of asking questions that I want to practice with you ...

Think back to this morning when you first opened your eyes ... and tell me everything that happened from when you woke up until ....
Concerns About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs

- **FETI:** AVOID asking for promise to tell the truth
- Research & experience suggest that there are important reasons to ask most children to promise to tell the truth

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Why include the promise?

Research shows:

Eliciting a child’s promise to tell truth increases honesty, decreases lies

*Even if* child cannot demonstrate understanding of the difference between telling the truth & telling a lie

Thomas D. Lyon, Lindsay C. Malloy, Jodi A. Quas, & Victoria Talwar

*Coaching, Truth Induction, and Young Maltreated Children’s False Allegations and False Denials*

79 CHILD DEVELOPMENT 914 (2008)
Other Reasons?

- Reinforces seriousness
- Responses can give you valuable information, such as a child revealing having been coached to lie

Question:
“Do you promise that you will tell the truth?”

Child’s Response:
“I can’t.”
Overall Concern
About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs

The trauma involved in the majority of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases isn’t the same as the trauma experienced in many overtly violent adult assaults (because of the grooming & gradual ‘seduction’ process employed by offenders)

The Tale

- This HBO movie is excellent & tells the powerful true story about sexual abuse experienced by a 13 year old
- It makes clear how offenders manipulate children into believing they are willing participants

https://thetalemovie.com/
https://www.hbo.com/movies/the-tale
“It was not that I suddenly remembered more, because I always remembered everything. It was like a light went on in a part of the room that I had kept slightly dim.”

“Most child sexual abuse... tends to be associated with grooming, & grooming is designed to gradually break down the child’s resistance to sexual contact that, were it to be engaged in from the outset, would be very stressful & potentially terrifying to the child. Indeed, most perpetrators of child sexual abuse are systematically training the child to dissociate from the inappropriate, strange, unwanted & potentially frightening behaviors, sensations & emotions associated with such betrayal & exploitation. Thus most (but certainly not all) child sexual abuse tends not to be associated with the states of intense fear that result in sudden fear circuitry activation...”
The strategies revealed in the books and websites described on the following 5 slides are often employed by successful child molesters
Pedophile playbooks exposed

Published: Tuesday, November 16th 2010, 10:58 am PDT

JONESBORO, AR (KAIT) - "Stranger Danger" is something we tell our children to say to keep them from being harmed by a predator, but in this day and time, those two words just aren't good enough. "How to" manuals are now available on the internet to help child predators turn their desires into a parent's worst nightmare.

A guide titled "The Pedophile's Guide to Love and Pleasure" was sold as a Kindle reader e-book download from Amazon.com, but after public outcry, the manual was quickly pulled.

"It's the most disgusting thing I've ever seen," says family counselor Alina Gestasi. "I don't understand why anyone would write this. It's something that in every way, he is not acknowledging the victim." says Gestasi.

The author of the e-book, Philip Greaves II, disagrees. "I don't think it's always bad for the child, but I do think it's always confusing for the adult."

The Pedophage's Guide to Love and Pleasure isn't the only manual out there. Another manual titled "How to Practice Child Love," has recently been removed from the internet by police. It consisted of more than 170 pages showing watchers how to make the transition into abusers.

Jonesboro Detective Ernest Ward, with the Internet Crimes Division, says he can't believe anyone would publish this kind of information. "I believe in the power of the press and freedom of speech as long as it's not hurting someone," says Ward. "But, when it's hurting a child, I don't like that. It crosses the line. That's my personal opinion.

"We see these people watching child pornography and downloading child pornography," continued Detective Ward. "They are building toward something, and that's usually to have sex with a child. The target age is between 2 and 8."

This particular manual is broken down into sections with great detail including where to find a child. The author writes of four important advantages when looking for a child to molest or have sex with. He lists the advantage of owning an animal, adding that rabbits and puppies attract little girls best. He writes about the advantage of searching in poor communities, finding sad and lonely children, and using schools as starting points.

"This is ridiculous," said a mother outraged over this manual for pedophiles. Several years ago her 8-year-old daughter was molested and raped by a pedophile living in their neighborhood. She thought he was a family friend. "To this day I look in the mirror, and ask 'How come I didn't see it?'"

She didn't see it because pedophiles are smooth operators. They know the tricks, and they know a vulnerable child when they see one.

"It's not going to happen to my child, that's what everybody thinks," says Detective Ward. "We have to be active in our kids' lives and know who they're interacting with."

How to practice child love

How to practice child love is a controversial book on the topic of pedophile by Richard Creech, writing under the nickname The Mule. The book was never published and is distributed online in PDF or HTML formats. The PDF version of the book has 170 pages, however, all pages have big pictures of little girls collected from the internet (not CP), thus increasing page count by about 30%.

The book came to attention of police, FBI, and was featured in Fox News. On September 20, 2013, Creech was sentenced to 18 months in prison followed by 10 years of supervised release for distribution of child pornography. His writings were found to have included this book.¹

References

This filing was once in a fow sale until someone enlightened enacted his ban. Why? Why is the wrong guideline how to fit in a gentle sexual relationship with a child? The book is supposed to be a team of authors, who is the author under the nickname Hula, a child psychologist, a pedagogue and a socializing specialist, "Experienced Child Guardian", and an experienced child abuse assessor who has not yet been captured. I would like to doubt the involvement of the psychologist and the educator, and if my doubt is wrong, I doubt at least my mental health. The book is divided into three parts. The first, introductory, deals with the theory of child sexuality, social conventions and risks. This can be denied here, except perhaps over-estimating the need for sex in children. Yes, children are often "sexually curious," but it is a mistake to compare it with the need for real sexual interaction with an adult. Disconcerting is when the baby is ripe for swallowing the seed - when it begins to accept a semi-liquid diet. I leave aside how old children experience sexual
How Trauma May Affect a Child’s Brain

- Influences on brain development will be different for each child
- Changes in the brain due to trauma can improve over time
- Especially when children experience safe, stable, and supportive environments after trauma

“How can trauma affect the brain?” by Katie McLaughlin
Stress & Development Lab, University of Washington

The way trauma influences brain development will be different for each child. Just as each child will have different emotional responses to a traumatic event, the way that the brain responds to trauma will also vary across children. The following regions of the brain are the most likely to change following a traumatic event.

“How can trauma affect the brain?” by Katie McLaughlin
Stress & Development Lab, University of Washington
Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Developed by Drs. Anthony Mannarino, Judith Cohen & Esther Deblinger

An evidence-based treatment that has been evaluated and refined during the past 25 years to help children and adolescents recover after trauma

Trauma Narrative

• A critical part of TF-CBT
• Talking about a traumatic experience helps organize memories & feelings into a more manageable & understandable psychological 'package'
Autobiographical Memory

- Important to a child’s ability to describe an experienced abusive event
- A form of episodic memory which permits a child to think about specific past events

**Components:**
- Holds personal relevance
- Is located in a particular place and time
- Can be expressed verbally, and
- Indicates autonoetic awareness
Autonoetic Awareness

“The capacity to be aware of one's own existence as an entity in time; the human ability to mentally place ourselves in the past, in the future, or in counterfactual situations, and to thus be able to examine our own thoughts. Our sense of self affects our behavior, in the present, past and future; the capacity to recursively introspect on one's own subjective experience through time, that is, to perceive the continuity in one's identity from the past to the present and into the future.”

Autobiographical Memory

• “Arguably, children do not demonstrate episodic memory abilities until about 4 years of age, as they are not capable of thinking back to specific past events prior to that age”

• Being older and scoring higher in cognitive functioning was related to fewer inaccuracies in memory retrieval about a stressful medical event
Some Highlights & Conclusions

- Children who experience sexual and/or physical abuse might retain a **better** memory of the event as opposed to child neglect
- *1 study found that severity of PTSD symptoms was positively associated with memory accuracy*
- Frequency of abuse associated with greater proportion of **omission** errors
- *Abuse severity and greater legal involvement predicted fewer **commission** errors*
- Maternal support following disclosure was the most significant predictor of memory accuracy

Some Highlights & Conclusions

- Forensic interviewing protocols need to be “trauma-informed” and take into account the impact of trauma on the child
- *Impact of trauma on memory systems is important to consider in relation to autobiographical memory development and forensic interviewing*
- However, **developmental differences** in memory retrieval are equally important to examine when considering the forensic implications of preschool children reporting abuse
Practice Implications

- Important to utilize a trauma-informed response for both children being interviewed as potential victims, as well as non-offending caregivers
- Targeted education and support services for mothers & other primary caregivers could be offered by the local CAC & corresponding MDT
- Can strengthen a child’s ability to accurately recall
- May strengthen caregiver’s ability to support their child throughout the investigation & prosecution process & assist in child’s recovery

Overall Concern About Applying FETI Principles to CFIs

The FETI & other adult-focused “trauma informed” approaches do not appear to take developmental considerations into account when interviewing children
Language is the source of misunderstandings

Antoine de Saint-Exupery
The Little Prince

All grown-ups were once children... but only a few of them remember it.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery
The Little Prince
FETI questions that are developmentally inappropriate, grammatically complex, & unlikely to be understood by a child:

- What are you able to tell me about your experience?
- Help me understand your thoughts when...
- What were your reactions to this experience?
- What was the most difficult part of this experience for you?
- What if anything can’t you forget about your experience?
Where's the research?

• There is no systematic research (yet?) on the FETI or other adult-focused ‘trauma-informed’ interview approaches
• Unlike our field, where we now have an impressive body of scientifically rigorous research (both field and laboratory) that has led to the development of systematic research-based interview guidelines for CFIs, which continue to be revised based on ongoing research

Overall Concern
About Using Adult-Focused Trauma Informed Approaches to Interview Children

Where's the Research?
Until & unless there is field research showing the efficacy & superiority of these approaches in child interviews, they should not be used in place of established child forensic interviewing protocols
What can we learn & apply from the work being done re: adult-focused “trauma-informed” interviewing?

• Traumatic experiences that are associated with (higher degrees of) fear, stress or emotional arousal can be associated w/poor encoding of contextual & time-sequence information

• Be careful w/sequencing prompts & others such as time segmentation prompts that they don't implicitly suggest that the child should remember, when perhaps such sequence info was not encoded & isn’t available for retrieval – this is where making sure to do a good job w/the ‘don’t guess’ instruction can be esp. impt.

What else could be done (to learn how CFIs can do better at being ‘trauma-informed’)?

• Perhaps future research could look specifically at impacts of fear/stress/arousal during abuse & other traumatic experiences on memory encoding & retrieval

• Possibly try to compare sexual abuse that occurs after a long period of grooming (in which potential fear and stress responses were systematically averted by the perpetrator) vs. sexual abuse experiences for which the child was not manipulatively "prepared" and in which surprise/fear/distress were high
Conclusions

• Many “trauma-informed” techniques already incorporated in CFI best practices

• Because of grooming & manipulation, CSA often does not involve states of intense fear that result in sudden fear circuitry activation, thus the dynamics (& trauma impacts) are not the same as in adult sexual assault & DV cases

• Developmental considerations are crucial when interviewing children, and are not evident in adult-focused approaches

• Child forensic interviewers should be aware of the impact of trauma on a child’s brain & how it might affect memory & the interview - be prepared to add to your toolbox & further customize interviews based on this information
Thank you for all you do!

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