

CARE FOR  
**Traumatized children :**  
TRAINING FOR FOSTER PARENTS

# INTRODUCTION

*Educate and care for traumatized children*

- A training in group / interactively
- Initially intended to be used for fosterparents, for adoptive parents, (biological) parents and other primary caregivers (educators in institutions)
- Developed in America by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

# INTRODUCTION

*Educate and care for traumatized children*

- The training program is edited en translated to the Dutch care practice by Leony Coppens & Carina Van Knegten
- Since 2012 also used in the Netherlands to educate foster families
- In our organisation we implemented the training since last year

# INTRODUCTION

*Educate and care for traumatized children*

- Contents 8 modules
- 2 books : handbook trainers  
workbook carers
- Ideal group size 12
- Led by 2 trained foster care supervisors
- Preferably assisted by a fosterparent who is experienced in caring for children with trauma

# INTRODUCTION

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- Each module has a similar structure :
  - 1) theoretical explanation of the theme
  - 2) case study (workbook)
  - 3) application of the theoretical knowledge on the basis of the particular situations in the training group

# WHY a traumatraining?

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- Many children placed in care have had traumatic experiences
- The burden of these trauma weighs heavily for those children and makes it difficult for foster parents to cope with
- Trauma has a profound impact on the behavior, the feelings, the relations and the worldview of a child

# WHY a traumatraining?

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- The trauma of a child has also profound impact on foster parents :
  - exhaustion of a sensitive and empathic approach
  - painful memories
  - secondary traumatization
- The impact of a trauma can disrupt the stay in foster care
- Research has shown tha the risk of a breakdown is considerably reduced when foster parents have knowledge and skills about trauma

# CONTENT

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*Essential elements :*

- 1) Recognize the impact of the trauma of your child*
- 2) Help your child to feel safe*
- 3) Help your child to understand his overwhelming emotions and to control them*
- 4) Help your child to understand his problem behavior and to change it*

# CONTENT

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*5) Respect and support positive and stable relations from the child*

*6) Help your child to reconstruct his life story based on empowerment*

*7) Represent the needs and the interests of your child*

*8) Support trauma focused research en treatment for your child*

*9) Take good care of yourself*

# CONTENT

## *Educate and care for traumatized children*

### ***Definition of trauma :***

- Related to the threat of life or the physical integrity of a child or a person who is of great importance for that child (such as a parent, grandparent, brother or sister)
- Causes an overwhelming feeling of fear, helplessness and impotence
- Has physical effects (such as heart palpitations, rapid breathing, vibration, dizziness,...)

# CONTENT

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***The risk of traumatisation increases :***

- ***Presence of violence***
- ***If the events involve loss of attachment or betrayal caused by somebody who is very important for the child***
- ***Young age of the child***
- ***If the child thinks that the events are his fault***

# CONTENT

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## ***Complex trauma :***

Describes both the exposure to multiple traumatic events and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure

Beginning at a very young age

Caused by adults who should take care for the child and protect it

# CONTENT

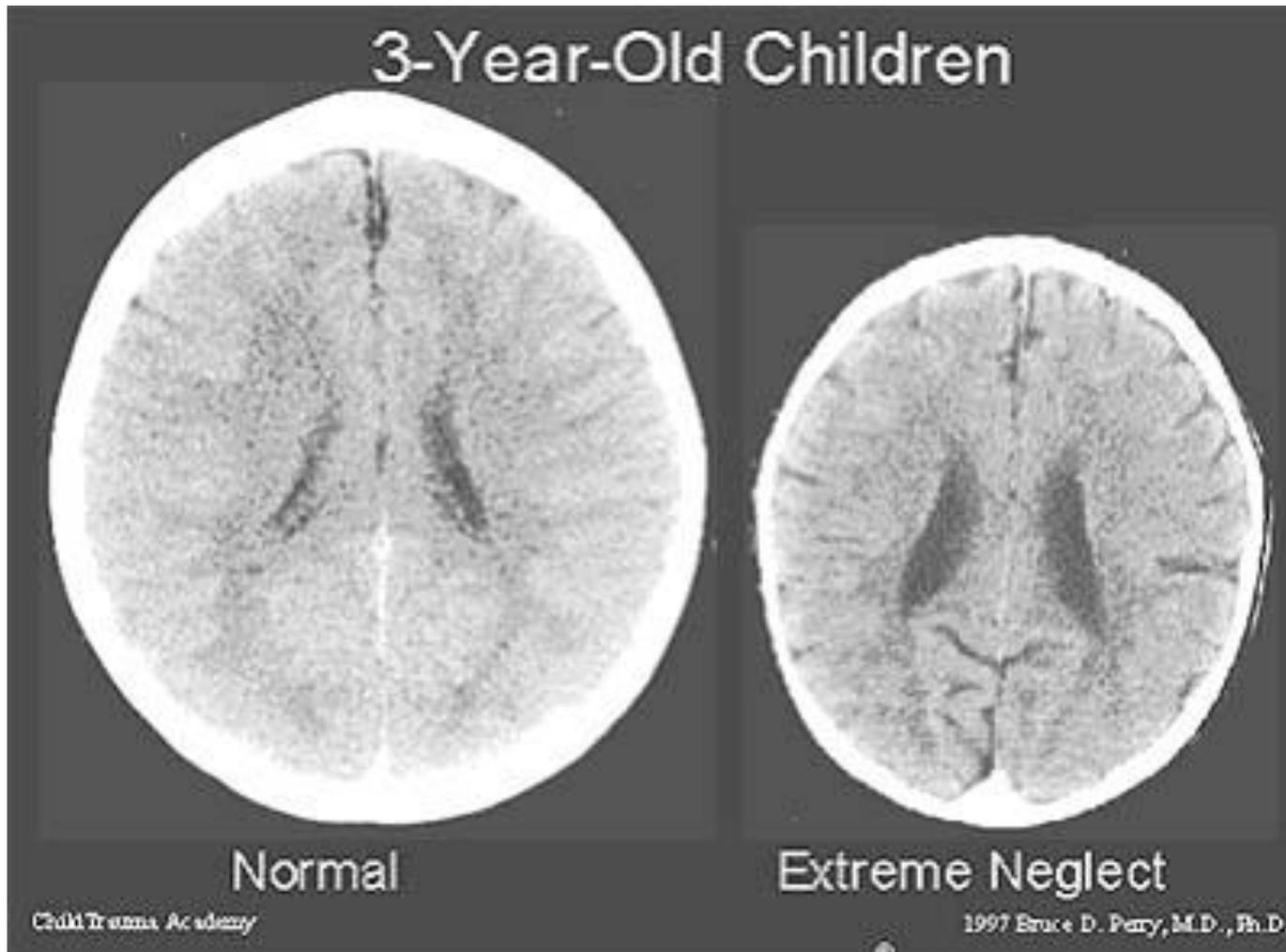
*Educate and care for traumatized children*

## ***Impact of the trauma :***

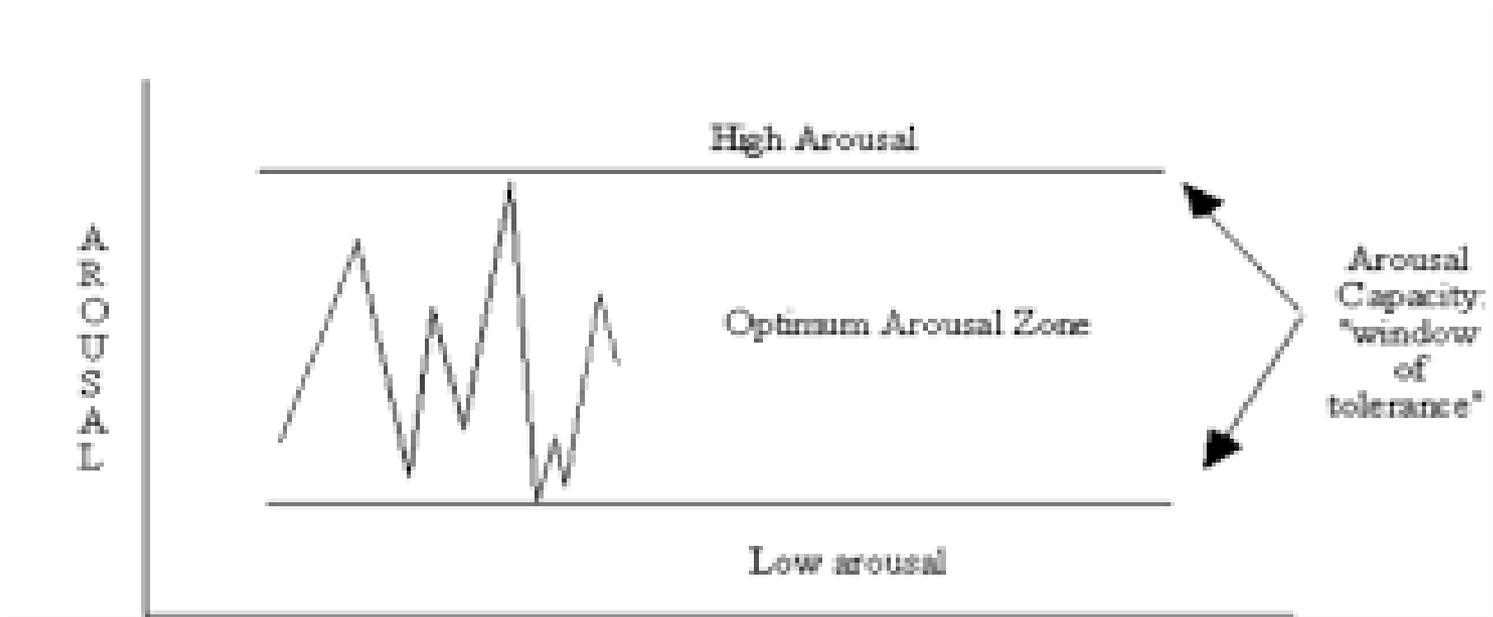
*research has shown that the brains of traumatized children develop abnormally*

*the brains of a severely neglected children are smaller and we see a lot of black spaces who show the lack of neural connections*

# ***Impact of neglect on the development of the brains***



# *Window of tolerance*



Zone of stress that can be accepted  
Range in which cognitive and emotional functioning is possible

# CONTENT

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*Impact of the trauma :*

*Chronic trauma can disrupt the healthy development and can affect :*

- the ability to trust other persons*
- the sense of personal safety*
- the ability to control emotions*
- the ability to accept changes in life and to cope with theses*
- emotional and physical reactions to stress*
- the overall development*

# CONTENT

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*How can foster parents deal with these problems the best :*

- Be sure that positive change is possible*
- Provide a secure base with love and protection*
- Be available both physically as emotionally*
- Identifying the needs of the child and respond appropriate to them*
- Lead and be a positive example*
- Offer opportunities to explore the world in a safe manner*

# CONTENT

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## ***How to improve the development of the child :***

- Traumatized children can learn new ways of thinking, of building relations and of respond appropriately*
- Rational thinking and self-consciousness can help children to controle primitive reactions of the brain*
- Unlearn and rebuild costs a lot of TIME, al lot of PATIENCE and a lot of repeat*

# CONTENT

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## ***How to improve the resilience :***

- a strong relation with at least one competent, caring adult
- a sense of belonging to a positive role model
- the disposal of talents which are stimulated and appreciated
- experiencing any control over their own life
- the feeling to be part of a certain community, group or family

# CONTENT

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## ***Evaluation of the training by the participants :***

- very positive about the content and the group interactions
- learned skills to cope better the problems of their foster child
- learned skills to help their foster child to process their trauma so that they go on with their lives in a more pleasant way