

Submission:

Infant Illness: A Silent Trauma.

Medical Trauma and Symptom Development through an Attachment Lens.

Submission Statement:

Participants will sharpen their ability to understand and process a child's present symptoms and past trauma, in relation to possible somatic memories arising from medical trauma and the damage that may have been done to the attachment system.

Abstract

This presentation introduces the necessity of approaching infant medical trauma through a dyadic lens. Often the continuing concern over a medical condition or the relief at the passing of that condition prevents therapists from appreciating that this dyad may have been traumatized and that present symptoms may be triggered by traumatic somatic memories. Both these present and past memories respond to creative treatment planning within the EMDR Protocol.

This presentation will focus on deepening the treatment of children who have suffered medical trauma, by sharpening the therapist's appreciation of the role of somatic memory and the often unavoidable damage to the child, the parent and the attachment relationship, when an infant is ill.

We will highlight the neurological processes that occur within the AIP system when the attachment relationship loses its ongoing ability to contain and soothe stress. Participants will increase their understanding of the effect of these failures on the development of affect regulation, attention and other higher cortical abilities as the child grows.

We will illustrate, through case descriptions, how an appreciation of these early processes contributes to a better understanding of symptoms and informs an EMDR treatment plan, which emphasizes dyadic attachment work throughout the preparation and trauma processing phases of the protocol.