

Resist-Refuse Dynamics within the Context of Allegations of Trauma

**Lyn R. Greenberg, Ph.D.,
ABPP**



EVIDENCE-INFORMED INTERVENTIONS FOR COURT-INVOLVED FAMILIES

Promoting Healthy Coping and Development

EDITED BY

LYN R. GREENBERG

BARBARA J. FIDLER

MICHAEL A. SAINI

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/evidence-informed-interventions-for-court-involved-families-9780190693237?cc=us&lang=en&>

What is this person doing?

Many families need
SOLUTIONS
before they need ANSWERS

**They are NOT mutually
exclusive!*

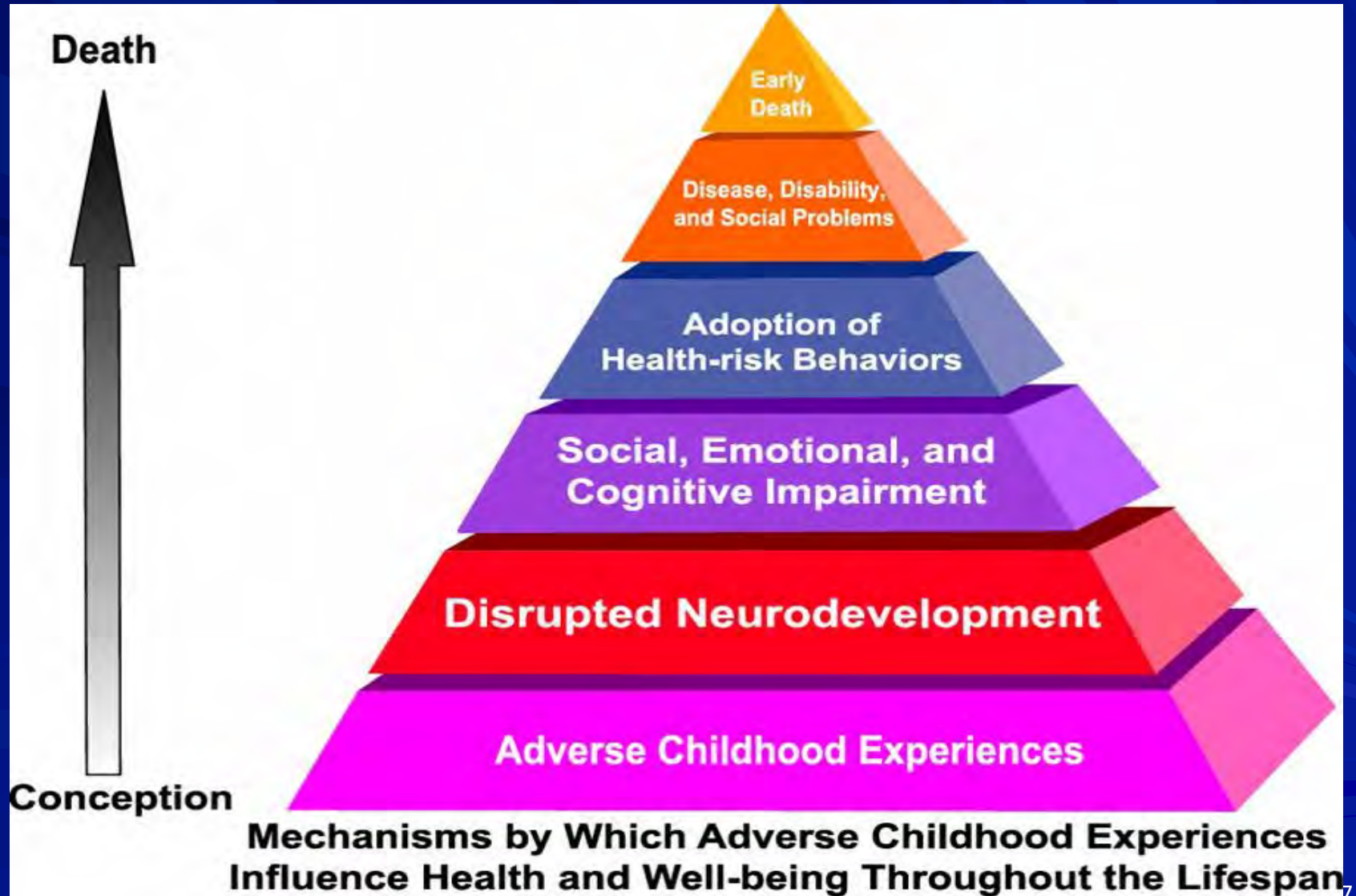
Changing our reasoning

- Rejecting the single factor theory
- Stopping the bleeding
- Reframing “do no harm”
- Two directional risk assessment

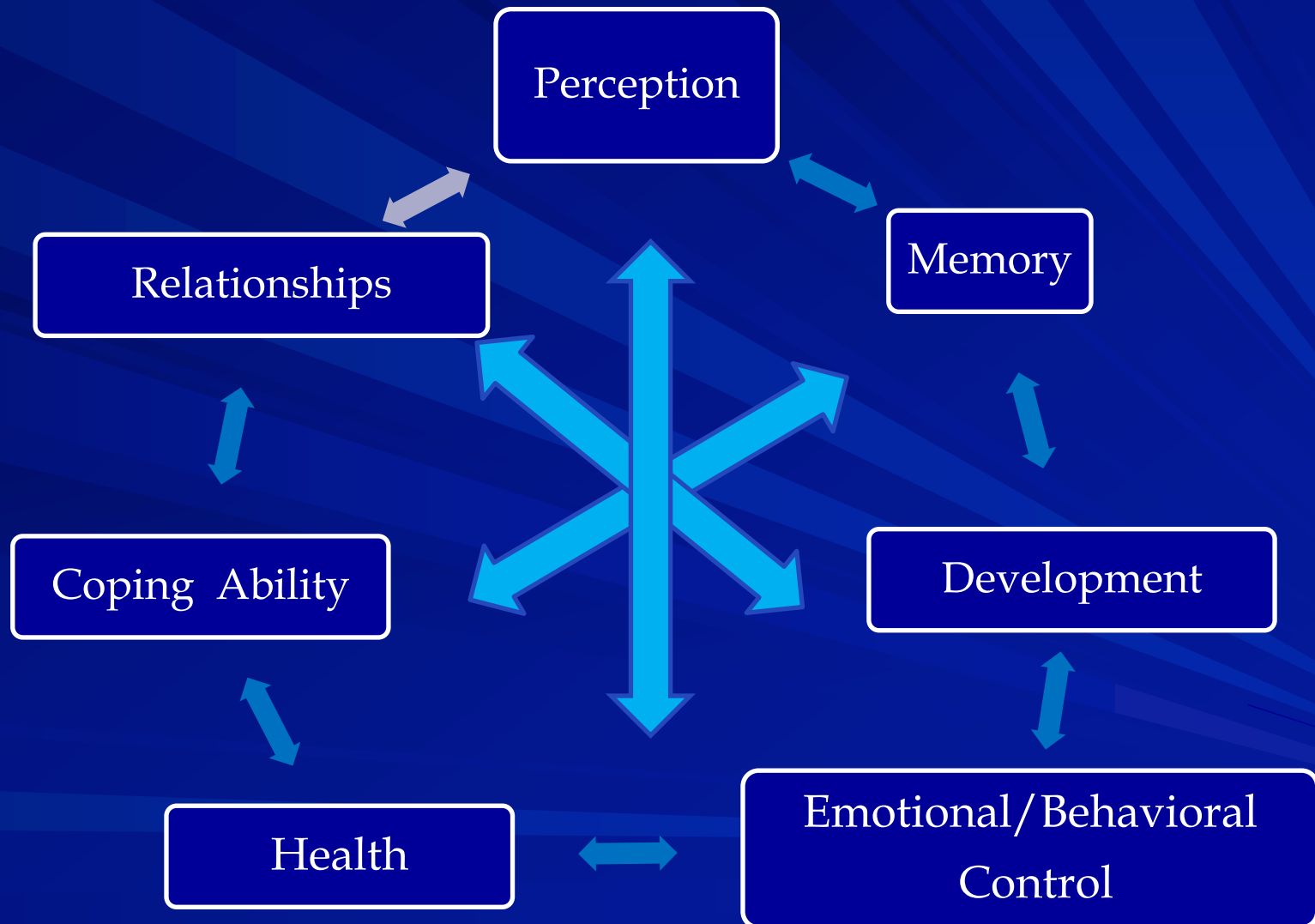
Early Intervention Does Not Mean...

- Neglecting Assessment
- Ignoring safety concerns
- Compromising investigations
- Ignoring realistic anxiety, trauma or parenting deficits

ACES Pyramid



Trauma Impacts:



*What Traumatic Effects
Can Be Caused
By Unrestrained Exposure
To Parental Conflict?*

Toddler

Changing our Thinking- Imagining the Possible

- What does effective intervention look like?
- How do we get there?
- What common mistakes should we avoid?
- How do we keep providers available to families?

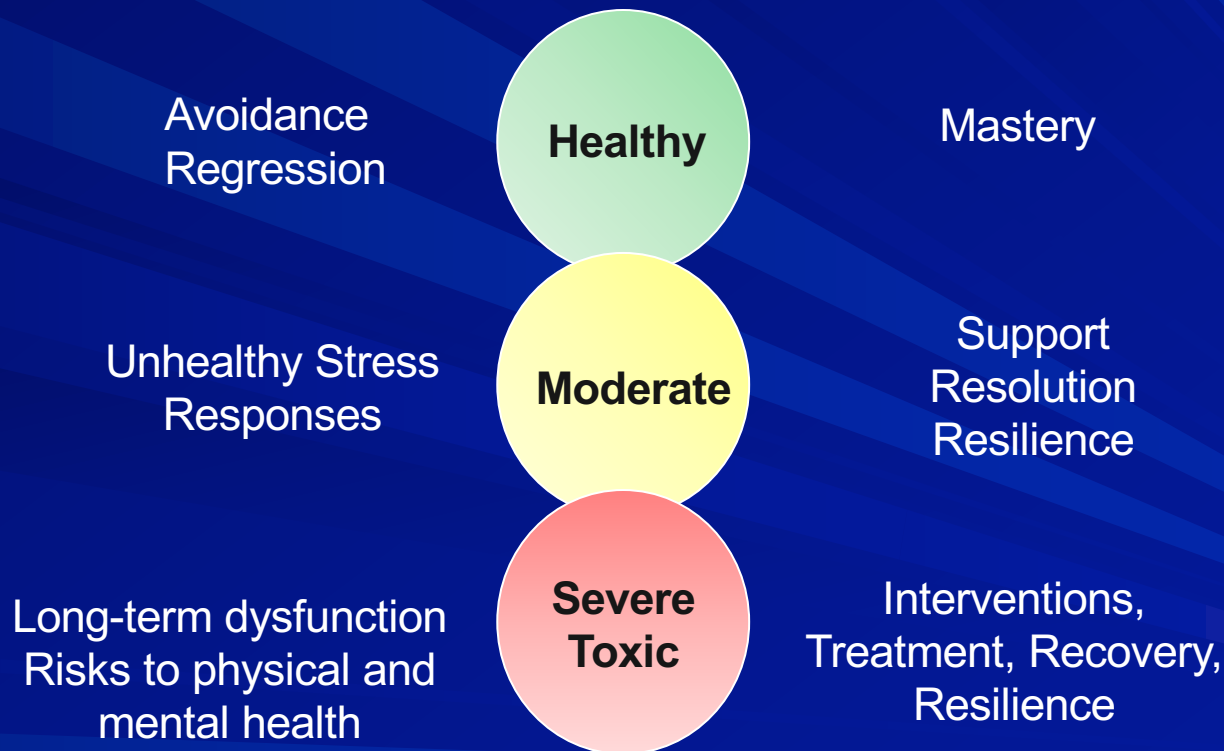
When you first see these cases...

- What information should you look for?
- What questions should you ask?
- How should you look at others' reports?

Cases that can't wait

- Sex abuse allegations
- Intent to flee
- Acute danger

Levels of Stress, Potential Outcomes



How Do We Recognize Children in Trouble?

- *Are they meeting developmental expectations?*
- *Are they moving forward?*
- *How do they respond to intervention?*
- *How do they relate to others?*

The Case for Early Systemic Intervention

Risks of delay

Difficulties of intervening when problems become entrenched

Initial treatment goals surround universal issues

clear, early, adaptive messages to parents and children

real time observations

Available tools in children's activities and daily routines

What are the effects of fragmented or poorly planned interventions?

The child's "job" is to ...

- *Grow up healthy*
- *Mastering developmental tasks along the way*
- *Learn to have successful relationships with others*
- *Learn to solve problems constructively*
- *Manage stress*
- *Learn emotional control...*

The parent's "job" is..

- To provide the tools and environment that helps the child reach those goals
- Engage with surrounding systems
- Get necessary help and support
- Support autonomy and development

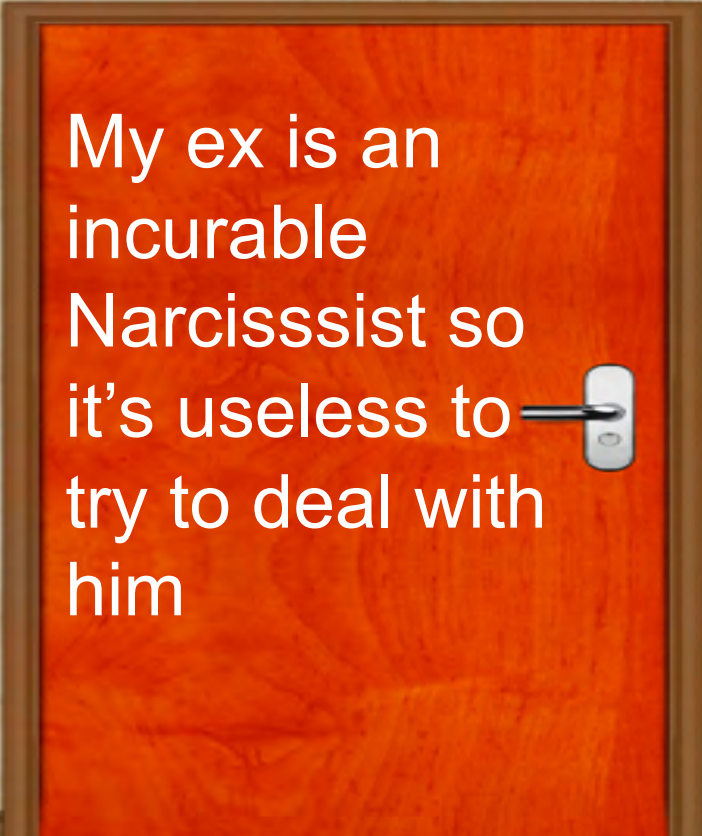
What Goes Wrong in these Cases?

- Focus on blame
- Focus on adults' allegations
- Ignoring developmental context
- Therapy is too late or poorly structured
- Poor follow up
- Fragmented intervention
- Endless investigation


Obstacles to Early Intervention

- Systemic
- Professional
- Parent and Family related

Which is more tempting?



My ex is an incurable Narcissist so it's useless to try to deal with him



I need to do my part to make peace for my child

Professional obstacles

- Lack of enforcement
- Assessment going out of control
- Inaccurate assumptions about treatment or other services

Assessment Going Out of Control

- Search for certainty replacing risk assessment
- Allegation focus replacing developmental focus
- Dwindling intervention options, some requiring major changes
- How applicable is the medical model?

Reversing Common Thinking

- The “little stuff” is really the most critical
- Daily issues critical
- If you can't improve it, create a clear track record
- Explain to the Court why it matters
- “Answers” can emerge

So What Keeps Us From Doing It Right?

The Amazing Resilience of Inaccurate Information and Bad Ideas

Assumptions to Question

- “People don’t change unless they want to”
- “If there is accountability, people won’t talk to the therapist”
- “There’s nothing judges can (or will) do to enforce compliance”
- “Parents have to acquire insight”

Assumptions to Question

- If parents don't change, there's nothing we can do for children
- Comprehensive evaluation (or trial) must precede services
- There is no evidence about what works
- All stress is bad

How Do We Recognize Children in Trouble?

- *Are they meeting developmental expectations?*
- *Are they moving forward?*
- *How do they respond to intervention?*
- *How do they relate to others?*

*Absence of accountability,
poor therapeutic structure*

Judges' reluctance may come from..

- Financial issues in making orders
- Fear of Doing Harm
- Equating doing nothing with doing harm
- Shortage of trained Providers
- How good is the information I'm getting?

Is anyone here teaching avoidance?

- head start trauma smart

Other System Obstacles

- Resource limitations
- Shortage of trained providers
- Factors that discourage providers from treating our clients
- Poor interdisciplinary communication
- Poor integration with other services

So what can we do?

Early Intervention

- Early intervention
- More specific standard orders
- Enforcement of Orders
- Addressing predictable problems early
- Incorporating other systems
- Guidance for selecting services
- Better recommendations

BEWARE

The “I didn’t want it to work anyway” model

- Sealed treatment in a high conflict case may produce:
 - No treatment at all
 - An accountability-free acting-out zone
 - Unprotected children
 - Simple transfer of chaos from courtroom to therapist’s office
- Engaging other professionals is critical
- Avoid suspending contact with no plan

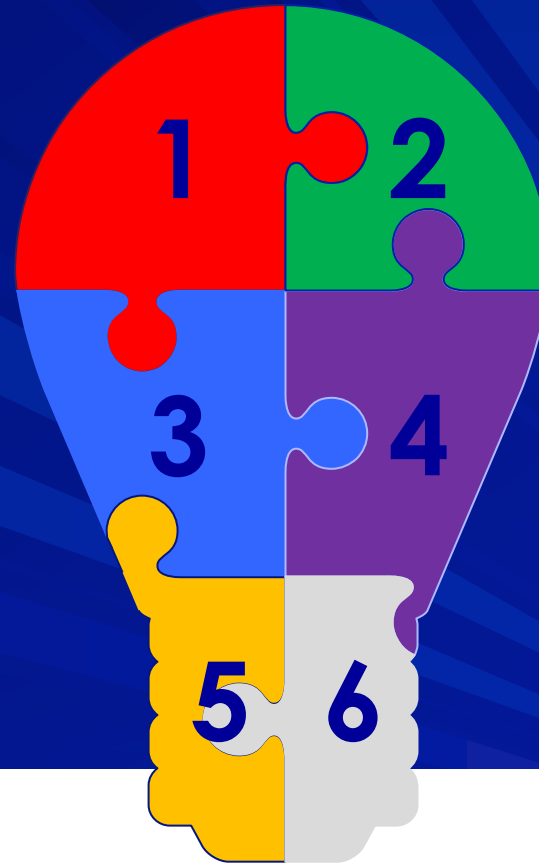
What Can Judges Do?

- Better orders
 - Therapy and other interventions
 - Services
 - Better “non-disparagement orders”
 - Targeted restraining orders
- Judicial expectations

What can Professionals Do?

- Rely on current information and research
- Structure Services
- Consent agreements/orders
- Cooperate to curb abuses
- Remember that how therapy ends is as important as how it begins

1. Support for children's development
2. Structure
3. Behavioral Focus
4. Accountability
5. Tiered Information System
6. Integration with Daily life



Essential Elements

Systemic Intervention Planning

- What does the child or family need to learn/master?
- What activities or conditions can help the child get there?
- What developmentally regressive influences do we need to address, or protect the child from?
- How do we build resilience in the child?
- What assessment questions
 - MUST be answered beforehand
 - Can be addressed while intervention is ongoing

Systematic Intervention Planning (cont.)

- Recreation
- Focus on behavior
- Potential activities with parent
- Attention to daily issues
- Direct or Indirect Accountability

Some concluding thoughts..

Keeping Development Central

- What do we want children to learn?
- How do we want them to see themselves?

What Do We Want Them to Learn?

- How do we build resilience?
- How do we help them adjust going forward?

Presenter Contact Information

Lyn R. Greenberg, Ph.D., ABPP
Board Certified, Couple and Family
Psychology

10801 National Blvd., Ste 220

Los Angeles, CA 90064

Phone: (310) 399-3684

Fax: (310) 988-2706

lyn@lyngreenbergphd.com

<http://www.lyngreenbergphd.com/>