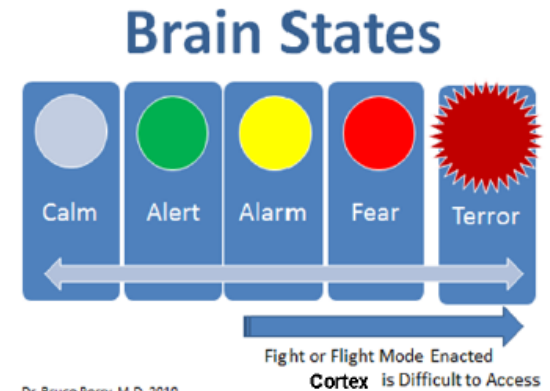
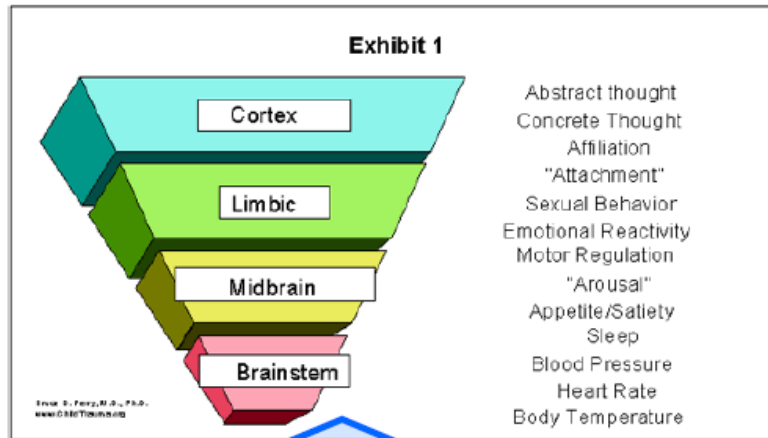


Trauma and the Developing Brain

Brain development happens in order, from the bottom to the top (brainstem to cortex). Each stage of development in the pyramid builds on the previous.

When young children are exposed to stressors like violence, depending on the quality of caregiving and support they receive, their brains spend the most energy on survival, at the brain stem level.



Learning Calm Promotes Brain Development

In order for the brain to develop & move up the pyramid, where complex emotions can be regulated and cognitions can be processed, children need to learn how to "reset" their brains to calm. This will also help their behavior at school and home.

Children, just like adults, learn better in the context of relationships – and the closer the relationship the better! This is why healthy attachment with caregivers builds resiliency.

If adults (and even other children) close to the child can help him or her learn how to reset their brains to calm, through attunement, closeness, and teaching emotional regulation skills, their brains will spend less time in the terror state, and more time learning & exploring.

Help children identify which brain state they are in...

When a child's brain development resources are primarily spent in the lower brain due to stress, their brain can be in a constant state of alert or alarm.

If a child's baseline is at yellow (some children may even be at red as a baseline), **they will likely have a "terror" response more quickly.**

*Created by Erin Fairchild, MSW "Exhibit 1" & "Brain States" images by Dr Bruce Perry, M.D. www.childtrauma.org, used with permission