



Supporting Emotional Regulation, Coping and Problem-Solving Skills in Youth and Adults: A Developmental and Systems Perspective on Executive Function in Complex Trauma

Executive functions (EFs) are high-level cognitive functions that support emotional regulation and enable adaptation to novel situations or complex problem solving. These functions are vulnerable to toxic stress related to complex trauma. Thus, on average, children and adolescents exposed to trauma have lower EFs than those who are not exposed. Executive difficulties are manifested, for example, by cognitive rigidity, impulsivity, risk-taking behaviours, emotional dysregulation, or strong reactions to change or the unexpected; difficulties that are often observed in youth exposed to trauma. Using a trauma-sensitive developmental approach, this workshop will explore concrete interventions to support the EFs of these youth. Strategies and activities that will be discussed include: decision-making and problem-solving support; fun, creative, and sportive activities; and board games. Workshop participants will be able to use the strategies and activities discussed in a variety of settings and contexts (e.g., family, school, rehabilitation). The workshop will be interactive and will include clinical examples.

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- FRENCH PRESENTATION -

2023
Trauma
Symposium

