

Family Trauma Institute

TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO
BECOME FAMILY TRAUMA EXPERTS

Video Transcript

Guiding Your Families to Discover the Root Causes of Their Trauma

Let's find out what's causing your stress. And to do this I'm going to draw an apple tree and together we're going to find out why these stressors, which I said before are symptoms and you list them off the problem chart, which for me I would say you listed off aggression, disrespect, chores, and also I'm a big believer in metaphors.

So a bonus technique I could give you today is what I often do is I'll hold up this apple and say, I'm going to show you now what I mean by an apple tree and when they apples are bruised like this one is and full of worms. How do we know if this is the tree or the family tree is stressed and how do we know when all the apples are bright and shiny?

So again, I usually hide this behind my chair. Sometimes I'll throw it to the kid to catch like this. But again, what's great about this is that there, I used to do mostly talk therapy. And so this really grabs them with a metaphor, which is literally an apple that they can see. So I'll say to the family, okay, now let's look at these. And I also call these as another metaphor. These are the weeds that we see that we can pull. And a plant doctor would look at the tree and look at the apple and say, okay, the apple based on the fruit is either healthy or not, but a good plant doctor will go beneath the soil and look at these seeds that are the drivers or causes of the stressors or as we call them symptoms.

So the learning moment. it occurs to illustrate how this seed tree diagram moves your family from a child only problem to a systemic family problem to solve? You may think that that's a small thing, but it's a huge thing because where I usually got stuck when I first started treatment is the just fix the kid. And so when I tried to say, but parents or caregivers, I need your help. They would be like, Nope, just fix your kid. I even had one story where a parent literally went on just slow up the car and go, I'm going to Disney World. I'm always sitting in a facetious way and only would come back after I treated the case. And the parent called me up and said, boy, I liked your individual work.

I don't have to deal with the conflict as long as you're doing my job for me. And it just hit me like triangulation, equal strangulation. So the parents were triangulating me to not do their job and I was actually helping keep the system going in that direction. So this is an important moment. And then what are all the reasons why this apple tree metaphor might be a helpful way to begin trauma treatment for you, the participant? And I'll list on my reasons as well after you guys get a chance to list yours. So let's go to the videotape and how I do the videotape is that I will at times pause it and sometimes I'll let it go through all the way. Let's go to the videotape and let's hear how I bring up this apple tree metaphor visually and how you can replicate the same thing with your family.

(Video starts here)

It's an unhealthy undercurrents combined to create problem symptoms which are represented as apples on this tree. Watch how this connect the dot exercise begins to hook the family and give them hope.

Now that I know your stress, our next step is to figure out what's causing it. Okay? Often times the cause is unseen to the naked eye, so we're going to have to go below ground to look at it and I'm going to need your help from this. Okay, so I'm going to draw a tree here. You see over here apple tree. I'm going to draw it right underneath your stress chart and I'll explain what it is and how it works. And then you guys consent to help me out here. I'm not a good drawer. I'm trying to draw a tree here. That's supposed to be the tree. That's the stump. And then there's root systems underneath the tree. There's what you call the seeds.

Now if you look up here, there's apples on this tree. Okay? If I went to an apple tree and I was a plant doctor, they look at fruit to see if this tree is stressed out. So Charles, if I went up to a tree and all the apples had worms in them, they're all bruised. Would you say that that tree is probably stressed out? Okay. And if you want to turn to another tree and all the fruit was just bright, shiny red, you'd know that that tree was pretty good. So you're treating the apples with what I can see with the naked eye. So if I went to your house, I could see aggression, right? So that's one apple fighting. I can also see

the chores. You guys aren't doing your chores. I could also see disrespect. I can see the big one, which is the heated arguments. If I was a fly on the wall, and wasn't around your house and you knew I was there, I could see that. Right? And these are what's called symptoms.

In other words, stressors. It's all the same word, two different ways. Again, I'd even know by you coughing today that you've got a virus maybe or allergies. Underneath the skin, right? You went it to the doctor, they look at your eyes, ears, nose, throat. Maybe do it a throat culture. If they thought you had strep throat, they put it under the microscope. Unseen to the naked eye. Right? But those would be the symptoms. These are just symptoms that I could see all these symptoms in here. The problem is just like with a doctor, you've got to go beneath the soil or the skin to see what's really causing it. There's something toxic. A virus that's attacking your family. Okay. And there's four potential toxic seeds. And I'm going to go over each one and I'm going to ask each of you at the end of today to say your top two seeds that you think are producing the most poison. John, the most poisoned, Charles, and the most poison from your point of view that's killing this family or stressing it out.

(Video ends here)

One of the things as you look at this, you see the apple tree is it slows therapy down. It used to be, when I brought families together I'd say, why are you here? What's the problem? And they would immediately use the session as an ability to do what they do in the living room, which is to attack each other, to blame game each other. This really helps slow things down where you're literally connecting the dots. So to summarize this segment, we really literally connected the dots to the stress chart. We linked the stress chart problems and slash symptoms to the apples. Again, I gave you the bonus metaphor of using an actual apple if you want to as well as the drawing. You can pre draw the drawing like I did to the left. You can use the PowerPoint that you just saw. What I normally do is I draw it out as well right underneath the stressors of the stress charts.

And I always say to the family, this is what we can see to the naked eye. I always say if I was a fly on the wall and I was at your house and looking down, I could see aggression. I could see the house being told this array with no chores being done. I could see self-harm, I could see depression. And then I'm always looking at body language. I think good therapy is education and application. So right now I'm in an education mode, but I'm constantly looking at my clients saying, are they engaged? Dad's going like this. Charles is intrigued. The neighbor's waiting to see what's going to happen. So then I always use an analogy to the medical profession. Again, I normalize. I say, if you are going to the doctor, they want to look at your symptoms. Do you have a strep throat? Do you have a fever?

And again, I start to set up beautifully the on-ramp for toxic seeds, which is the next part of this technique.