



# Welcome!

---

## Bullying and Disability

James Turnage, LPC-S, LCDC-CI,  
Director of Support, Disability and Behavioral Health



# Prevalence of Bullying in Disability

- Study of 93 children with special needs and 93 children in mainstream education settings found 66% of special needs children were bullied. (Whitney, 1994)
- Study of 137, 13 yr. olds found that bullying victimization was more highly reported with those with developmental disabilities (Christensen & Baker, 2012)
- Study of children with special health needs, physical, occupational, or speech therapy and with emotional, developmental and behavioral problems were victims twice as much as mainstream (Van Cleave & Davis, 2006)



# Increased Risk of Victimization

- Research evidence also suggest that children with development disabilities are at increased risk for other forms of victimization such as physical abuse, sexual abuse and criminal acts (McGrath & Jones, 2010)



# Cyberbullying

- The use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.



# Cyberbullying

- Study of 114 youth ages 12-19 with developmental disabilities found 9% reported bullying by phone or internet

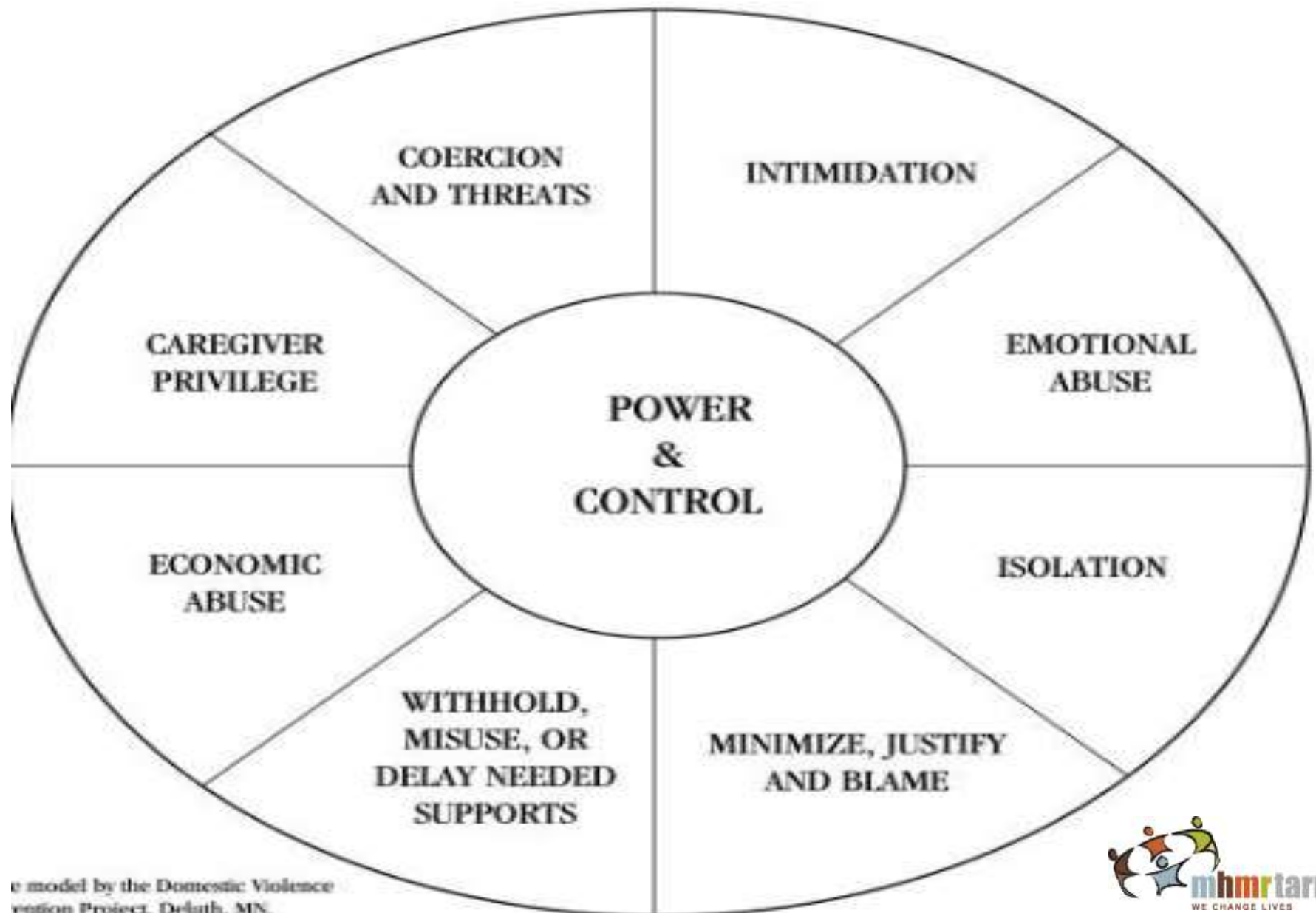


# Bullying of Adults with Disabilities

- Bullying can happen with adults in disabilities in group homes, day habilitation programs, institutions, and workplace



**POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL:  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**



# The Life Journey of a Bully and Victim

- Bully is a relationship Issue
- It takes years to make a bully
- All bully's are victims
- It's a journey of life experiences since birth





# The Life Journey of a Bully and Victim

- **Difference between aggression in children versus bullying. Being teased may not be bullying, however in the IDD population even being teased is harmful.**



# Understanding the Road Signs

- Prenatal stressors
- Difficult temperaments in children
- Mothers have difficult time soothing
- This impacts secure attachment needed for healthy brain development
- Behavioral problems emerge, meltdowns, defiance, parents find it hard to manage behavior



# Understanding the Road Signs

- This leads to parents using abusive punishment to manage, hitting, scolding, yelling
- By age 3, two different child victims emerge, one is aggressive and one is passive



# Understanding the Road Signs

- Aggressive children have difficulty related to other children and hit to self regulate the anxiety from social situation
- Passive children are excluded, other children find them boring
- Teachers find it difficult managing and use exclusion strategies such as “time-out” further shaming children



# Understanding the Road Signs

- Aggressive children are emotional reactive and go from 0 to 60 with rage if things don't go their way
- The passive child easily gives up in school
- Both types of children are unable to learn social skills



# Understanding the Road Signs

- Aggressive types form negative and hostile thoughts about themselves and others and are filled with anxiety
- Passive types form negative thoughts of not belonging and are filled with sadness
- Adults view the aggressive child as “mean” and the passive child as “lazy” and unmotivated



# Understanding the Road Signs

- These judgements blind us to road signs and we miss the impact of trauma on brain development
- Aggressive child becomes a bully and passive child becomes a victim
- Aggressive and passive children are pushed aside in schools by teachers and peers. Deep emotional pain of rejections rewires the brain to stay stuck in the fight, flight, and freeze mode



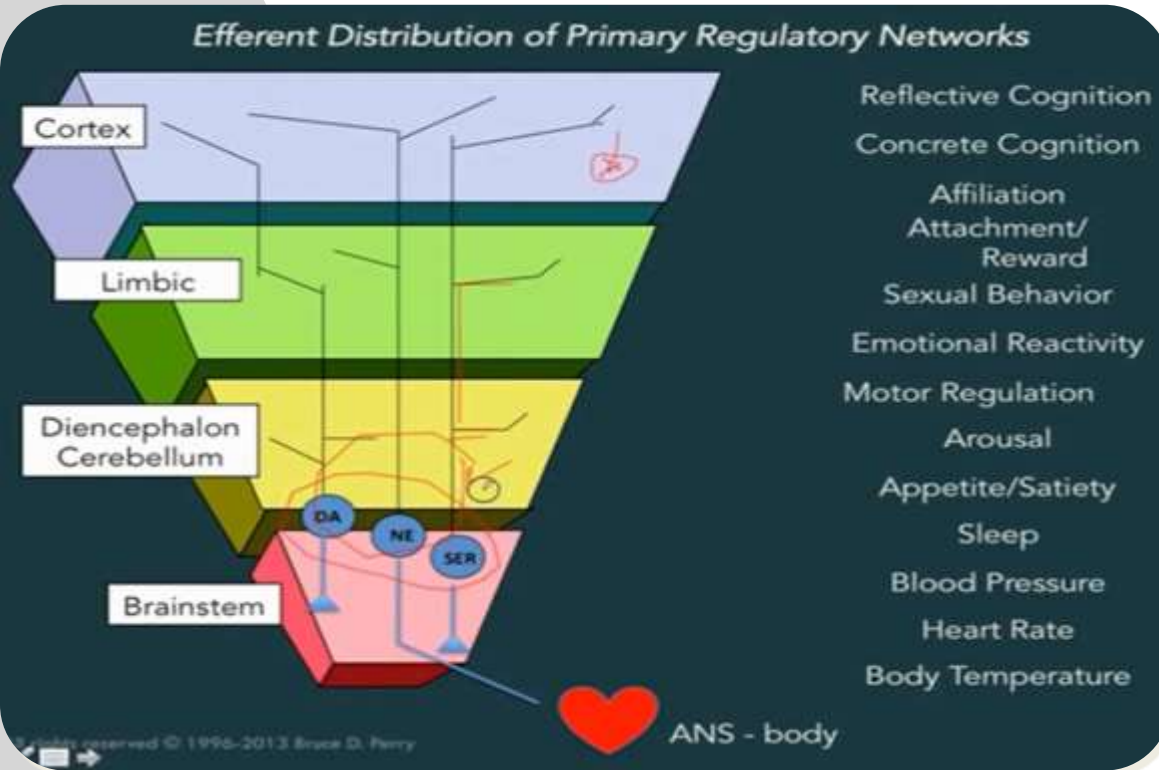
# Understanding the Road Signs

- Bully and victim are desperately searching for connection, mainstream excludes them
- Bully and victim move towards one another.
- Bully says “you are mine, I own you. Do what I say or else”
- Victims gives in to bully because a bad connection is better than no connection at all



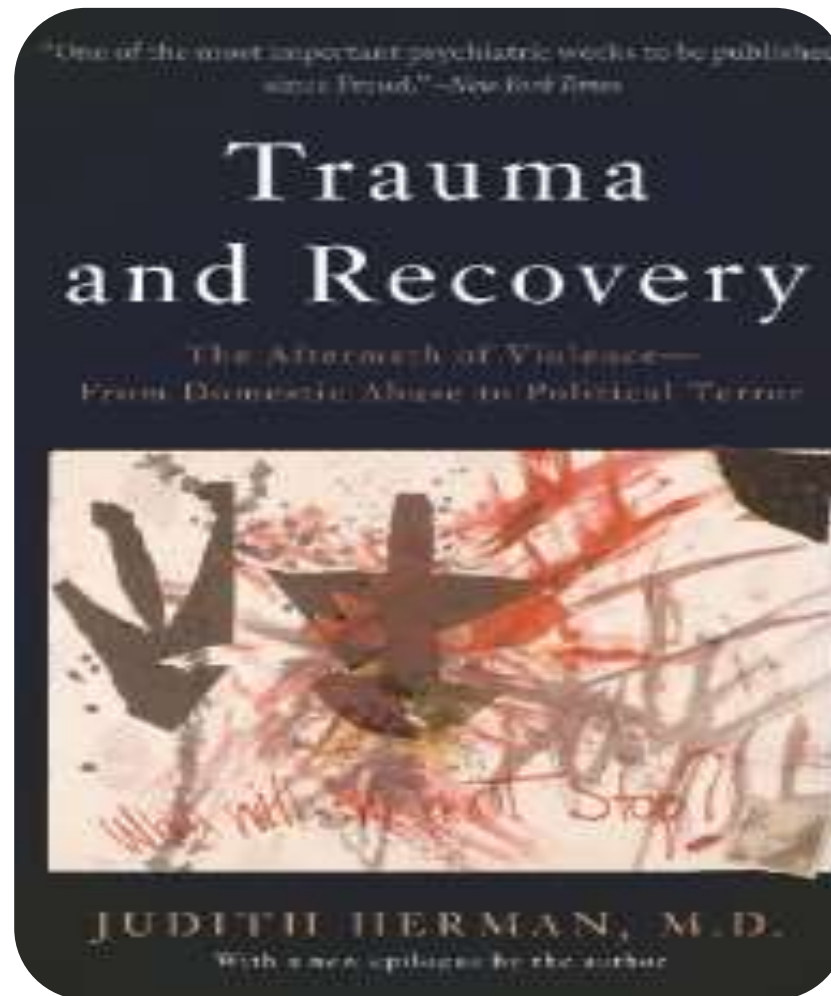


# Understanding the Road Signs



- The part of the brain that is suppose to be wired for caring for others is turned off and consequences do not work on these children
- Rewiring the brain system only comes from caring relationships

# Connection, Safety, Empowerment



# Preventing Bullying

- **Safety** – monitoring children and find mentors for children with special needs to provide this monitoring in schools, schoolyards, and busses.
- **Connection** – create relationships where children are included, Special Olympics, peer mentoring
- **Empowerment** –celebrate strengths, give out awards, take photos of accomplishments, celebrate successes





# WHAT IS THEIR STORY?



We begin to ask,  
“What happened to you?”  
rather than  
“What is wrong with you?”

We have to ask,  
“What’s strong?”  
rather than  
“What’s wrong?”

Paradigm Shift



# References

- **Bullying and Disability- Fred Pampel, University of Colorado**
- **Conscious Discipline, Creating Emotionally Intelligent Schools with Master Instructor Jill Molli**
- **Trauma and Recovery, Judith Herman**
- **Waking the Tiger, Healing Trauma, Peter Levine**
- **Body Keeps the Score, Bessel Van Der Kolk**