

Trauma Conversation Starters:

Topic:	Examples:
Frequent/ Multiple Moves; Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When children have no idea where they are going to sleep that night, very hard to concentrate on school, social relationships, etc. • Changes in schools is difficult because part of children's connections are to teachers and friends • Chaos throws off routine
Neglectful Home Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was their home environment growing up? • How is your home different/ same as yours growing up? • Maslow's hierarchy of needs- can not focus on anything else unless most basic needs are being met • Cycle of neglect
Loss of Significant People, Places, Etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the parents lost anyone? How did it impact them? • Have there been any out of home placements for them? How did they feel? • How do the parents feel on a re-removal?
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about how the parent was disciplined • Assess where the parents are at: do they acknowledge the physical abuse or deny it? • Talk to the parent about the child's thoughts and memories on it • Ask the parent what they see in their child's behavior in regards to the discipline • Ask the parent what it looks like when they get mad and how they are feeling
Exposure to Other Chronic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adrenaline rush- high alert, moving around • Bullying- using violence to relate • Ask about sleeping, eating, aggressive play, definitions of violence and what it looks like • Who and what are your kids exposed to? What do you do for fun with your family?
Lengthy or Multiple Separations from a Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you notice when you visited your child again? How are they feeling? • How many schools did they have to go to? • Changes in their lives?
Exposure to Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle of violence • Needs met before they can focus on anything else • Fear of loved ones getting hurt • Have you ever witnessed violence? (child or parent) • How do you think your child has been affected by this exposure? • Papers on exposure to DV (by Jen's cube) • Pattern/ genetic impact
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think your behavior impacts your children? • How did you grow up? How did it make you feel? • How does your child react to your words/ behaviors? • What kind of person do you want your kids to view you as?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is supportive to your children? How?
Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol, Drugs, Maternal Stressors During Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to alcohol can cause issues with brain development • Possible health problems for child • What do you feel the side effects are? • Do you know anyone who was born positive? How are they? • Prenatal stress is important, can lead to multiple effects
Sexual Abuse/ Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about parent's own trauma • If they admit to their own past trauma: How did it affect you then/ now? • Discuss safety plans/ boundaries • Educate parents/ guardians/ support people on behaviors after abuse/ exposure • Stress importance of parent's own recovery
Impaired Parenting (Mental Illness, D.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking about generational mental illness. How did it affect them/ you for knowing them as a child and now? • Children are intuitive to parent's emotional state, can lead to excess stress/ worry
Exposure to Drug Activity aside from Parental Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing child in danger to witness/ fall victim to various crimes • Dangerous people/ area
Parental Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about decisions made while under the influence • Do you think your child notices differences when you are sober/ under the influence? • How does your substance abuse impact your child on more than an individual level? I.e. school, community • What are you exposing your children to? • When you are under the influence your child sees your behavior as very unpredictable
Parental Alienation/Co-Parenting Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk candidly with the parent(s) about their relationship with the co-parent. • Ask them how they believe this affects their child(ren) • Talk to them about the significant emotional damage that this can cause children as they love both of their parents (i.e. low self-esteem, self-hatred, addiction, lack of trust for others and unhealthy relationships when they get older). • Children often feel the need to take on "adult issues" and want to protect their parent.
Resiliency: Ways to promote a child's overall well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having positive, caring relationships with others- This includes in the home and the community. • Positive and high expectations of the child • Opportunities for meaningful participation (i.e. church, sports, clubs, organizations that promote positive behavior and outcomes)