

Speakers: Dr. Helena Hawryluk and Jerris Popik

Let's talk about it – strategies to support young people's understanding of a parental operational stress injury (OSI)



Dr. Helena Hawryluk and Jerris Popik

Co-founders, Shoulder to Shoulder



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT: UNDERSTANDING OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES

Dr. Helena Hawryluk & Jerris Popik, MSW, RSW

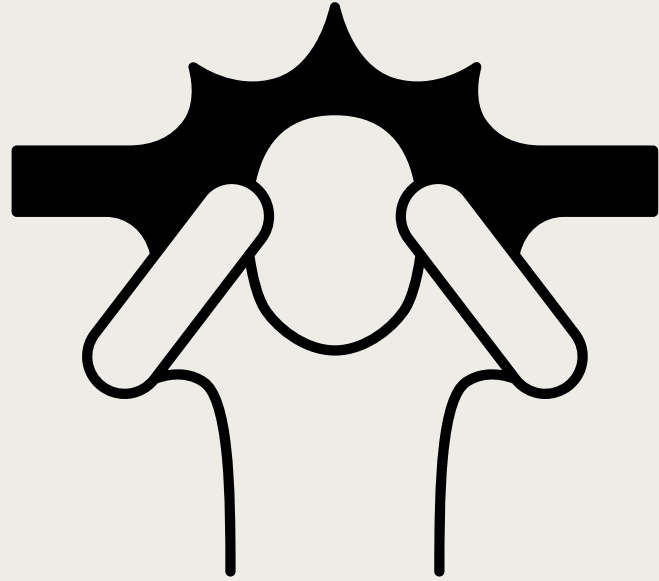


We would like to begin by acknowledging that we are fortunate to be able to gather on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place, and travelling route to the Cree, Sauteaux (So-toe), Blackfoot, Métis, Dene (De-nay) and Nakota Sioux (Sue). We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries."

Understanding the Need

- Battling a new war on the Homefront - Supporting CAF families
- Willingness to reach out for programs for their children
- Children and families deserve the same quality evidence based programs and supports as members have access to

Operational Stress Within Military and First Responders



**The Trauma
is different**



**Organizational and
Operational Factors**

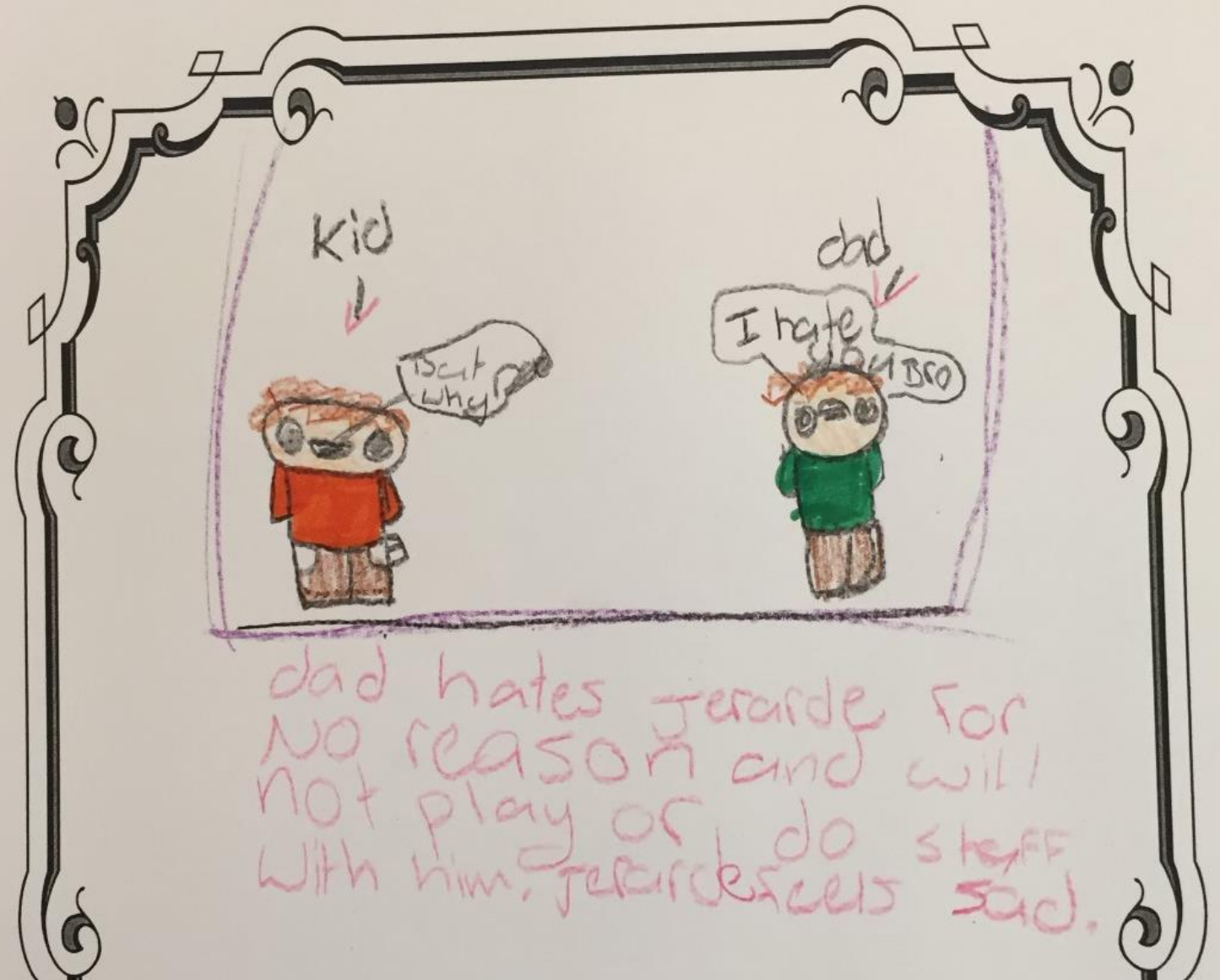
PTSD Impacts Relationships

EMOTIONAL NUMBING

HYPER-VIGILANCE

ISOLATION/AVOIDANCE

What an Operational Stress Injury Looks Like to Me



Warrior Kids Program

AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED PROGRAM FOR
CHILDREN WITH A PARENT WHO IS A FIRST
RESPONDER OR VETERAN IMPACTED BY AN
OSI





Building FAMILY Resilience Through a Psychological Injury



We are all Hard Wired For Connection



The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued.



Brene Brown





Have a deep conviction
that families can
recover and grow out
of adversity





I just wanted to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. You two have truly helped Ben open up. I won't go into details but Ben has witnessed his father go from a happy, go lucky loving person into a dark, angry and doom and gloom person. It as been a very long slog to get back to half of the person that I used to be.

But since being part of your program he tells me that things will get better and he smiles at me again. He has some more zest for life again and is interested in trying new things. Hearing and seeing that positive statement come from him has inadvertently given me more confidence to get back to life and be a better person again.

I'll take that win and run with it. So thank you so very much! Thank you for helping my boy be a boy again!



Injury Communication

Families and children will often catastrophize if they are provided with unclear or no information.

Aim to have shared knowledge within and outside of the family that builds on a shared understanding.

Aim to provide developmentally appropriate information to ensure the conversation is ongoing. It's a process of creating a family environment of open discussion on what is occurring with the family member that helps nurture relationships and prioritize quality interactions in the family.

Injury Communication: Steps To Take

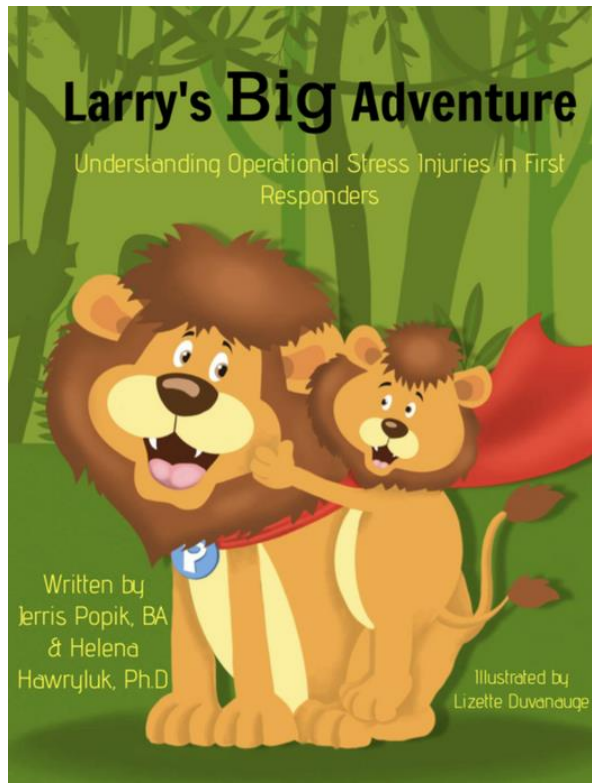


Plan when to have the conversation.
You should feel calm and ensure the kids are ready. Try not to be reactionary.



Provide some information, then allow time for your child/ren to ask questions.

Plan according to age.



Check-in to see what they understood.

Check-In about feelings they have.

Young children will dose information.

Short conversations are good.

Teenagers may appear not to pay attention but are listening.

“

"I'd like to talk with you about some tough things I'm dealing with right now. I know we talk about how important it is for us to be open and honest with each other."

“

"I've been dealing with some difficult stuff lately, and I would like to talk with you for a few minutes. "



“

**I've been a bit crabby, grumpy,
withdrawn, tense, down... lately.
I want to tell you a little but about
what's going on for me.**

”



Explain that you experienced a stressful event at work

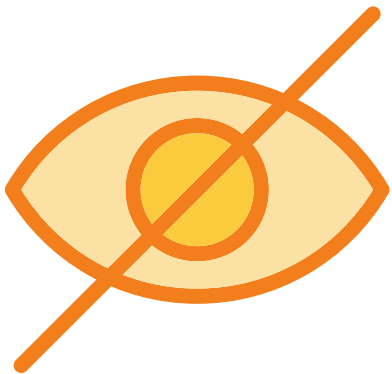


When I was on shift a few months ago I had a bad experience that still bothers me today. I won't be sharing the details because talking about it is hard for me.

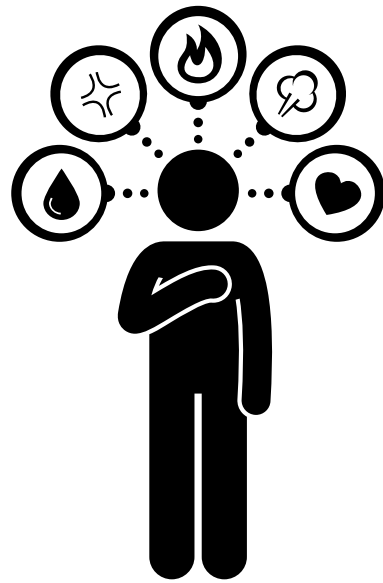
Name the Injury



I have an invisible injury, also known as PTSD, or a mental health injury,.



**Injury is
INVISIBLE**



**Emotional Injury
"Inside mommy's brain"**

Remember to use language that is according to age. You can use more general simple terms for young kids.



Describe behaviors linked to managing the OSI

Identify that certain sights, sounds, smells, are triggering. This leads you to feel overwhelmed and needing a break to calm down



I worry and feel tense a lot. It's hard for me to relax.

I can get angry really quickly...I'm sure you've noticed that lately.



Anger and emotional numbing are key symptoms that have the most impact on relationships. You can talk about how these show up in your interactions with the kids.



Your Injury of OSI affects everyone in the family

Develop a shared knowledge in the family about the injury. This means providing appropriate information to children about the injury and the associated consequences- ie. Leaving for treatment, attending appointments, and missed family events.

Assure them that your behavior changes are linked to the injury and the tension in the family is not their fault and they don't have to worry about the responsibility to "fix it".

Express your feelings
on how the OSI has been
tough for your child



**Emphasize how you want to be there
to support your child/youth**

**I really love you. I want you
to know that just because I
wasn't able to attend
_____, doesn't mean I
don't love you.**



As a family we will
work together to
manage this issue. We
are a team!





Reach out for more information

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