

## **The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog**

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Early trauma shapes the developing brain in predictable, experience-dependent ways, particularly through chronic activation of stress-response systems. Symptoms often labeled as ADHD, ODD, conduct disorder, or attachment disorders are frequently adaptive responses to overwhelming stress and disrupted caregiving. Healing requires safety, predictability, patterned repetition, and relational connection.

### **Therapeutic Orientation**

Neurodevelopmental, attachment-focused, trauma-informed, relational; integrates somatic, developmental, and psychodynamic principles

### **Key Concepts**

- Neural systems develop sequentially and are shaped by patterned, repetitive experiences; what a child receives—or misses—during sensitive periods matters deeply
- Repeated early trauma can dysregulate stress systems, leading to chronic hyperarousal or dissociation that affects attention, emotion, behavior, and health
- Trauma impacts children differently depending on when it occurs; earlier trauma often results in more global, somatic, and relational symptoms
- Trauma-related adaptations frequently masquerade as ADHD, ODD, or conduct disorder when stress and relational history are overlooked
- Human connection is the most powerful stress-modulating system; healing happens through relationships more than techniques
- Change occurs through predictable, moderate, repetitive experiences that restore regulation and a sense of control

### **Reflection Questions**

- Where do you notice the impact of predictability or unpredictability in your own sense of safety or stress?
- What relationships in your life have helped regulate you during times of distress?

### **Practice Ideas**

- Observe moments when stress responses (fight, flight, freeze, dissociation) show up without trying to change them. Note context and intensity
- Identify one safe, predictable relational interaction (e.g., regular check-in, shared routine) and protect or strengthen it
- Experiment with rhythm-based regulation (walking, rocking, music, breath pacing) rather than cognitive strategies during stress
- Journal prompt: What did my nervous system learn early on about safety, control, or connection and how does that show up now?

### **For Clients**

This book may help if you:

- Have a history of early trauma, neglect, or disrupted caregiving
- Struggle with emotional reactivity, dissociation, or chronic stress

- Feel confused or shamed by past diagnoses or labels

What it's not:

- A self-help workbook
- A step-by-step healing guide
- Focused primarily on adult trauma processing

### **For Therapists**

- Offers a foundational neurodevelopmental framework for understanding trauma-related symptoms across diagnoses
- Clear education on brain development and stress systems, case examples, normalization of adaptive responses
- Child-focused
- Some examples may feel intense or emotionally activating

### **Clinical Takeaways**

- Shift interventions down the brain through prioritizing regulation and safety before insight or narrative processing
- Reframe “behavior problems” as stress adaptations when working with children and families
- Emphasize predictability, rhythm, and relationship as core treatment mechanisms

### **Recommendation**

Recommended for therapists, caregivers, and adults seeking a foundational understanding of developmental trauma.