

Working with Vulnerable Populations

A Workshop for Church and Community Volunteers

By
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Who is Robert Wright?

- Social Work Private Practitioner
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Some Propositions

- Church and community volunteers are “mandated reporters” who have increased responsibility to report suspected abuse
- There is an increased expectation that churches and community agencies have structures in place to make their programmes “Safer” for their participants
- Volunteers need to look out for each other to keep themselves and those they serve safe

ROADMAP to Becoming a Safer Church

Become a safer church by developing an **Abuse Response and Prevention Plan**.
The journey starts here!

PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY



Identify leaders for the journey

Set a timeline

Gather information about your church

Learn how managing risk can make your church safer so that your ministries may flourish

CREATE YOUR POLICY

Here you'll review all the things your church does (what, why, how, where, when) and who does them

OPERATIONS

- Identify and assess risks of abuse
- Identify measures to address the risks

- VBS
- Youth Group
- Sunday School

Create your church's **Abuse Response and Prevention POLICY** to guide you on the journey

GOVERNANCE

- Identify and assess risks of abuse
- Identify measures to address the risks

Here you'll review how your church is structured and managed

- Deacons
- Members
- Pastoral Team

FOUNDATION

- Identify and assess risks of abuse
- Identify measures to address the risks

Here you'll review what grounds your church: your mission, values, constitution, covenants

- Constitution
- Mission Statement
- Covenant

INTANGIBLES

- Identify and assess risks of abuse
- Identify measures to address the risks

Here you'll review your church's atmosphere, culture, and environment

- Hope
- Fear
- Commitment

Your church's **Abuse Response and Prevention PLAN** includes:

1 The **POLICY** you created at the start of the journey

2 The **MEASURES** you identified along the way

PUT YOUR PLAN TOGETHER AND USE IT

WELCOME to a safer church!



Your Questions Before We Begin

Mandated Reporters

- Every person who has information, whether or not it is confidential or privileged, indicating that a child is in need of protective services shall forthwith report that information to an agency (applies to everybody)
- Notwithstanding any other Act, every person who performs professional or **official** duties with respect to a child, including: Health care professionals, teachers, social workers, counsellors, **clergy**, peace officers, day care providers, youth recreation workers, . . . shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to an agency.
- This section is read to apply to volunteers of similar agencies

Limits of Mandated Reporting

- Though the idea of mandated reporting replies in law only to children, it sets the expectation that these professionals and agency volunteers are attentive to the needs of the vulnerable persons they serve

Who Are Vulnerable Populations

- Children as defined by child welfare legislation
- Adults who “lack the ability to care and fend adequately for themselves” as defined by adult protection legislation
- Adult persons who, though competent, may be needy or vulnerable due to developmental delay, mental illness, or physical, mental or emotional distress

Child Welfare “Eras”

- The advent of childhood and the requirement to protect – c. 1930’s – 1950’s
 - Industrialization, post-depression/postwar society, formal child welfare charities, enforced “community standards”.
- The advent of professional child welfare – c. 1980’s
 - More professionalism, clearly defined “risks”, introduction of “principles” in the form of preambles
- Expansion of protection – seen in recent changes

Child in Need of Services

- Children are in “Need of protection” when they have suffered or are at “substantial risk” of:
 - Physical harm
 - Sexual harm
 - Medical neglect
 - Emotional abuse
 - Neglect of mental, emotional, developmental needs
 - Exposure to intimate partner violence
 - Neglect
 - Abandonment
 - Engaging in serious violence or criminal behaviour

Adults in Need of Protection

- Adults are in “Need of protection” when they, in the premises where they reside:
 - are a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental cruelty or a combination thereof, is incapable of protecting himself therefrom by reason of physical disability or mental infirmity, and refuses, delays or is unable to make provision for his protection therefrom,
 - Or is not receiving adequate care and attention, is incapable of caring adequately for himself by reason of physical disability or mental infirmity, and refuses, delays or is unable to make provision for his adequate care and attention;

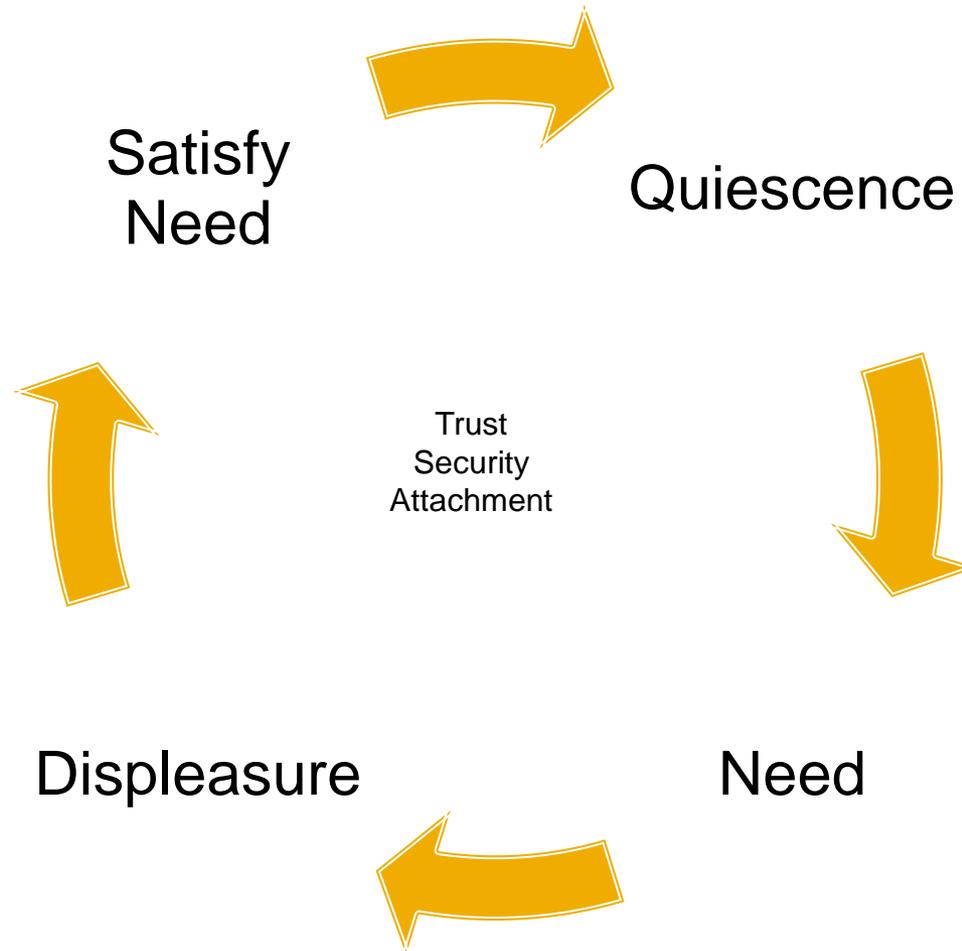
Trauma and Emotional Vulnerability

- Age (the very young and the very old), medical conditions, developmental delay, or abuse can make an individual vulnerable to abuse
- Such individuals may experience an emotional neediness that makes them vulnerable
- Lack of clear understanding of appropriate boundaries between caregivers and those they care for

Some Indicators of Abuse

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Is reluctant to be around or fearful to leave the side of a particular person
- Discloses maltreatment

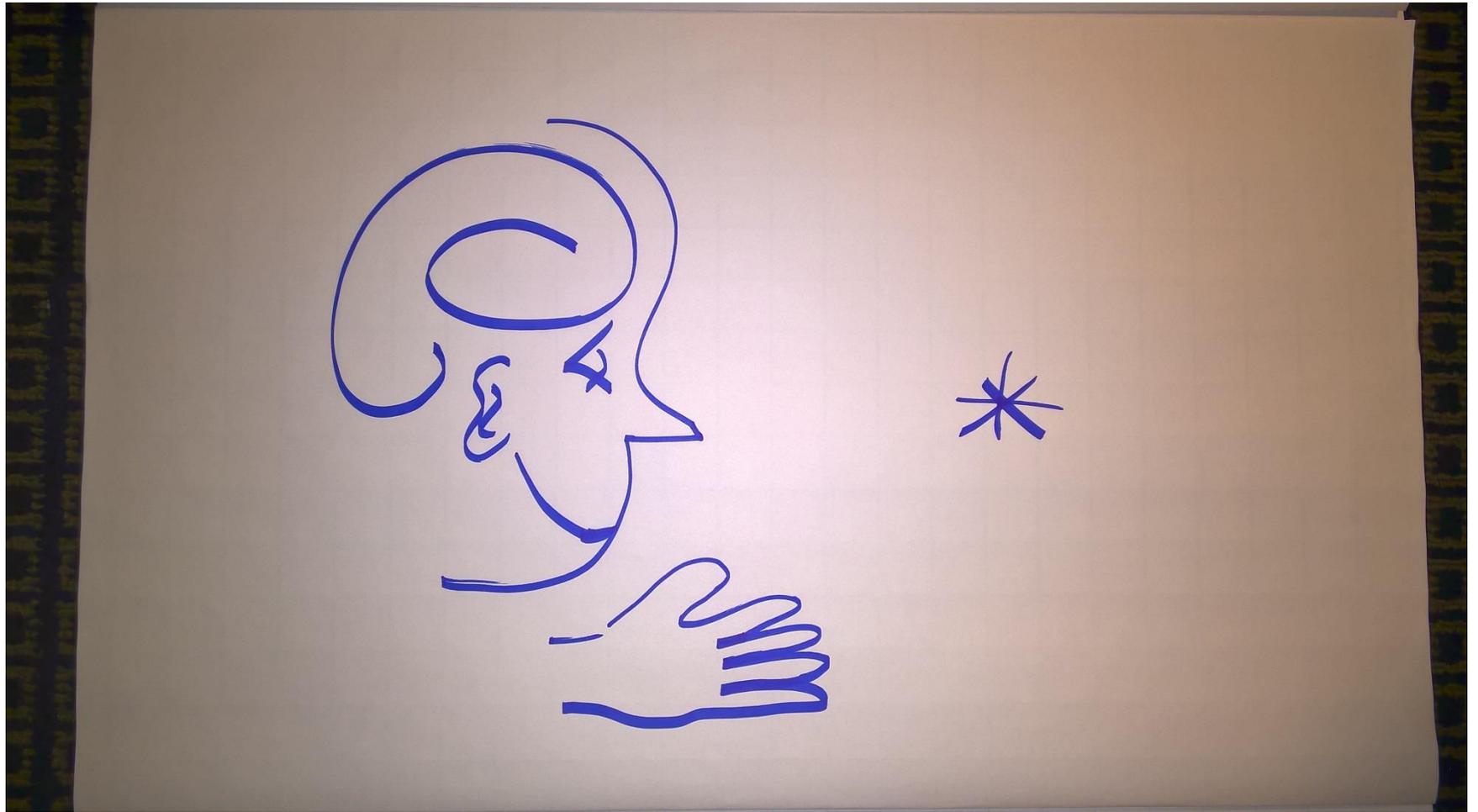
Attachment and Emotional Needs



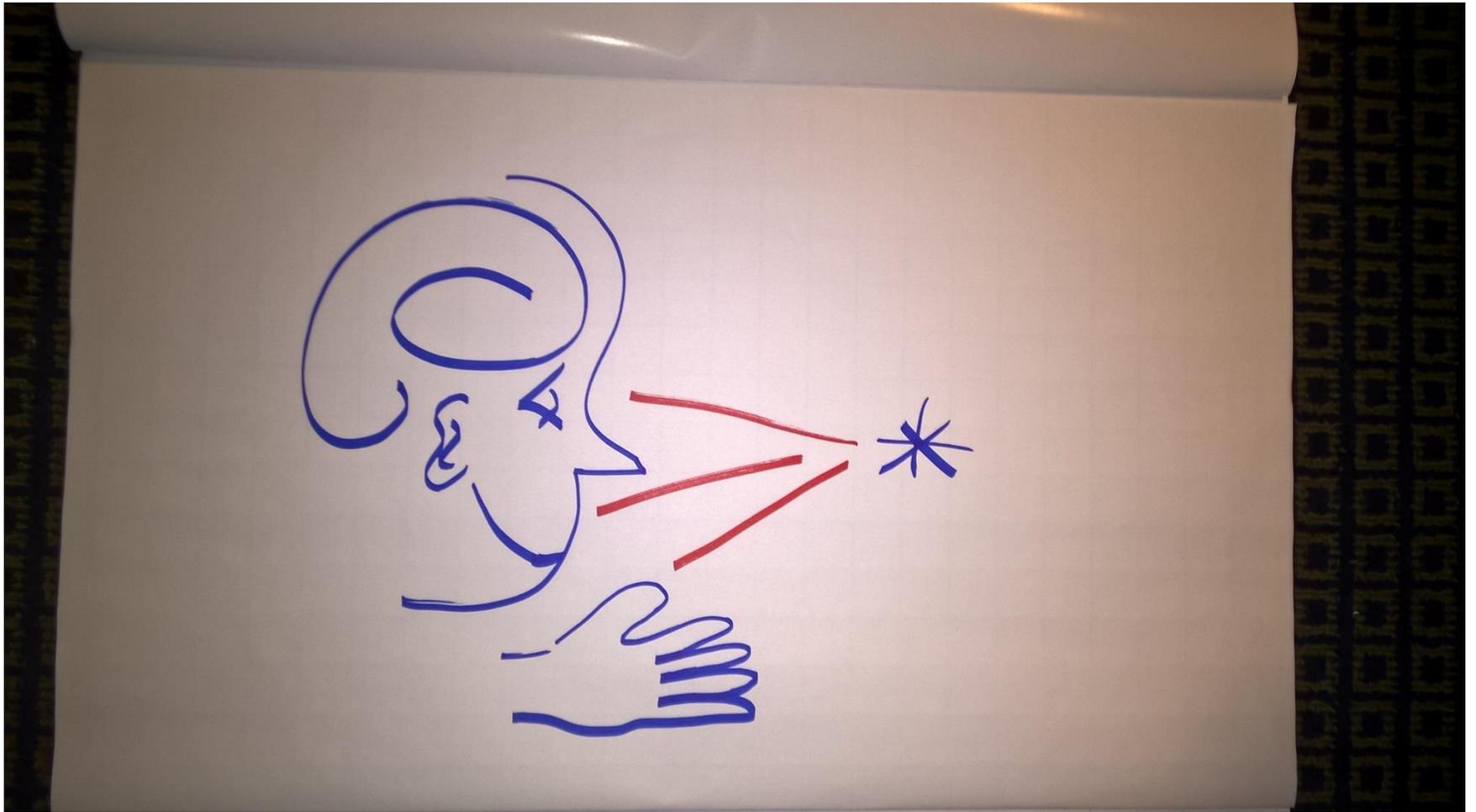
When Attachment Needs Are Not Met

- Individuals can be extremely emotionally needy
- They can be said to have experienced developmental trauma that impairs their later emotional and social development and functioning
- Other traumas that occur later in life can also interfere with our development and make us emotionally needy

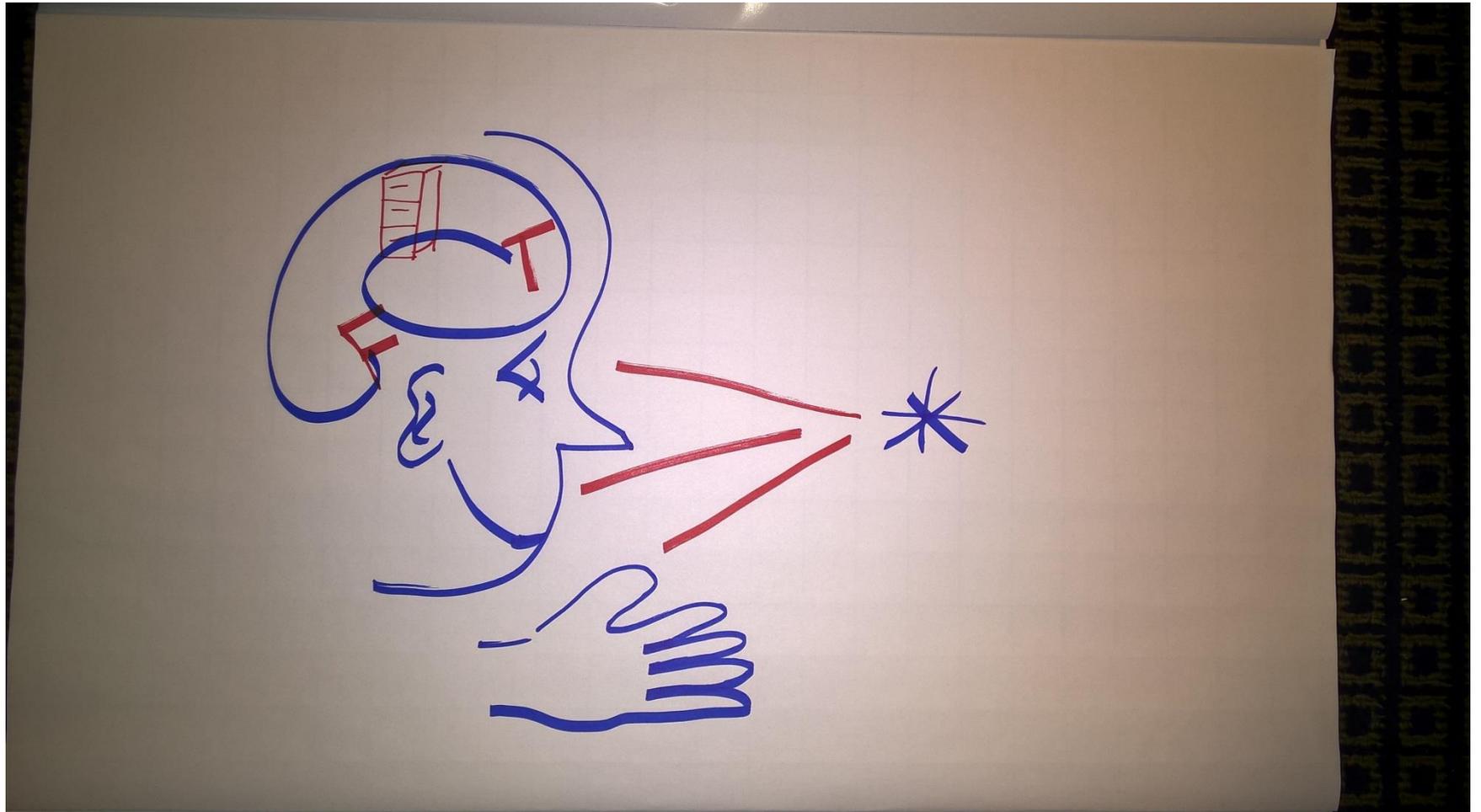
A Simple Model of Trauma



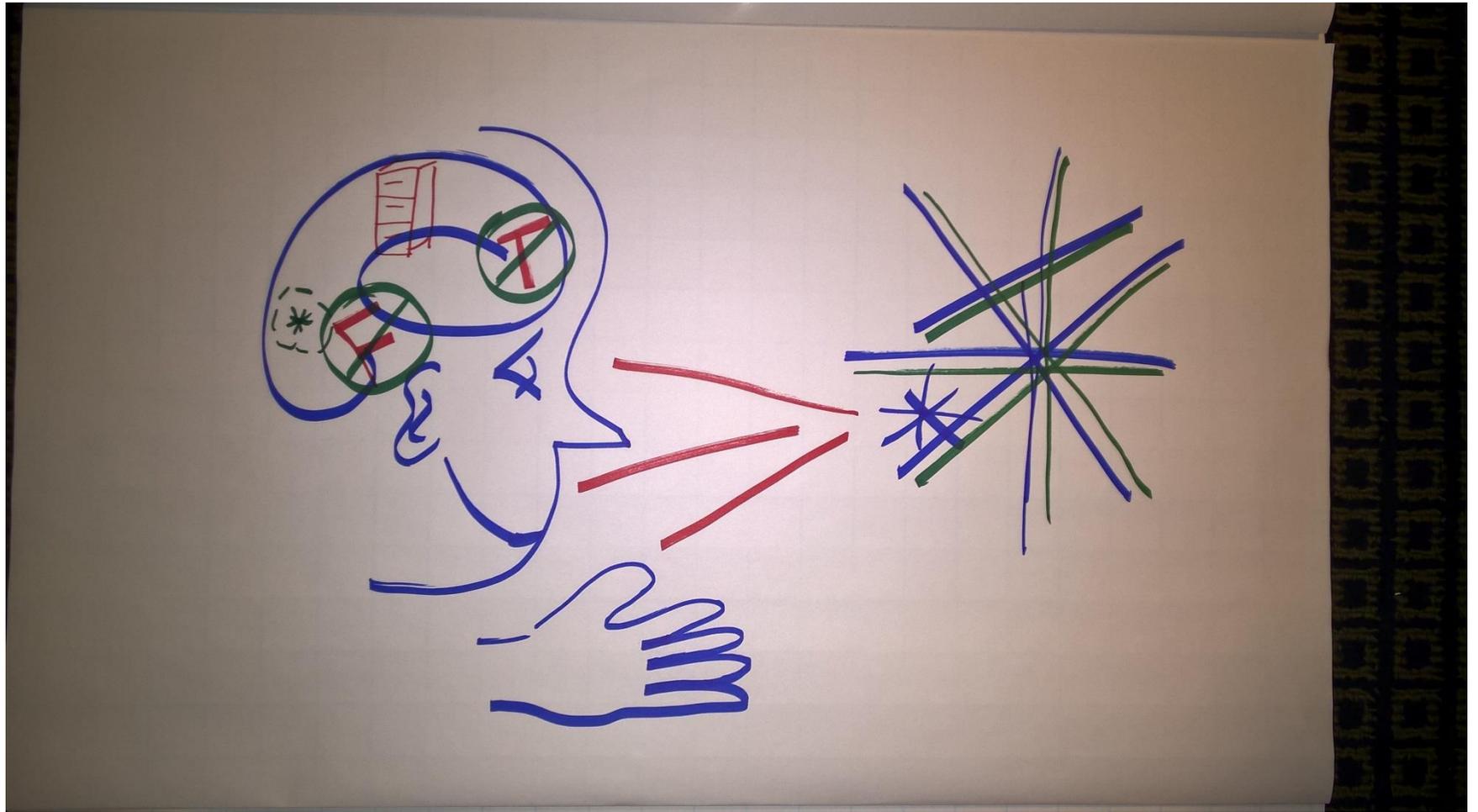
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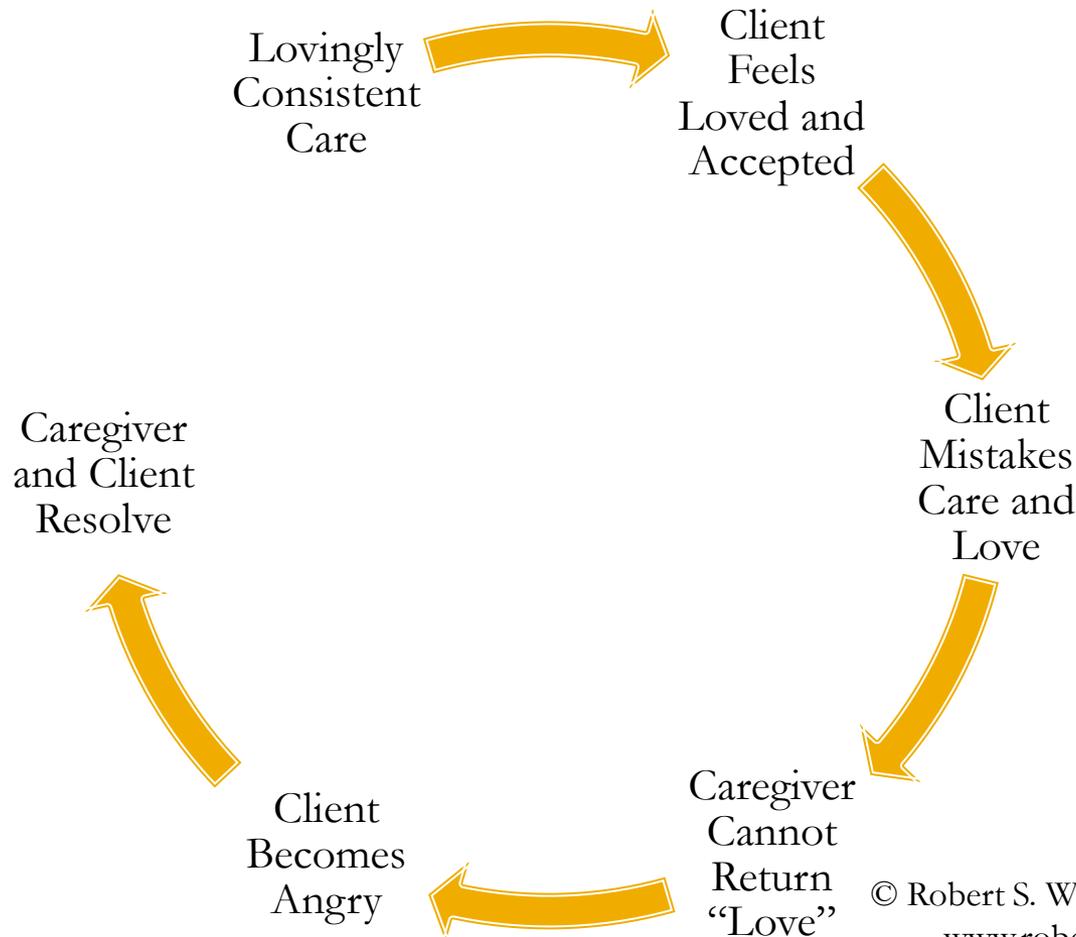
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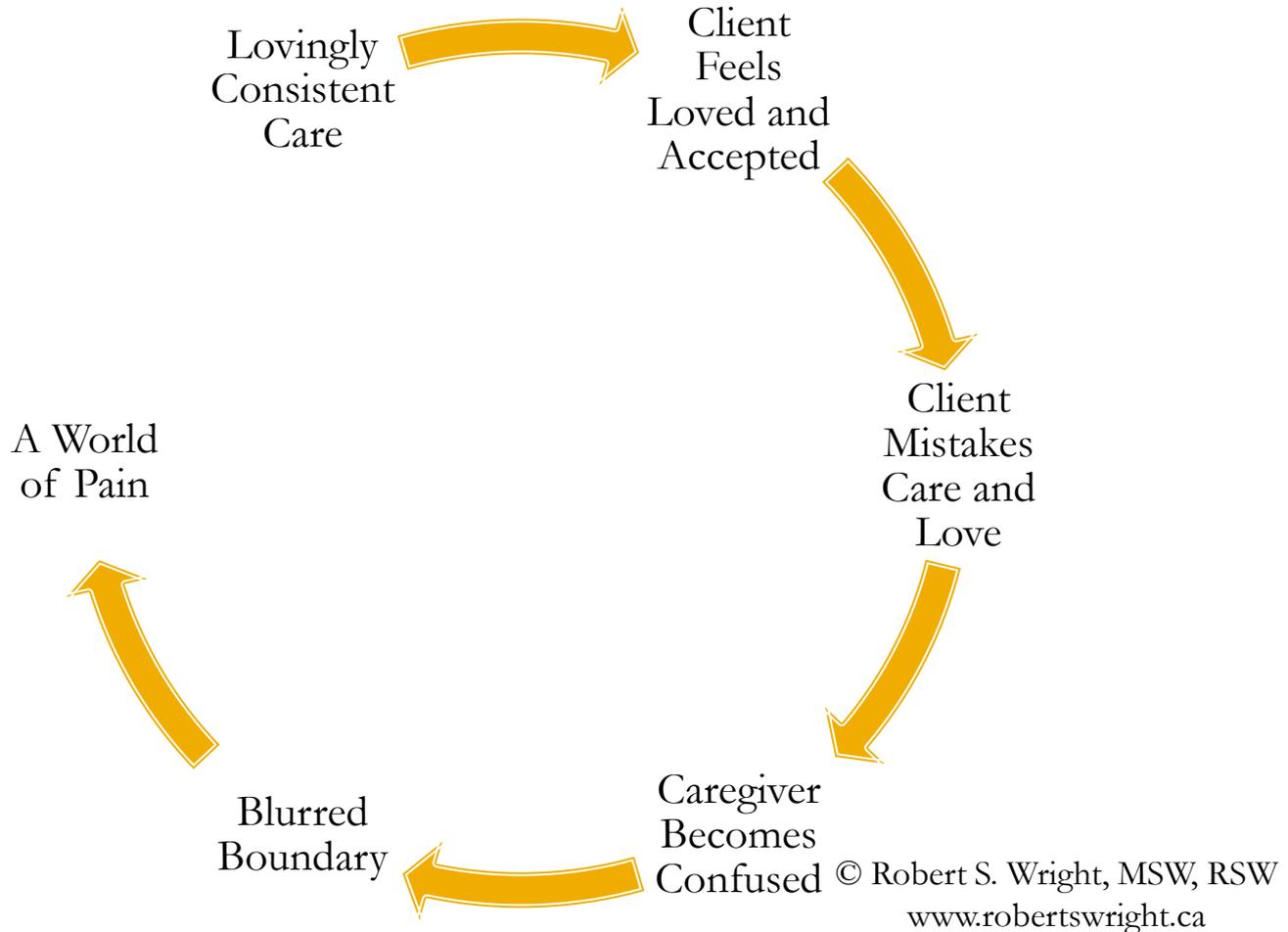
A Simple Model of Trauma



Transference and Counter-transference: The Caregivers Dilemma Resolved



Transference and Counter-transference: The Caregivers Dilemma unresolved



Safety for All!

- Staff and volunteers get training (as you just have)
- Staff and volunteers regularly talk about the needs and feelings of participants
- Staff and volunteers regularly talk about their own needs and feelings
- Programmes have a plan in place to support staff and volunteers who feel the need to report
- Programmes have ready access to professionals who can consult on difficult matters
- Staff and Volunteers “look out for each other” and don’t avoid difficult conversations when they see blurred boundaries
- Programmes communicate to participants that they have policies in place to keep participants safe

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