

Neurofeedback Training and Child Refugee Trauma Interventions in a Primary School Setting: A Pilot Study

Presented at AWCH 10th National conference

28 – 29 April 2005

Presenters:

Kerry Kenny

ESL Teacher

Marsden Road Public School



Mirjana Askovic

Psychologist

STARTTS



Marsden Road Public School

- state primary school at Liverpool
- 550 students
- 80% LBOTE
- many students from the former Yugoslavia
- since 2000 students from Iraq
- since 2003 students from Sudan

Partnership with STARTTS

first referral in 1999

counsellors working with children on school premises

special needs of Iraqi students

working with Mirjana and neurofeedback

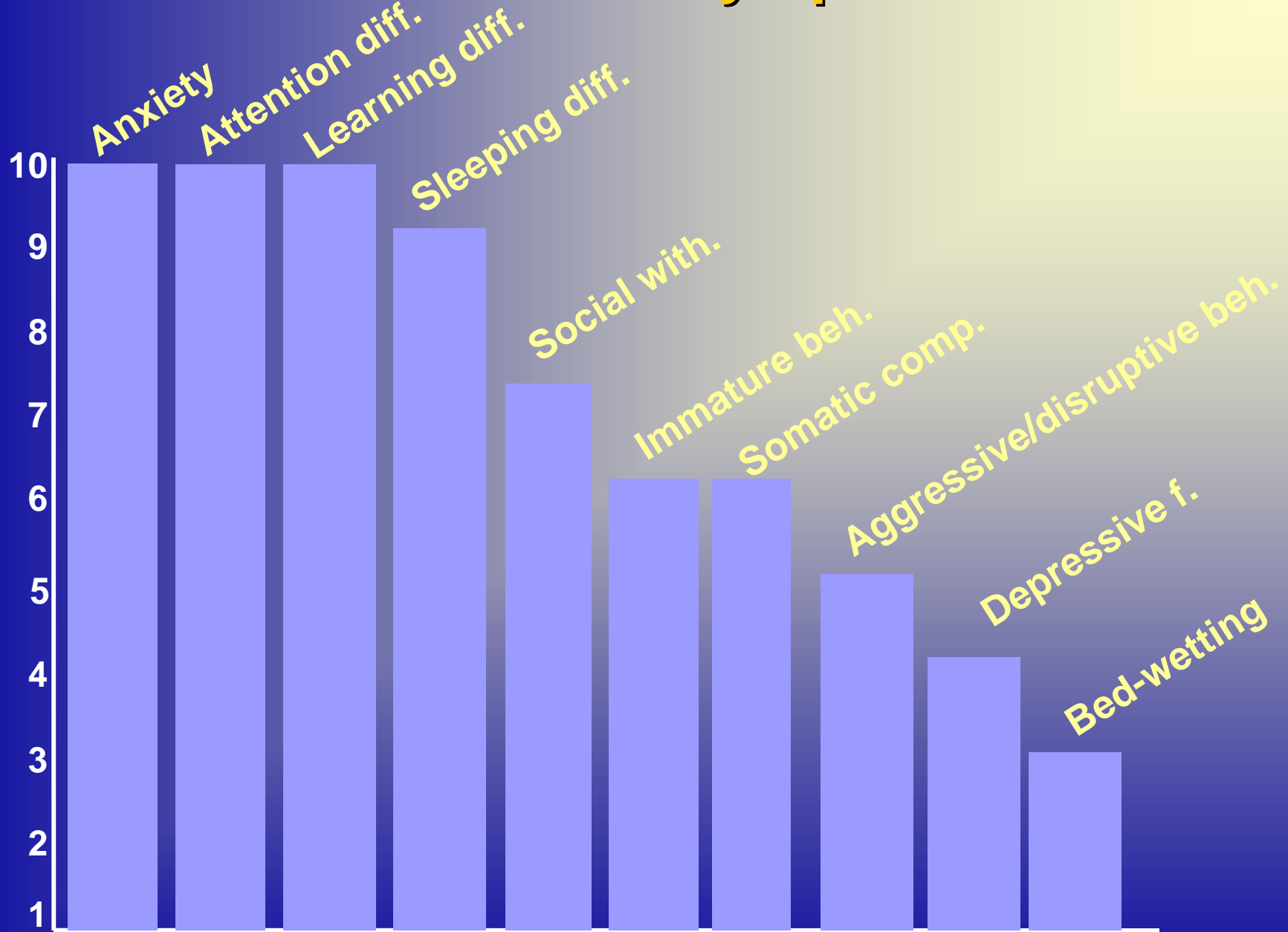
Major problem areas

**Learning difficulties
and academic
underachievement**

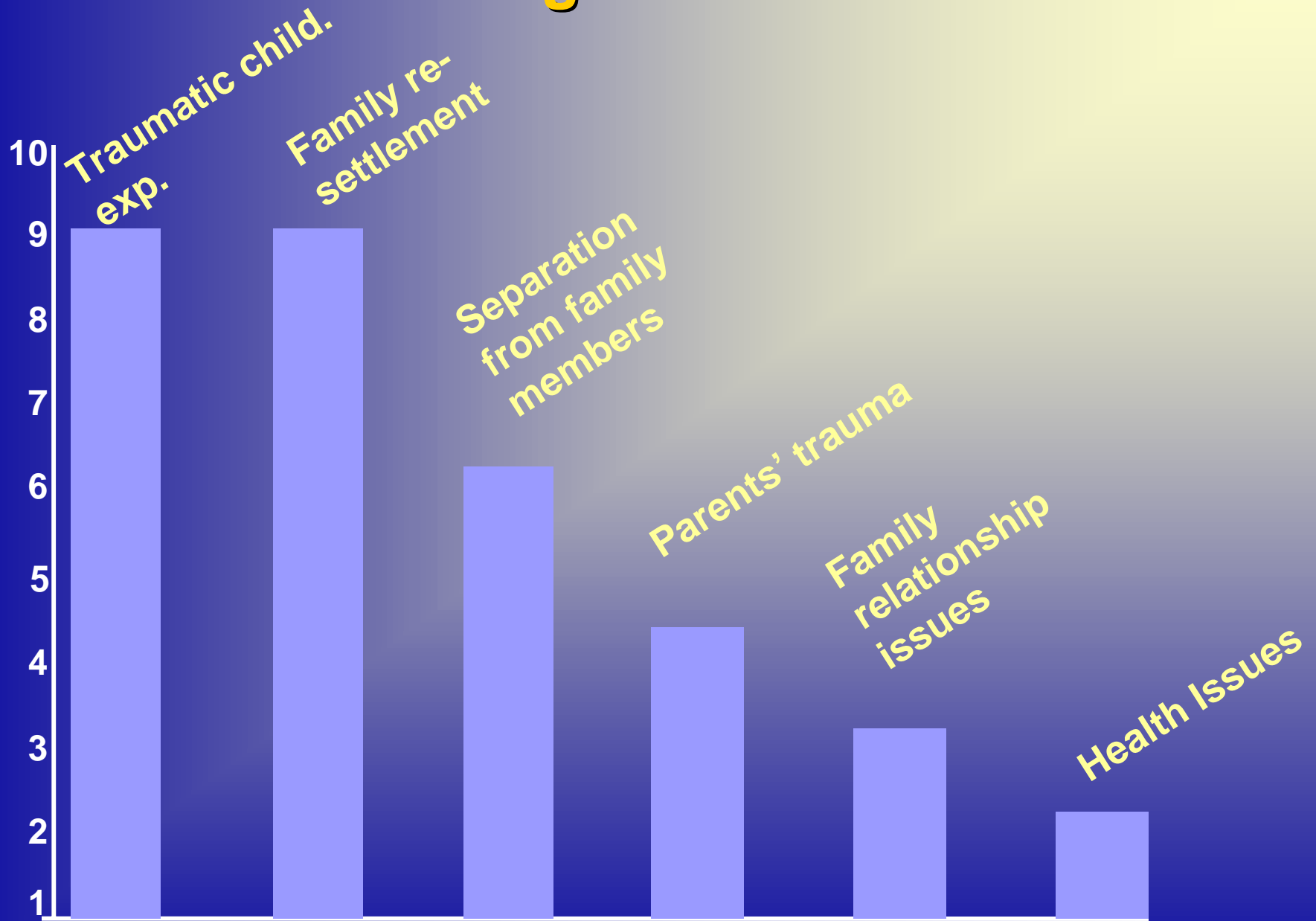
**Emotional and
psychological
difficulties**

**Family difficulties:
trauma, relationship,
settlement**

Children's symptoms



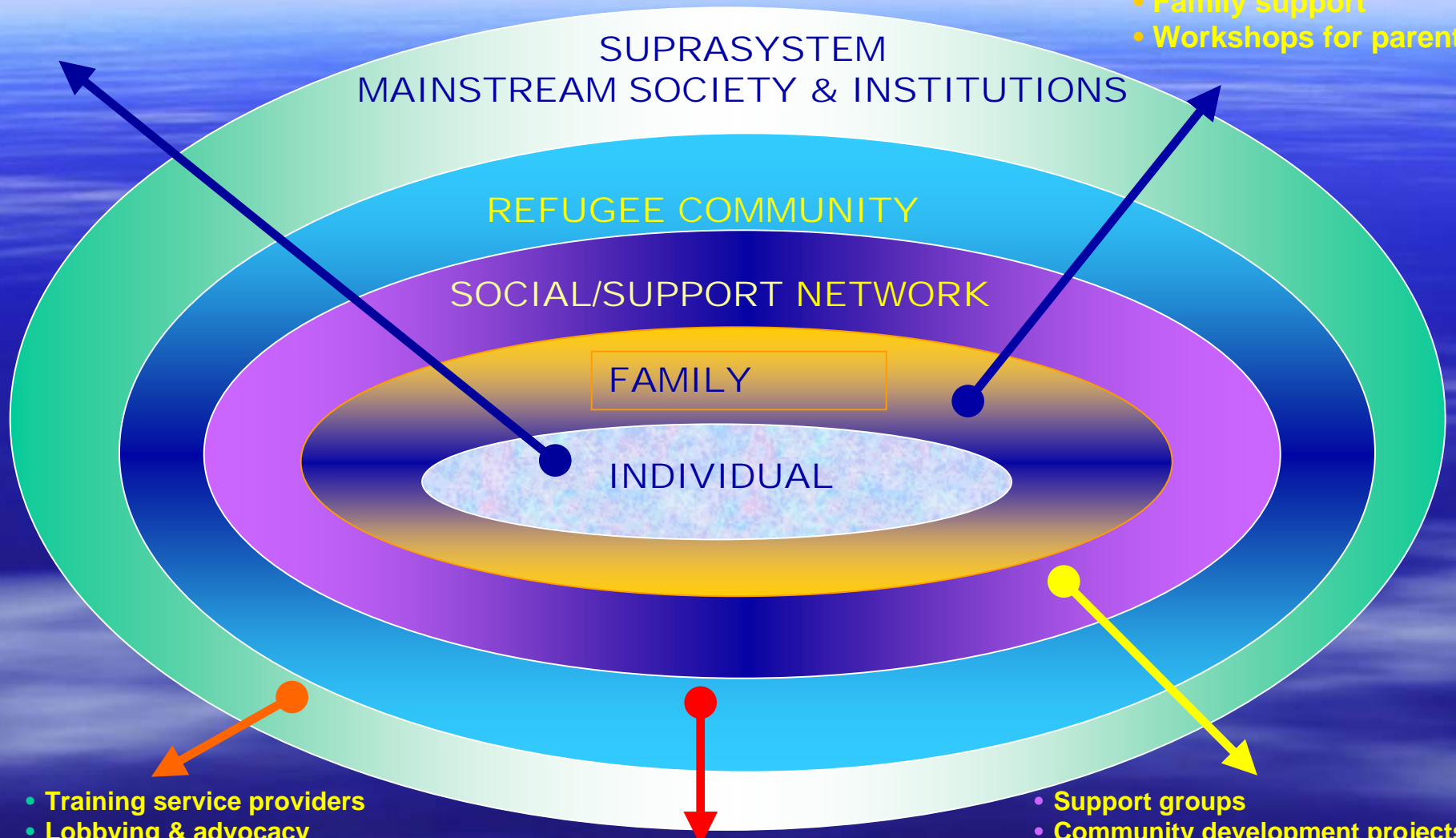
Other significant issues



A systemic approach (Bio-psycho-social model)

- Counselling
- Neurofeedback
- Group therapy/work

- Family therapy
- Family support
- Workshops for parents



- Training service providers
- Lobbying & advocacy
- Awareness raising
- Liaison with media/other agencies
- Consultancy
- Community education

- Community development projects
- Advocacy & lobbying
- Consultations
- Information/community education

- Support groups
- Community development projects
- Settlement information workshops
- Youth program
- Excursions
- English & craft classes

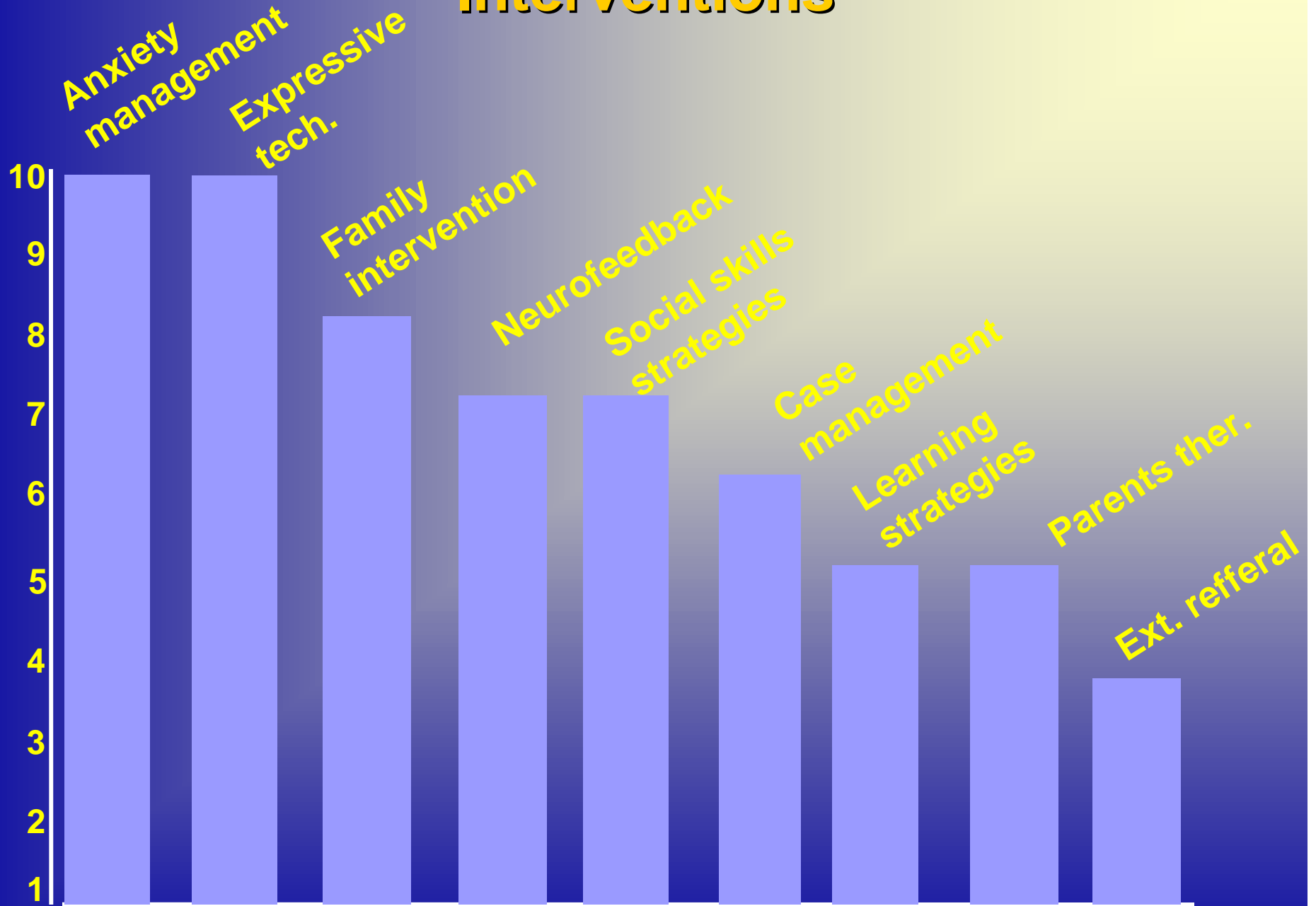
Neurofeedback

**as a therapy intervention that
addresses physiological
consequences of trauma:**

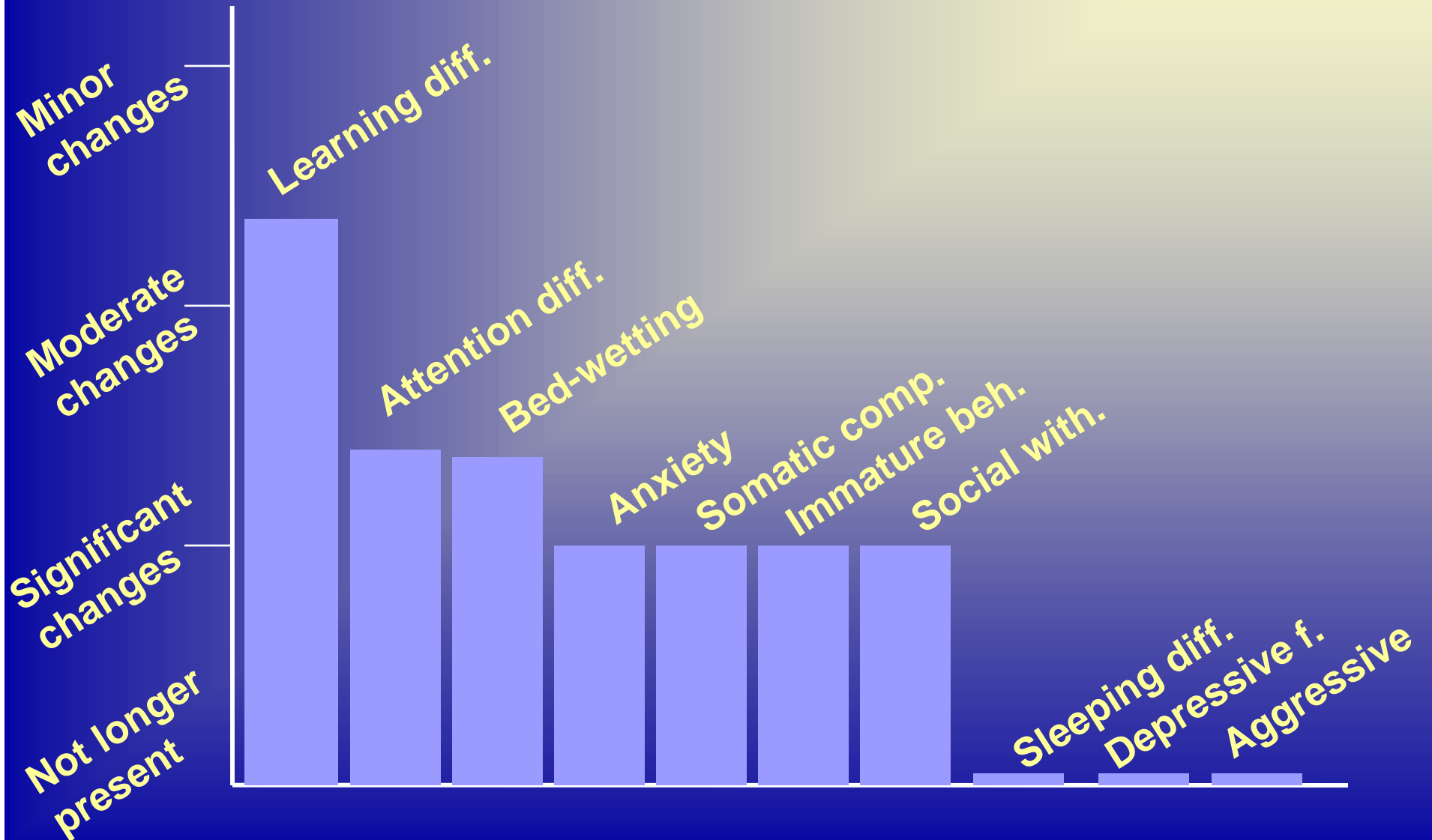
Hyperarousal

**Freezing,
numbing**

Interventions



Overall Changes in Children's Symptoms after 20 sessions



Discussion

- **Defining characteristics of refugees**
(Trauma, Loss and Deprivation)

and their impact on children's development

- **Special needs of refugee children**
- **Flexible model**

(Systemic approach bio-psycho- social variables)

1. Stabilizing brain functioning
2. Empowering individuals and families
3. Developing networks: the role of school, refugee communities and the community at large

Benefits of School-STARTTS Partnership

- 1. Children were seen on regular, consistent basis, with minimum disruptions to their daily routines.**
- 2. More effective use of counsellor time**
- 3. Improved two-way communication between trauma counsellor and teaching staff enabled us to work as a team to address children's needs and issues in the most effective way.**
- 4. Positive changes in parents' attitudes towards their children, the role of the school and STARTTS.**

Working in partnership...

Sharing a common understanding on the following:

- **Many refugee children will need special assistance at different points during their school years (sometimes over long periods. Trauma recovery process)**
- **The need to stimulate refugee families' participation in their children's school, education and to promote a better understanding of the education system (e.g. FICT)**
- **Over the years there are changes in the composition of the refugee population (so presenting issues and needs). Therefore, the need to consult, update and share knowledge about these communities.**
- **The importance of strengthening networks (schools, services and communities)**