

Karviter As An Experiential Learning Platform: A Case Study Of A Play Script And Intergenerational Trauma

(Karviter Sebagai Platform Pembelajaran Berasaskan Pengalaman: Satu Kajian Skrip Teater Dan Trauma Antara Generasi)

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods case study analyzes the Universiti Malaya theatre carnival (KARVITER) as an experiential learning platform for mental health awareness. The study investigates a significant gap in public discourse: the failure to attribute responsibility to detrimental parental upbringing as a root cause for the cycle of intergenerational trauma. The methodology involves a narrative analysis of the 2025 KARVITER script, *Kurung*, produced by PENTAZ Production (KK10), and a pre- and post-production survey (N=7) of the play's student committee. The narrative analysis confirms *Kurung* functions as a critical pedagogy text, dramatizing how authoritarian parenting (Hannah) leads to adult psychopathy (Haq) and perpetuates the trauma cycle (Airis). Survey data reveals that the process of production served as a complex intervention. While quantitative agreement on the primary cause of trauma became more nuanced, shifting from absolute certainty to multifactorial complexity (Mean T1=4.29, T2=3.86), participants' self-reported understanding significantly deepened (Mean=4.43). Qualitative data indicates a cognitive shift from binary blame to systemic empathy, particularly regarding the "micro-hurts" of abuse and the "mutation" of trauma visualized in the character of Airis. This study argues that KARVITER is a powerful, untapped tool for educating future generations on parental roles, providing a preventative intervention for intergenerational trauma.

Keywords: KARVITER, Experiential Learning, *Kurung*, Parental Upbringing, Cycle of Trauma, Authoritarian Parenting, Narrative Intervention

ABSTRAK

Kajian kes kaedah campuran ini menganalisis Karnival Teater Universiti Malaya (KARVITER) sebagai platform pembelajaran berasaskan pengalaman untuk kesedaran kesihatan mental. Kajian ini menyiasat satu jurang yang ketara dalam wacana awam: kegagalan untuk mengaitkan tanggungjawab terhadap didikan ibu bapa yang memudaratkan sebagai punca utama kitaran trauma antara generasi. Metodologi kajian melibatkan analisis naratif skrip KARVITER 2025, *Kurung*, terbitan PENTAZ Production (KK10), serta tinjauan pra- dan pasca-produksi (N=7) terhadap jawatankuasa pelajar pementasan tersebut. Analisis naratif mengesahkan *Kurung* berfungsi sebagai teks pedagogi kritikal, yang mementaskan bagaimana gaya asuhan autoritarian (Hannah) menjurus kepada psikopati dewasa (Haq) dan melangsungkan kitaran trauma (Airis). Data tinjauan mendedahkan bahawa proses produksi tersebut berfungsi sebagai satu intervensi yang kompleks. Walaupun persetujuan kuantitatif mengenai punca utama trauma menjadi lebih bernuansa, beralih daripada kepastian mutlak kepada kerumitan pelbagai faktor (Min T1=4.29, T2=3.86), pemahaman sendiri peserta mendalam dengan ketara (Min=4.43). Data kualitatif menunjukkan peralihan kognitif daripada menyalahkan secara binari kepada empati sistemik, terutamanya mengenai "kecederaan-mikro" (micro-hurts) akibat penderaan dan "mutasi" trauma yang divisualisasikan menerusi watak Airis. Kajian ini berhujah bahawa KARVITER adalah alat yang berkuasa dan belum diterokai sepenuhnya untuk mendidik generasi akan datang mengenai peranan keibubapaan, sekaligus menyediakan intervensi pencegahan untuk trauma antara generasi.

Kata Kunci: KARVITER, Pembelajaran Berasaskan Pengalaman, *Kurung*, Didikan Ibu Bapa, Kitaran Trauma, Gaya Asuhan Autoritarian, Intervensi Naratif

INTRODUCTION

The Karnival Teater Universiti Malaya (KARVITER) is a major annual event that showcases the creative talents of students from the university's residential colleges. While celebrated for its artistic merit, its function as a high-impact "experiential learning platform" remains critically unexamined. This study investigates KARVITER's potential as a pedagogical tool for one of society's most complex issues: mental health awareness.

The issue this study investigates is not merely the *existence* of mental illness, but its etiological roots. There exists a significant cultural and narrative silence surrounding the profound, causal link between detrimental parental upbringing and the subsequent cycle of intergenerational trauma that leads to severe adult mental health disorders. This gap is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where studies on student-parent communication and mental health are very limited and rarely found. This silence is often compounded by cultural stigma, where Asian students have a higher stigma and are more reluctant to seek professional help due to judgement from their families.

This study is significant because it explores how student participation in theatre, the very act of deconstructing and staging a challenging play, can serve as a powerful intervention to fill this knowledge gap. It provides a unique, arts-based approach to educating a high-risk demographic (university students) on their future parental roles as a preventative measure.

The objectives of this case study are:

- i. To analyze the *Kurung* script as a narrative intervention that confronts the problem of intergenerational trauma.
- ii. To measure the impact of *producing* *Kurung* on the production committee's perceptions of this problem.
- iii. To propose KARVITER as a formal model for educating university students on their future parental roles to help prevent this cycle of trauma.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study is a case study of the KARVITER platform, with the 2025 script *Kurung* serving as the central case. KARVITER is a long-standing and prestigious university-level theatre competition. As a student-run initiative, it functions as a site of learning-by-doing, where students take on all roles of production, from directing and acting to technical

management and marketing.

Kurung is a psychological thriller selected for the 2025 competition, produced by PENTAZ Production from Tun Ahmad Zaidi Residential College (KK10), Universiti Malaya. It revolves around three main characters: Haq, a charismatic man diagnosed with Erotomania; Aryan, his loyal, co-dependent companion with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD); and Airis, a psychiatrist whom Haq kidnaps and imprisons in a cage.

The script explicitly lists its primary themes as Psychological Manipulation and, most importantly for this study, the Cycle of Abuse. The narrative's core conflict is not just the kidnapping, but the revelation of why Haq is the way he is, tracing his psychosis back to his stepmother, Hannah.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Produced by PENTAZ Production from Tun Ahmad Zaidi Residential College (KK10), Universiti Malaya, the script follows a tragic dramatic arc that visualizes the transmission and mutation of trauma. The narrative is structured as follows:

- i. Exposure (The Etiological Root): The narrative begins by establishing the backstory of Hannah, a mother who employs an authoritarian, abusive, and transactional parenting style. Frustrated by her stepson Haq's perceived lack of utility, she verbally abuses him, deeming him a useless burden simply because he lacks the exceptional qualities or resources to serve her needs. This conditional love and chronic emotional neglect create the seed of Haq's eventual psychopathy, which ended by him severing Hannah's physical health.
- ii. Rising Action (The Symptom): In the present, Haq, now an adult exhibiting Erotomania and psychotic behavior, kidnaps his psychiatrist, Airis. Deprived of maternal affection, he constructs a delusional reality where Airis, a figure of authority and care, is destined to love him. He is aided by Aryan, a character suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Aryan's extreme obedience and dependence are the results of physical and psychological conditioning by Haq since childhood. Believing he must repay Haq's "kindness" for saving him from a harsh life as an orphan, Aryan becomes an enabler, assisting in Airis's confinement within a handmade cage (*sangkar*).
- iii. Conflict (The Mutation): The conflict evolves

beyond the kidnapping into a clash between Airis's clinical understanding of trauma and Haq's lived reality of it. As her confinement drags on, the gap between Haq's delusional "love story" and reality widens. Airis, initially frightened, begins to adapt to the trauma, turning aggressive.

- iv. She strategically digs into the backstories of her captors, Haq, the handicapped Hannah, and the subservient Aryan, discovering the fissures in their dynamic. A complex tension arises when Airis exploits a developing romantic undercurrent with Aryan, who is responsible for her care, using it as a wedge between the two men.
- v. Climax (The Eruption): The tension peaks when Airis, leveraging her professional psychological expertise, weaponizes Haq's instability and Aryan's confused loyalty. By manipulating Aryan's perspective towards his superior, Haq, she orchestrates a violent altercation that results in Aryan killing Haq. This moment represents the violent eruption of suppressed trauma, where the victim (Aryan) destroys the abuser (Haq) but is psychologically shattered in the process.
- vi. Resolution (The Cycle Continues): The play concludes with a dark resolution that signifies the "virus" of abuse has been successfully transmitted. Rather than escaping or healing Aryan, Airis traps him in the same cage she was confined in and kills Hannah. This final act demonstrates her complete psychological destabilization; she does not end the violence but inherits it, completing the cycle of trauma by becoming the new abuser.

ISSUE

The core problem statement, that a failure to understand the link between parenting and mental health perpetuates a cycle of trauma, is strongly supported by a wide body of clinical and psychological research. The seed of good mental health is planted as early as childhood, and parents act as the most powerful catalysts in this developmental process (Singh, 2017). The literature identifies distinct parenting styles, with the authoritarian style being most relevant to this study. This style is characterized by parents who expect strict commands to be obeyed, are obedience and status-oriented, and consistently fail to clarify the reasoning behind such rules (Singh, 2017; Uji et al., 2014).

This authoritarian style is identified as an unfavourable rearing strategy that clinical studies link to severe negative outcomes. Children raised in such environments often become anxious, withdrawn, or suffer from low self-esteem (Singh, 2017). More severely, this style is associated with antisocial behavior and a verifiable increase in symptomatic problems and risk to self and others (Uji et al., 2014).

Kurung's narrative premise is a direct dramatization of this clinical data. The play's backstory for Haq serves as a textbook example of familial violence, which research confirms is significantly more common and more severe in the families of patients with mental disorders compared to healthy controls (Bandelow et al., 2004). The link is not theoretical, it is a multifactorial reality where early trauma and unfavourable rearing combine to create the disorder (Bandelow et al., 2004).

This issue is amplified by cultural stigma. In the Malaysian context, where mental health awareness is still developing, familial judgment acts as a primary barrier to seeking help (Dimbulana et al., 2023; Latiffah et al., 2014). This sense of shame, forces a child to hide their illness, preventing early treatment and allowing the condition to persist into adulthood (Dimbulana et al., 2023). This dynamic, where the family is both the cause of the trauma and the barrier to its treatment creates the inescapable cycle that *Kurung* explores in the relationship between Haq and Hannah.

THEORY OF ANALYSIS (METHODOLOGY)

This study employs a Mixed-Methods Case Study design, integrating qualitative textual analysis with quantitative and qualitative survey data to provide a holistic analysis of the experiential learning process.

- i. Narrative Analysis: This involves a close textual deconstruction of the *Kurung* script to identify the specific dramaturgical techniques it uses as a narrative intervention. The analysis focuses on how the script executes its stated theme of the Cycle of Abuse and Trauma and how the cage is used as a physical and visual metaphor for the abstract confinement of intergenerational trauma.
- ii. Pre- and Post-Production Questionnaire: A two-part survey was administered to the *Kurung* production committee (N=7). The T1 (Pre-Production) survey measured baseline perceptions before the play, and the T2 (Post-Production) survey measured changes after the final performance. This tool captures the

learning process that occurs during the process of staging the play. The instrument consisted of four quantitative questions (5-point Likert scale) and open-ended qualitative questions.

Table 1 below outlines the specific questions used and the research objective (construct) each question was designed to measure.

TABLE 1. Questions and Research Objectives

Item Type	Question Content	Research Objective / Rationale
Q1 (Quantitative)	"A person's parental upbringing is a primary cause of their adult mental health."	To measure the cause: Determines if participants attribute the root cause of mental illness to family dynamics versus other factors.
Q2 (Quantitative)	"People who experience severe childhood abuse are likely to become abusers. (Cycle of Trauma)."	To measure Cyclical Beliefs: Assessing the participants' understanding of the transmissibility of trauma.
Q3 (Quantitative)	"KARVITER is an effective platform for raising deep awareness about the root causes of mental illness."	To measure Platform Efficacy: Validating the study's premise that student theatre is a viable educational tool.
Q4 (Quantitative)	"Most people in my community fully understand the serious, long-term impact that 'bad parenting' can have."	To measure Perceived Knowledge Gap: Identifying the need for this intervention.
Qualitative	"Who is to blame for an adult's violent behavior?" (T1)	To measure Nuance & Complexity: Capturing the specific experiential learning and identifying shifts in perspective that numbers cannot show.
	"How has your understanding changed?" (T2)	
	"How did Airis's transformation affect your view?" (T2)	

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores). In a focused case study cohort, mean scores are used to identify directional trends in perception pre- and post-production. A decrease in mean score indicates a shift toward nuance, while an increase indicates stronger agreement. Qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring sentiments regarding the complexity of trauma.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of the Kurung script and the committee survey data demonstrates that the production process functioned as a significant "experiential learning" intervention. The key findings are twofold.

Narrative Finding: Kurung as an Intervention

The script functions as a model of intervention by dramatizing the consequences of authoritarian parenting. The character of Hannah is a perfect dramatization of the authoritarian parent defined in the literature. Her verbal abuse of Haq: "*Anak tak guna. Menyusahkan. Menyesal jaga aku*" (a line from the original script) is a textbook example of insufficient love and care from a parent towards her child and directly mirrors the punitive control described in the literature, resulting in her son suffering from mental disorder.

Dramatizing the Cycle of Trauma

The script's most profound intervention is its ending. Kurung does not offer a simple resolution. Instead, the psychiatrist Airis, having been infected by the trauma, tricks Aryan into the cage, becoming an abuser herself.

This visualizes the central theme of this study, the cycle of trauma as the true antagonist, and it is contagious without intervention. As one respondent powerfully noted, "Trauma doesn't just break people. Sometimes it reshapes them into the very thing they were hurt by" .

Experiential Finding: The "Deepening of Complexity"

The survey data reveals that the committee's learning was not a simple increase in agreement, but a significant *nuancing* of their understanding.

Quantitative Analysis: A Shift from Certainty to Nuance The quantitative data shows the committee began with a high level of agreement, which was then complicated by the production process.

Q1 (Parenting as Primary Cause)

The mean score decreased from 4.29 to 3.86. This statistical drop is significant because it represents a shift from certainty to complexity. Initially, the committee viewed bad parenting as the definitive,

Change in Perceptions: Pre- vs. Post-Production (N=7)

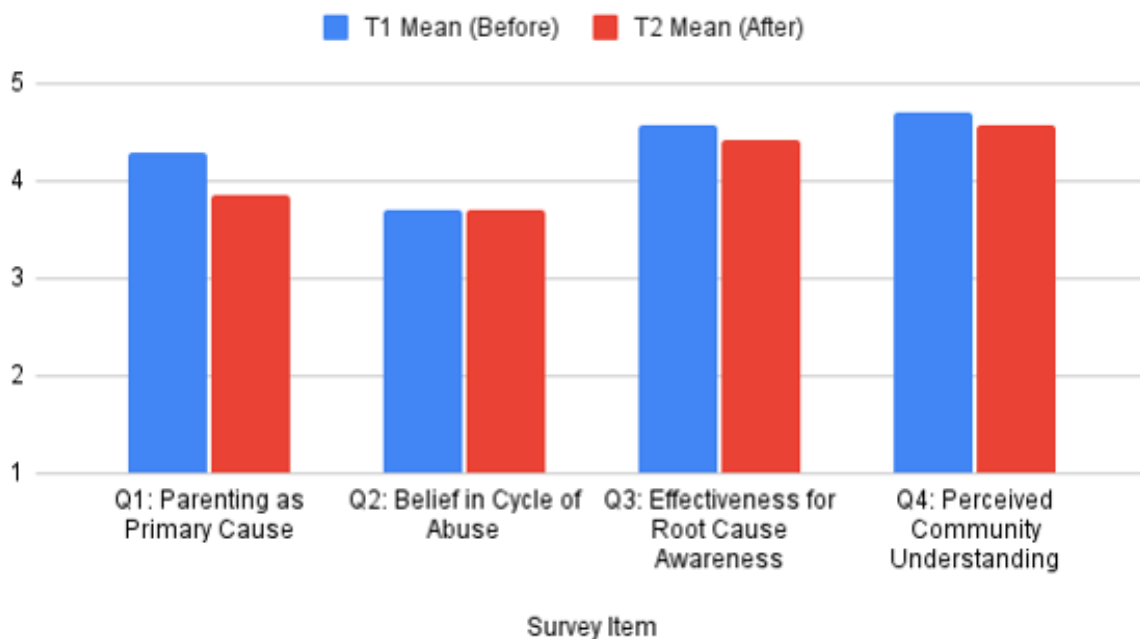


DIAGRAM 1. Charts on Change in Perception: Pre- vs. Post-

singular root of the problem. However, the production process introduced them to conflicting variables. For instance, in qualitative analysis, the actor playing Hannah noted that neurobiological factors and brain chemistry also play a role, not just upbringing . The drop in score, therefore, does not indicate that parenting is unimportant, but rather that the students have adopted a more sophisticated, multifactorial worldview where parenting is one crucial part of a larger, messy biological and social puzzle.

Q2 (Likelihood of Trauma Cycle)

The score remained stable at 3.71, reinforcing the play's central theme that abuse begets abuse. While the number remained stable, the qualitative context reveals that the nature of this belief deepened. The students didn't just agree that the cycle exists, they witnessed

its mechanism. The stability suggests that while they intellectually understood the cycle beforehand, the play forced them to confront its inevitability and mutation. As one respondent observed regarding Airis, "Trauma can mutate... showing how even those who understand trauma intellectually are not immune". The stable score reflects a continued agreement with the premise, but the production moved that agreement from a theoretical concept to a lived reality.

Q3 (Effectiveness of KARVITER)

High agreement (Mean 4.43) validated the platform's utility. The consistently high score validates the core thesis of this study, where participation is a superior teacher to a usual passive observation. The slight fluctuation is negligible compared to the overwhelming qualitative evidence that the process itself such as

rehearsals, script discussions, and blocking for the actors on stage was the primary educational tool. Respondents explicitly linked this hands-on platform to their new understanding, stating that watching the cast explore their characters allowed them to realize the complexity of a person's behaviour in a way a lecture could not.

Q4 (Perceived Community Knowledge)

The mean score remained high but showed a slight decrease (4.71 to 4.57). The committee began with a strong belief that their community already understood the impacts of bad parenting. However, the slight drop in post-production is revealing. It suggests that as the students engaged with the script's complex portrayal of trauma (e.g., the "mutation" of Airis and the "micro-hurts", the subtle, cumulative instances of verbal invalidation and emotional neglect, of Hannah), they realized that the general public's understanding is likely superficial. They learned that knowing abuse is bad is not the same as fully understanding the invisible, cyclical mechanisms dramatized in *Kurung*, reinforcing the need for such narrative interventions to bridge that gap.

Qualitative Analysis: Experiential Learning in Process

While the quantitative data indicates that a shift occurred, the qualitative responses reveal the mechanism of this learning. The textual analysis of the open-ended responses identifies three distinct cognitive shifts that validates the experiential learning model.

From Binary Blame to Systemic Empathy

Prior to production (T1), respondents largely adhered to a binary view of abuse, focusing primarily on attributing blame to the abuser's choice to harm others. However, the immersive process of acting compelled the committee to humanize these complex figures. The respondent portraying Hannah experienced a profound cognitive dissonance during performance, noting that 'the mother was strict on her son but still loved him dearly... due to the son's mental disability, he took it differently'. This reflection highlights a pivotal shift away from perceiving abusers as one-dimensional villains, objects of instinctive hatred by many, towards a more sophisticated understanding. By embodying the character, the student recognized the tragedy of miscommunication and the neurobiological factors

at play. The committees learned that abuse often originates from a distorted attempt at care or control rather than pure malice, a level of empathetic nuance that is exceptionally difficult to replicate in a traditional classroom setting.

The "Mutation" of Trauma (The Airis Effect)

The most significant conceptual breakthrough for the committee was understanding the contagious nature of trauma, visualized specifically through the character of Airis. Respondents described her transformation as proof that trauma can mutate, noting that even those who understand trauma intellectually, like a psychiatrist, are not immune to its effects emotionally. Another respondent powerfully concluded that trauma, when left unhealed, can turn victims into people who repeat harmful behaviours, a sentiment that perfectly encapsulates the nature of the cycle of abuse.

This finding directly validates the *Kurung* script as a Critical Model. The students realized that trauma is not a static event but a dynamic force that reshapes the victim, transforming a character perceived as lawful and sane into an unnatural reflection of her abuser. The realization that a healer (Airis) could become a jailer (trapping Aryan) forced the committee to abandon the safety of the binary 'us vs. them' narrative, where abusers and victims are distinct categories, and accept the terrifying reality that the cycle can claim anyone.

The "Process" as Pedagogy

Finally, the data confirms that the duration and intensity of the production were the primary drivers of this awareness. When asked for a specific moment of learning, one respondent corrected the premise and stated: "For me, it wasn't one specific moment, it was the overall production... from rehearsals, script discussions, blocking... I started to realise how complex a person's behaviour truly is".

This is the strongest evidence for KARVITER as an educational platform. The deep awareness was not triggered by a single lecture or performance, but by the repetitive, physical act of production: blocking, planning, critical discussion, and rehearsal. These routine theatrical activities, often viewed merely as logistical necessities, function here as profound mechanisms of learning. This lived experience of the play allowed the students to internalize the complex causal links of intergenerational trauma in a manner that was both cumulative and transformative.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key implication of this study is that KARVITER is a high-impact educational resource. The experience of producing *Kurung* forced the student committee to grapple with the complexities of trauma in a way that a lecture, an article or a mere performance could not. This experiential learning can be formalized to serve a preventative public health goal, which is educating university students as future parents.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

It is recommended that KARVITER organizers formally recognize the carnival as a structured experiential learning platform. To maximize this potential, organizers should implement a formal reflective practice component for all participating committee members, rather than limiting such engagement to the creative leads (directors and actors). This could take the form of post-production vivas with judges or facilitated discussions with university counselors, designed to help students process the complex social issues embedded in their productions. As an institution that upholds the importance of academic value, the university must ensure this platform serves as a space for critical intellectual inquiry, elevating the carnival from a site of mere entertainment to one of substantial academic and social learning. This shift would allow students to deepen their understanding of the social impact developed throughout their months of preparation.

Concurrently, it is recommended that the university's Student Wellness and Counseling Centers establish a strategic partnership with the Faculty of Creative Arts, residential colleges, and the Student Union to develop 'Future Parent' workshops. To ensure efficacy, these programs should integrate immersive, art-based pedagogies, such as interactive plays or creative performances, that effectively capture student engagement, rather than relying solely on traditional lectures. This approach is strongly supported by the committee's own qualitative feedback, which explicitly proposed initiatives such as a 'Critical Thinking & Social Awareness Workshop,' 'Trauma-Informed Leadership Training,' and a 'Childhood Memory Lab.' By utilizing theatrical tools to teach emotional literacy and conflict resolution, these workshops would provide a practical, hands on framework for preventing the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Finally, adopting this model would directly answer the urgent call from Malaysian public health researchers for new, culturally specific interventions to improve family communication and mental health. By integrating theatrical expression with psychological education, the university can offer a novel, engaging programme that transcends traditional workshops. This approach effectively positions student theatre not just as an art form, but as a frontline, preventative measure for intergenerational trauma in the community.

CONCLUSION

This case study concludes that KARVITER transcends its traditional role as a student arts festival to function as a high-impact platform for critical pedagogy. The analysis confirms that the *Kurung* script serves as a narrative intervention by forcing a direct confrontation with the cultural taboo linking authoritarian parenting to the cycle of trauma.

Unlike sentimental narratives that aim merely for sympathy, *Kurung's* critical model utilizes discomfort, specifically the "mutation" of the psychiatrist Airis into an abuser, to force a higher level of cognitive engagement. The findings demonstrate that this experiential learning resulted in a valuable deepening of complexity among the committee members. The data confirms that the immersive physical process of production moved students beyond a binary "Us vs. Them" narrative, compelling them to recognize that trauma is not just a tragedy for the other, but a contagious cycle that can affect anyone.

Ultimately, by educating university students not just as artists, but as critics and future parents, this arts-based intervention provides a tangible strategy to address the silence surrounding mental health in Malaysia. It is imperative that the university formalizes this potential, transforming KARVITER from a site of ephemeral entertainment into a sustainable, preventative public health intervention that breaks the cycle of intergenerational trauma before it begins.

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