Trauma-Informed Approaches in Our Community

Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative
September 17, 2019
When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” To this day, especially in times of “disaster,” I remember my mother’s words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world.

Fred Rogers
Today’s Presenter

Karen Johnson, MSW, LCSW
Senior Director of Trauma-Informed Services
National Council for Behavioral Health
Overview

• Prevalence and Impact of Trauma
• Trauma-Informed Approaches in Our Daily Work
What is Resilience?

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

What is Trauma?

Definition (SAMHSA Experts 2012) includes three key elements.

Individual trauma results from an *event* series of events, or set of circumstances that is *experienced* by an individual as overwhelming or life-changing and that has profound *effects* on the individual’s psychological development or well-being, often involving a physiological, social, and/or spiritual impact.
Intergenerational, Historical and Cumulative Trauma
“Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences.”

Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003
Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience
Aaron R. Denham, 2008

Historical Trauma and Cultural Healing, University of Minnesota Extension  http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/cyfc/our-programs/historical-trauma-and-cultural-healing/
Trauma Shapes Our Beliefs

➢ Worldview
➢ Spirituality
➢ Identity

We do not see things the way they are. We see them as we are.

Heather Marcus
Survival Mode Response
Trauma’s Impact on the Body

![Diagram showing the FIGHT or FLIGHT response and its effects on the body.](image)

NOTICEABLE EFFECTS
- Pupils dilate
- Mouth goes dry
- Neck + shoulder muscles tense
- Heart pumps faster
- Chest pains
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Muscles tense for action
- Breathing fast + shallow - hyperventilation
- Oxygen needed for muscles

HIDDEN EFFECTS
- Brain gets body ready for action
- Adrenaline released for fight/flight
- Blood pressure rises
- Liver releases glucose to provide energy for muscles
- Digestion slows - or ceases
- Sphincters close - then relax
- Cortisol released (depresses the immune system)

F. Hedges
Trauma and the Human Stress Response
Important Concept
Use Dependent Development

The more a neural system is activated, the more that system changes to reflect that pattern of activation.

©

Dr. Bruce D Perry  2004-2015
Survival Mode Response

Inability to

- Respond
- Learn
- Process
Loneliness
Adverse Childhood Experiences
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression
Emotional & Sexual Abuse
Substance Abuse
Domestic Violence

Physical & Emotional Neglect
Divorce
Mental Illness
Incarceration

Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty
Discrimination
Community Disruption
Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital
Poor Housing Quality & Affordability
Violence

Ellis W., Dietz W. BCR Framework Academic Peds (2017)
How Childhood Trauma Can Make You a Sick Adult
Trauma is a risk factor for Substance Abuse

Substance Abuse is a risk factor for Trauma
Started Drinking Alcohol Prior to Age 15
Illicit Drug Use Before Age 15
Illicit Drug Use as an Adult
Gabor Mate’s Definition of Addiction

Any behavior that is associated with:

• Craving and temporary relief
• Long-term negative consequences

That a person is unable to give up

Early emotional loss is the template for all addictions
Addiction and the Brain

As Gabor Mate notes in his book, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, those with substance use disorder “self-medicate to sooth their emotional pain – but more than that, their brain development was sabotaged by their traumatic experiences.”

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we’ve experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection.  

_Brene Brown_
“An addict needs shame like a man dying of thirst needs salt water”

Terrence Real
What can we do?

• Prioritize the relationship
• Seek ways to build connection
• Embrace compassion instead of punishment
• Ensure screening for addictions
• Support the inclusion of evidence-based/informed services and supports, e.g.:
  – Medication assisted treatment
  – Recovery coaches
Becoming Trauma-Informed in Our Daily Work
We begin to ask, “What happened to you?” rather than “What is wrong with you?”

We have to ask, “What’s strong?” rather than “What’s wrong?”

Who’s lens do you look through?
Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4816/SMA14-4816.pdf
Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment
- Voice and choice
- Respect for cultural, historical and gender differences
- Peer support and mutual self-help

SAFETY
A Trauma-Informed Organization Includes

- Safe, calm, and secure environment with supportive care
- System-wide understanding of trauma prevalence, impact and trauma-informed care
- Cultural competence and humility
- Consumer and staff voice, choice and advocacy
- Recovery-oriented, consumer-driven, trauma-specific services
- Healing, hopeful, honest and trusting relationships
Screen for Trauma

Response

Inquiry

Education
Honor the Family and Youth Voice
Educate about Trauma

There is hope beyond hurt.

Trauma and toxic stress involve feeling overwhelmed by difficult life experiences that can lead to physical, emotional, and substance use problems.

We can help. Healing is possible.
Create Safe Spaces

Intentionally focus on:

• Fostering mutuality
• Decreasing rules and compliance
• How the environment affects senses
• Language
**Culture is**...the shared values, traditions, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people that are *unified by* race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religious beliefs, spirituality, socioeconomic status, social class, sexual orientation, politics, gender, age, disability, or any *other cohesive group variable.*

*Singh, 1998*

**Culture is**...the *communication and interaction guide* of any cohesive group of people

*Sockalingam, 2019*
Cultural Humility is another way to understand and develop a process-oriented approach to competency.

“the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]”
Hook et al, 2013

-Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998
Cultural Humility

Practicing Cultural Humility

A sk questions in a humble, safe manner
S eek Self-Awareness
S uspend Judgment
E xpress kindness and compassion
S upport a safe and welcoming environment
S tart where the patient is at

- Lisa Boesen

Practicing Cultural Humility TheLinkBetweenWorlds.com from Google Images
Build Protective Factors

Behaviors, characteristics and qualities inherent in some personalities that will assist in recovery after exposure to a traumatic event

- Environment
- A reliable support system (friends, family)
- Access to safe and stable housing
- Timely and appropriate care from first responders
- Good self care, such as sleeping at least 8 hours a night
- Eating nutritious foods
- Exercise
- Practicing good boundaries
- Using positive coping mechanisms vs. negative coping mechanisms
Language Matters

- Vocabulary reinforces feelings and beliefs
- Helps guide behavior
- Leads to greater options for acting
- Allows us to be able to recognize resilience in self/others
Three Statements of Resilience

I Have…
  a recognition of what is available

I Am…
  a recognition of my value

I Can…
  a recognition of mastery, sense of the future

-Strengthening the Human Spirit by Edith Grotberg, PhD 1995
Help Individuals Self-Regulate

Activate Social Engagement:

1. **Healing Power of Community**
   Expressed in Music, Rhythm, Theatre and Nature
2. **Exercise & Play**
3. **Practicing Connection**

Parks and recreation areas provide unique opportunities for providers. Engagement with nature enhances mental, physical, and social health. Recent studies suggest 2 hours a week in nature can improve wellness.
Square Breathing

[Diagram showing the process of Square Breathing with arrows indicating Inhale, Hold, Exhale, Hold phases each lasting 4 seconds.]
Build Relationships

Honor voice and choice
Partner with people
Request feedback
Ensure comfort

“Keep the Human in Human Services”
-Dr. Pat Deegan
TALK less .. LISTEN more ..
Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another

I feel with you, I am with you

Sympathy

I feel for you. I see you over there and that sucks, so I am glad I’m over here.
Understand the Mind/Body Connection
Grounding Exercise

- Hold a pillow, stuffed animal or a ball
- Place a cool cloth on your face, or hold something cool such as a can of soda
- Listen to soothing music
- Put your feet firmly on the ground
- FOCUS on someone’s voice or a neutral conversation
- 5-4-3-2-1 Game
Compassion in Our Work and Our World

The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.

Albert Schweitzer
“That which is to give light must endure burning”

Viktor Frankl
Work Force Concerns

Compassion Fatigue
Secondary Traumatic Stress
Vicarious Trauma
Burnout
**Compassion Resilience**

The ability to maintain our physical, emotional and mental well-being while responding compassionately to people who are suffering.

**Compassion Satisfaction**

The ability to experience pleasure from doing the work.
Build Resilience
Individual and Organizational

Expectations
• Realistic ones for yourself
• Realistic ones for others

Boundary Setting
• Know what you want/can say ‘yes’ to

Staff Culture
• Connecting with colleagues in a way that heals & helps

Self-Care
• Mind
• Spirit
• Strength
• Heart

https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/
Take Care of Ourselves
What Can I/We Do Next?

What do I/we need to....

✓ Keep Doing
✓ Change Doing
✓ Start Doing
✓ Stop Doing
Articles related to Environmental Justice and Trauma

Questions & Discussion
Thank You!