Helping Trauma Survivors Cope
How to Develop a Supportive Community

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What is Trauma?

**Shock Trauma:**
- Overwhelms ability to cope
- Danger to life or bodily safety
- A person is unable to bring body and mind back into balance after the event is over

**Developmental Trauma:**
- Chronic misattunement between child and primary caregiver
- Chronic abuse, neglect, or other harsh adversity that disrupt attachment
- Comes with a unique set of symptoms that differ from PTSD

Examples of Traumatic Events

- Physical, sexual abuse, neglect
- Domestic violence
- Stalking
- School or gang violence
- Severe motor vehicle accidents
- Serious medical conditions
- Military combat
- Immigration
- Natural disasters
- Chronic experiences of oppression or marginalization
- Witnessing or hearing about the above
Prevalence of Trauma in the U.S.

- An estimated 70 percent of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event.
- Almost half of our children have experienced at least one childhood trauma. This translates into an estimated 34,825,978 children nationwide.
- Nearly a third of all youth ages 12-17 have experienced two or more types of childhood adversity that are likely to affect their physical and mental health as adults.

Impact of Traumatic Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Physical Health</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Relational Issues</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Brain and CNS</th>
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Post-Traumatic Stress Response

Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSR (about than 20%)

PTSR can be diagnosed when there is:
- Exposure to a traumatic event
- The event is re-experienced through intrusive memories, dreams, feeling as if the trauma is reoccurring, distress when exposed to triggers
- Persistent avoidance and numbing
- Persistent increased arousal
- Symptoms persist for more than 30 days
- Life functioning is impaired

Other Symptoms of PTS

- Sleep disturbance
- Irritability/outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response

All of these are related to Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) dysregulation
Autonomic Nervous System Impacted by Trauma

- Hyperactivity
- Anxiety or panic
- Irritability, anger, rage
- Hypervigilance

The Nervous System gets stuck on "ON"

Depression
- Flatness, numbing
- Dissociation
- Disconnection

The Nervous System gets stuck on "OFF"

Trauma Symptoms as Adaptations

- Substance Abuse
- Self-harm and Suicidal Gestures
- Eating Disorders
- Behavioral Acting Out
- Indiscriminate Sexual Behavior
- Hyperarousal

- Dissociation
- Engaging in High Risk Behaviors

The Triune Brain Model

- Executive State
  - Prefrontal Lobes
  - What can I learn from this?

- Emotional State
  - Limbic System
  - Am I loved?

- Survival State
  - Brain Stem
  - Am I safe?

High Arousal (Fear) = Impaired Prefrontal and Insular Cortex

- Stress chemicals disable the mid and prefrontal cortex and the lower, more primitive parts of the brain takes over →
  - Language centers of the brain may go offline
  - Instead of fighting or fleeing, one may freeze
  - Memory may fragment
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Recurrent, severe physical or emotional abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Growing up in household with:
  - Alcohol or drug user
  - Member being imprisoned
  - Mentally ill, chronically depressed or institutionalized member
  - Mother being treated violently
  - Both biological parents absent

Trauma's Connection to Substance Abuse

Trauma Underlying Other Mental Health Issues

ACE Score and Indicators of Impaired Worker Performance
Shifting the Paradigm

Instead of asking:

“What is wrong with you?”

A trauma-informed approach asks:

“What has happened to you?”

A Blast from Our Past...

Look for the Helpers

“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.’”

—Mr. Rogers
Support Survivors who are Brave, Bold, and Beautiful

Thursday, April 5th from 5-7:30pm
Mental Health Partners
1333 Iris Ave, Boulder

Join us for an evening full of multi-media experiences to honor the evolution of advocacy against sexual assault and learn more about the Moving Beyond Trauma treatment program!

Learn more & RSVP:
Email: info@movingtoendsexualassault.org
Call: 303-443-0400
Visit: http://movingtoendsexualassault.org

Regulation Strategies to Regulate the Nervous System after Trauma

• Meditation
• Mindfulness practices (Mono-tasking)
• Yoga
• Slow, conscious breathing
• Learning new things
• Connecting with safe people and/or animals

What can YOU do to help Trauma Survivors?

How can I help?
- Start by believing
- Understand that symptoms are adaptations
- Avoid blaming or minimizing
- Encourage positive coping skills (e.g., exercise, yoga, social support, time in nature)
- Get support for yourself if the trauma survivor is a close loved one
- Refer to community resources

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