Trauma 101

Alliance of Local Service Organizations
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Agenda

• Introductions
• Objectives
• Overview of Trauma
• Overview of Organizations and Trauma
• Healing/Coping Strategies
• Reflections
Objectives

• Describe trauma.
• Identify and describe various forms of trauma.
• Delineate trauma experiences when working with underserved populations.
• Briefly explore ideas related to trauma-informed responses.
• Learn basic concepts related to trauma and its potential impacts on individuals and organizations.
• Identify and describe self-care/healing practices.
LET’S TALK….

WHAT IS TRAUMA?
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

“Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”
American Psychological Association (APA)

• *Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster.*
Trauma is....

• Emotional response
• Physical response
• Impacts an individual’s or a communities functioning (i.e., social, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical)
• Intersectional
• Intergenerational
• Historical
TABLE DISCUSSION....

• What words do people in your local communities use to talk about what we call "trauma?"

• What are cultural norms like in your local communities in relation to talking about trauma?
LET’S TALK…

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA?
Symptoms of trauma can be….

• Anger
• Persistent feelings of sadness and despair
• Nightmares and flashbacks (i.e., re-experiencing the trauma)
• Unpredictable emotions
• Physical symptoms, such as nausea and headaches
• Intense feelings of guilt, as if they are somehow responsible for the event
• An altered sense of shame
• Feelings of isolation and hopelessness
Symptoms of trauma can be cont…..

- Headaches, backaches, stomachaches, etc.
- Sudden sweating and/or heart palpitations
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, interest in sex
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Easily startled by noises or unexpected touch
- More susceptible to colds and illnesses

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs and/or overeating
- Fear, depression, anxiety
- Outbursts of anger or rage
- Emotional swings
- Tendency to isolate oneself or feelings of detachment
- Difficulty trusting and/or feelings of betrayal
- Self-blame, survivor guilt, or shame
- Diminished interest in everyday activities
- Racing heartbeat
TABLE DISCUSSION

• What does trauma look like in your local communities?

• How does trauma impact different generations in your local communities?

• How does trauma impact different groups in your local communities?

• What does trauma look like when people visit your organization?
WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS TYPES OF TRAUMA?
Types of Trauma

- Sexual assault
- Child maltreatment (i.e., abuse or neglect)
- DV
- Rape
- War related trauma
- Medical trauma
- Traumatic loss
- Hate violence

- Accidents and natural disasters
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Witnessing acts of violence
- Grief and loss
- Cultural and intergenerational trauma
- Historical trauma
- Vicarious trauma
Every 98 seconds
Every 6 minutes
321,500
7 OUT OF 10 RAPES ARE COMMITTED BY SOMEONE KNOWN TO THE VICTIM

- 28% are committed by a stranger.
- 45% are committed by an acquaintance.
- 25% are committed by a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.
- 6% are committed by more than one person or the victim cannot remember.
- 1% are committed by a non-spouse relative.

National Sexual Assault Hotline | 800.656.HOPE | online.rainn.org
Please visit rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence for full citation.¹
Trauma and the brain
Trauma and the brain cont.

• Difficult to treat because the trauma stored throughout the brain
• A traumatic experience becomes a long-lived deeply embedded memory
Trauma and the brain cont.
Trauma and the brain cont.

*Video - Trauma and the Brain: Understanding abuse survivors responses. (8 min)

• [https://youtu.be/4-tcKYx24aA](https://youtu.be/4-tcKYx24aA)

*Video made by mediaco-op for NHS Lanarkshire
LET’S TALK…

HISTORICAL TRAUMA?
Historical trauma is a form of trauma that impacts entire communities. It refers to the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, as a result of group traumatic experiences, that is transmitted across generations within a community. Unresolved grief and anger often accompany this trauma and contribute to physical and behavioral health disorders. This type of trauma is often associated with racial and ethnic population groups in the United States who have suffered major intergenerational losses and assaults on their culture and well-being.
Historical Trauma cont.

*Video – What is historical Trauma? (6 min)

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWmK314NVrs

*Video created by the University of Minnesota Extension Children, Youth & Family Consortium
TABLE DISCUSSION…

• What kinds of historical traumas impact the people you serve and your communities?

• How do people in your communities talk about historical trauma? What culturally-specific words do they use to talk about it or describe it?

• Is sexual assault/sexual violence a type of historical trauma experienced by ancestors of your local community members?
LET’S TALK…

VICARIOUS TRAUMA?
Vicarious Trauma

• A state of tension and preoccupation of the stories/trauma experiences described by clients.
Vicarious Trauma
Vicarious Trauma cont.

• *Can affect*
  • Behavioral
  • Interpersonal
  • Personal
  • Personal values/beliefs
  • Job performance
Vicarious Trauma cont.: Signs and Symptoms

- difficulty talking about their feelings
- free floating anger and/or irritation
- startle effect/being jumpy
- over-eating or under-eating
- difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep
- losing sleep over patients
- worried that they are not doing enough for their clients
- dreaming about their clients’ trauma experiences
- diminished joy toward things they once enjoyed
- feeling trapped by their work
- diminished feelings of satisfaction and personal accomplishment
- dealing with intrusive thoughts of clients with especially severe trauma histories
- feelings of hopelessness associated with their work/clients
- blaming others
Organizations and Trauma

• Must address trauma in a safe and sensitive way.
“Tone at the Top”

Organizational Intentions
- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- Theoretical orientations
- Philosophies
- Principles
- Framing of issues

Organizational Mechanisms
- Policies
- People
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Board members
  - Those served
- Physical space
- Community
- Funders
Trauma-Informed SA Advocacy

5 CORE COMPONENTS:

• Provide survivors with information about the traumatic effects of abuse.
• Adapt programs and services to meet survivors’ trauma and mental health related needs.
• Create opportunities for survivors to discuss their responses to trauma.
• Offer resources and referrals to survivors.
• Reflect on our own and our programs’ practice.
**Trauma-Informed Practice Tips**

**Welcoming Environments**

- Offer trauma-informed services
- Understand symptoms as adaptations
- Adapt the physical space

**Strategies to Increase Survivor Access**

**ASK OURSELVES:**

- How might this make someone feel? What are some ways that I can support survivors to manage feelings?
- Is information provided in ways that a person can understand easily? Are choices offered thoughtfully?
- How is s/he experiencing my interactions with her/him?
• What does the impact of trauma look like at your organization?

• How does providing support to survivors of trauma impact staff and volunteers at your organization?

• How does providing sexual assault/sexual violence survivor support *specifically* impact your staff and volunteers?
LET’S TALK…

WHAT CAN WE DO?
WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?
Resilience

*Video – Charles Hunt: What Trauma Taught Me About Resilience (14 min)

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qELiw_1Ddg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qELiw_1Ddg)

*Published 11/18/16 by TEDxCharlotte
Coping Strategies

• Acknowledge that you have been through traumatic events
• Connect with others, especially those who may have shared the stressful event or experienced other trauma
• Exercise
• Relaxation techniques (i.e., yoga, stretching, massage, meditation, deep muscle relaxation, etc.)
• Music, art, other diversions
• Avoid over-using stimulants like caffeine, sugar or nicotine
• Commit to something personally meaningful and important every day
• Write about your experience for yourself or to share with others
Coping Strategies cont.

• Staff
• Individual
• Healing
TABLE DISCUSSION…

• What does your organization do to respond to and decrease the impact of vicarious trauma at your organization?
  • What does this look like for staff and volunteers who are survivors of sexual assault/sexual violence?

• What ideas do you have for practices or efforts that are NOT already in place?
  • Are there healing practices specific to the cultures of the people you serve and your local community that might help?
Reflections

Anything rising to the surface?

Anything to share?
Thank you
References

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