

An Overview of Trauma



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Our objectives

1. Define what trauma is and the subsequent negative social emotional and health impacts it has;
2. Understand the impact of trauma and how that shows up in residential communities;
3. Learn strategies for taking care of our residents, ourselves, and our communities in this work.

Imagine



Now picture





Defining Trauma

Defining trauma

A traumatic event is one in which a person experiences (witnesses or is confronted with):

- Actual or threatened death
- Serious injury
- Threat to the physical integrity of self or another

Responses to a traumatic event may include:

- Intense fear
- Helplessness
- Horror
- Attachment

Defining trauma



Trauma in Children

Prolonged exposure to repetitive or severe events such as child abuse, is likely to cause the most severe and lasting effects.

Traumatization can also occur from neglect, which is the absence of essential physical or emotional care, soothing and restorative experiences from significant others, particularly in children.

Personal, private, public

- Examples of personal and private events:
 - Sexual assault
 - Sexual abuse
 - Domestic violence/interpersonal violence
 - Witnessing domestic violence
- Examples of public trauma/traumatic events:
 - Natural disasters
 - War
 - Community violence

Types of Trauma

Acute trauma = a one-time traumatic event.



Types of Trauma

Chronic trauma occurs when traumatic events are repeated.

- Sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Community violence
- War

Chronic trauma can have a **cumulative effect**. Subsequent traumatic events remind us of prior trauma and can trigger emotions and thoughts related to that prior trauma.

Types of Trauma

Complex trauma refers to the impact chronic trauma has on life and developing systems.



Historical Trauma

- the cumulative exposure to traumatic events
- affect the individual exposed & continue to affect subsequent generations.

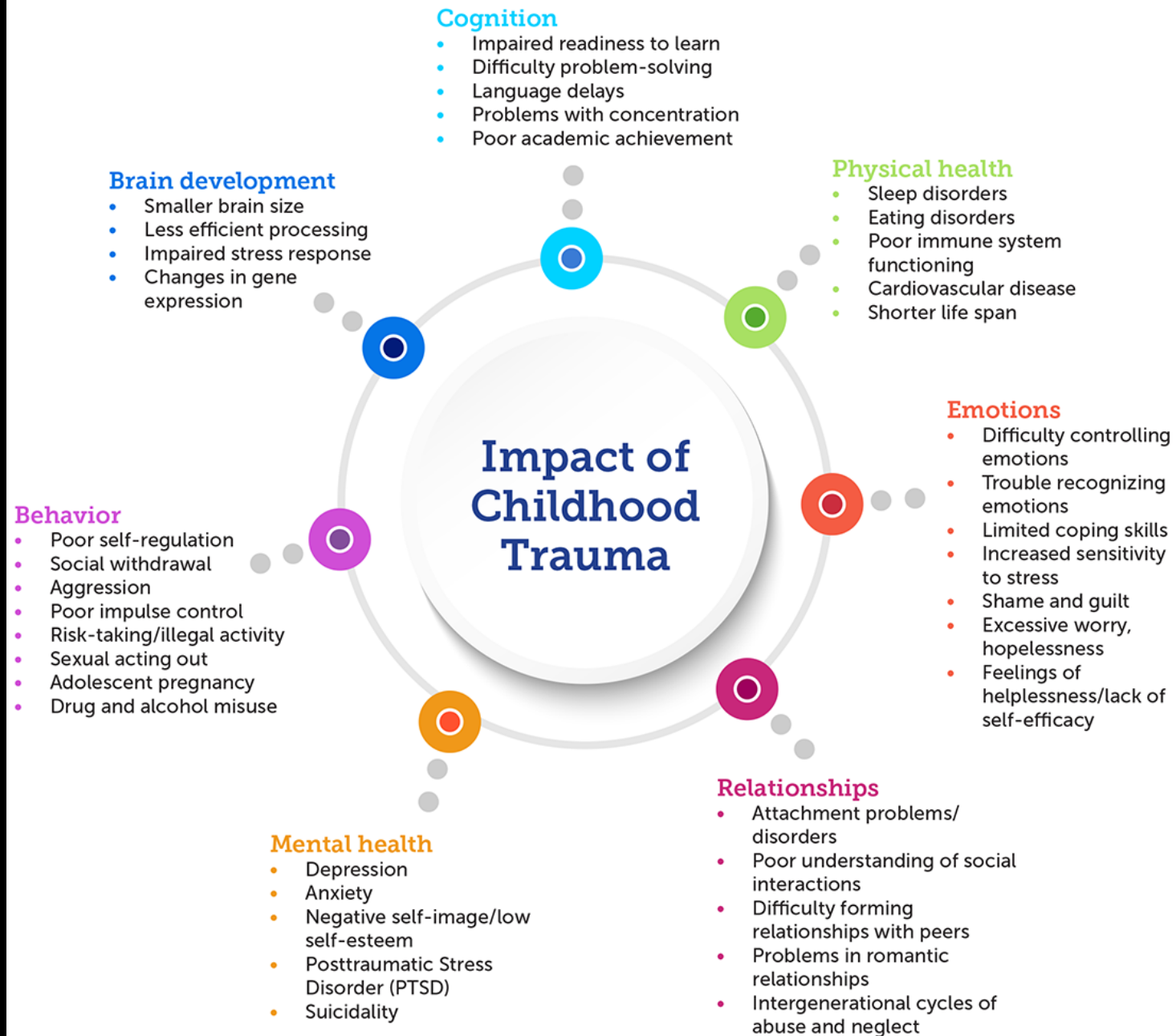


Why are different events, well, different?

Interpersonal violence tends to be more traumatic than natural disasters because it is more disruptive to our fundamental sense of trust and attachment, and is typically experienced as intentional rather than as “an accident of nature.”

(International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, 2009)

Impact of Childhood Trauma



The Impact of Trauma









- Trauma is **cumulative**
- Trauma affects the developing **neurophysiological** system
- Trauma **increases** likelihood of health risk behaviors (smoking, drinking, overeating) as means of **coping**
- Trauma is **directly related** to mental health symptoms, substance abuse, chronic physical illness, early mortality
- Has impact at the **molecular, clinical and population** level

Impact of Trauma

- Fight or flight

HYPER- AROUSAL



-  Irritability
-  Impulsiveness
-  Difficulty concentrating
-  Anger
-  Insomnia
-  Nightmares
-  Aggression
-  Constant feeling of danger

Symptoms as Adaptations: **Re-experiencing**

- The traumatic event is over, but the person's reaction to it is not.



Trauma “symptoms” as adaptations

- Symptoms represent survivor attempts to cope *the best way they can* with overwhelming feelings.
- When we see “symptoms” in a trauma survivor, it is always significant to ask ourselves: *what purpose does this behavior serve?*
- Every symptom *helped the survivor cope* at some point in the past and is still in the present – in some way.
- As humans *we are incredibly adaptive creatures*. If we help the survivor explore how behaviors are an adaptation, we can help them learn to *substitute* a less problematic behavior.

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

Trauma Informed Care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma...that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors...and, that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.



How do culture and trauma interact?

- Family communication
- Family response (shame, guilt, blame, denial, acceptance)
- Any stress or vulnerability the child and/or family is experiencing because of their culture (discrimination, stereotyping, poverty, less access to resources)
- How the family feel about interventions regarding the trauma (counseling, “sharing private business”)



Becoming trauma-informed

What actions should we take?

- > Assume that trauma may play a role in the person's current life difficulties and that our job is to...
- Engage the person
- Insure that our policies, procedures, activities, environment and **ways that we relate and talk to each other creates a safe** and trusting environment

Why is this important for us?

- People who have experienced trauma are often *very sensitive* to situations that remind them of the people, places or things involved in their traumatic event.
- These reminders, also known as triggers, may cause a person to relive the trauma and **view our organization as a source of distress and not as a healing and welcoming environment**



A trauma-informed organization

- Increases safety for all
- Improves the social environment in a way that improves relationships for all
- Cares for the caregivers
- Increases the quality of services
- Reduces negative encounters and events
- Creates a community of hope and health
- Increases success and satisfaction at work



Core Principles of TIC

- **Awareness:** Everyone knows the role of trauma
- **Safety:** Ensuring physical and emotional safety
- **Trustworthiness:** Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries
- **Choice:** Respect and prioritize consumer choice and control
- **Collaboration:** Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with consumers
- **Empowerment:** Prioritizing consumer empowerment and skill-building

Tips for Practicing TIC

- Use language the person recognizes
 - “Has your partner messed with your birth control?”
- Meet the survivor “where they are”
 - If a person is not ready to talk, do not force the conversation. Rather keep the door open for a later time.
- Consider the person’s cultural context
 - Avoid making assumptions – just ask!

Tips for Practicing TIC

- Recognize adaptive behaviors serve a purpose
 - Why is a person chronically miss morning appointments? Is the morning the only time she can sleep? Does she have a traumatic brain injury that prevents her from remembering things?
 - Make adjustments to help that person succeed. Set appointment times for the afternoon.
- Include everyone in your agency
 - From receptionist to front staff
 - Provide trauma training to every employee

Addressing compassion fatigue

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Irritability
- Apathy
- Loss of Motivation
- Fatigue
- Overwhelmed
- Loss of interest in things you enjoy
- Intrusive thoughts (especially about work)



Preventing Compassion Fatigue

Tips to prepare to work with victims of trauma:

- Maintain a work/life balance
- Eat healthy
- Exercise
- Maintain a good support system
- Don't be afraid to feel emotions
- Never be afraid to laugh



Coping with Compassion Fatigue

- Develop a plan to implement healthy behavior
- Develop healthy boundaries
- Do not feel afraid to ask for help
- Use resources available



Thank you!

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Resources

- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
<http://www.istss.org/Home.htm> An international collection of studies, research and education regarding trauma. Also provides guidelines for treatment of trauma.
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network <http://www.nctsn.org/> Programme works to educate professionals and non professionals about trauma and evidence based practices for trauma interventions. Site provides definitions of different types of trauma and evidence based practice resources.
- Sidran Institute: Traumatic Stress Education and Advocacy
<http://www.sidran.org/index.cfm>