

What Is Trauma-Informed Care and Why Is it Critical in Health Care Today?

October 10, 2018

Learning Objectives

At the end of this educational activity, participants should be able to:

- Develop an awareness of the impact of trauma on an individual's mental, emotional and physical stability.
- Explore adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how ACEs and trauma are interconnected.
- List the principles of a trauma-informed approach/trauma-informed care.
- State the impact of retraumatization and identify how HCPs can reduce the risk in individuals who have experienced trauma.

Introductions



Moderator

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What Drives Health Outcomes?

Health is impacted by more than clinical performance.¹



Social Determinants Can Impact Lives in Many Ways

One individual's situation may have started like this:



While awareness of social determinants exists - the support system remains fragmented.

- Increased ER utilization
- Increased spending
- Habitual cycle of poor health and wellness
- Poor care management for chronic conditions
- Constant uncertainty and lack of control
- Incomplete or partial reporting on outcomes by service providers



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What Is Trauma?

Events or circumstances that are physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that result in adverse effects on the individual's functioning and well-being.



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The Effects of Trauma

- **Trauma impairs:** memory, concentration, new learning and focus.
- **Trauma has been correlated to:** heart disease, obesity, addiction, pulmonary illness, diabetes autoimmune disorders and cancer.
- **Trauma impacts an individual's ability to: trust,** cope and form healthy relationships.
- **Trauma disrupts:** emotional identification; ability to self-soothe or control expression of emotions; and, **one's ability to distinguish between what's safe and unsafe.**
- **Trauma shapes: a person's belief about self and others;** one's ability to hope; and, one's outlook on life.

Retraumatization: What Hurts?

SYSTEM (Policies, Procedures, "The way things are done")

- Multiple, intrusive questionnaires without the person's buy-in, particularly early on
- Requirements to continually retell experience
- Being treated as a number
- Not explaining reasons for actions
- Judgmental labels of traumatic reactions (i.e. addict, noncompliant)
- Giving no choice in service or treatment
- No opportunity to give feedback about service delivery

RELATIONSHIP (Power, Control)

- Interactions that leave person feeling not heard/important
- Violating trust by offering solutions before allowing person to tell story
- Failure to ensure emotional safety
- Non-collaborative
- Does things for rather than with
- Use of punitive treatment, coercive practices and oppressive language

How Does a Trauma-Informed Approach Impact Our Work?

- **When a person has a traumatic reaction** to a painful or frightening event, they may be negatively affected emotionally, physically and spiritually, years after the actual event ends. They can't focus on making their life better, because they're so focused on survival.
- **When care is trauma-informed**, caregivers approach the person in a whole different way. When a caregiver understands and supports a traumatized person the way the person wants to be supported, they create a calm accepting environment, where people can begin to heal and consider the possibility that they can be safe
- **We stop asking "What is wrong with you?" and instead ask "How do I support you?"**



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Case Presentation: 19 year old male

Background:

- Physical and emotional abuse by his father
- Mother and father divorced when he was 12
- Outbursts of anger and caused disturbances in school

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/Dialectical Behavior Therapy at age 15

- Learned to regulate emotions and focus attention on school
- Began to have a close and loving relationship with mother and younger sibling
- Learned to have a limited positive relationship with his father

Currently

- Attends university on a full scholarship
- Has a healthy relationship with his girlfriend and is well adjusted

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Discussion



Summary

- Painful, frightening events happen to everyone. It's not what happened to you, **it's what you believe** about it that creates the trauma.
- **Trauma's impact** can often be seen through people's behavior.
- Healing our own trauma creates **deeper empathy** when working with people: we come to understand that we're all human beings, doing the best we can.
- Creating an **understanding and empathetic environment** will reduce the risk of re-traumatization.
- Engaging someone about their personal experiences can help to create a more **trusting relationship**.
- NEVER under-estimate the impact of trauma; **NEVER under-estimate your ability to help!**

Q & A



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Thank You!

If you have any questions or concerns please
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