

Being Trauma-Informed In The Workplace

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Trauma

The US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides a comprehensive definition of trauma:

“Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual, **family, and/or community** as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on ~~the individual’s~~ functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, **and/or** spiritual well-being” (SAMHSA, 2014)

Trauma

Trauma is pervasive.

Violence and Victimization are common

Many individuals with devalued identities do not know a world without trauma

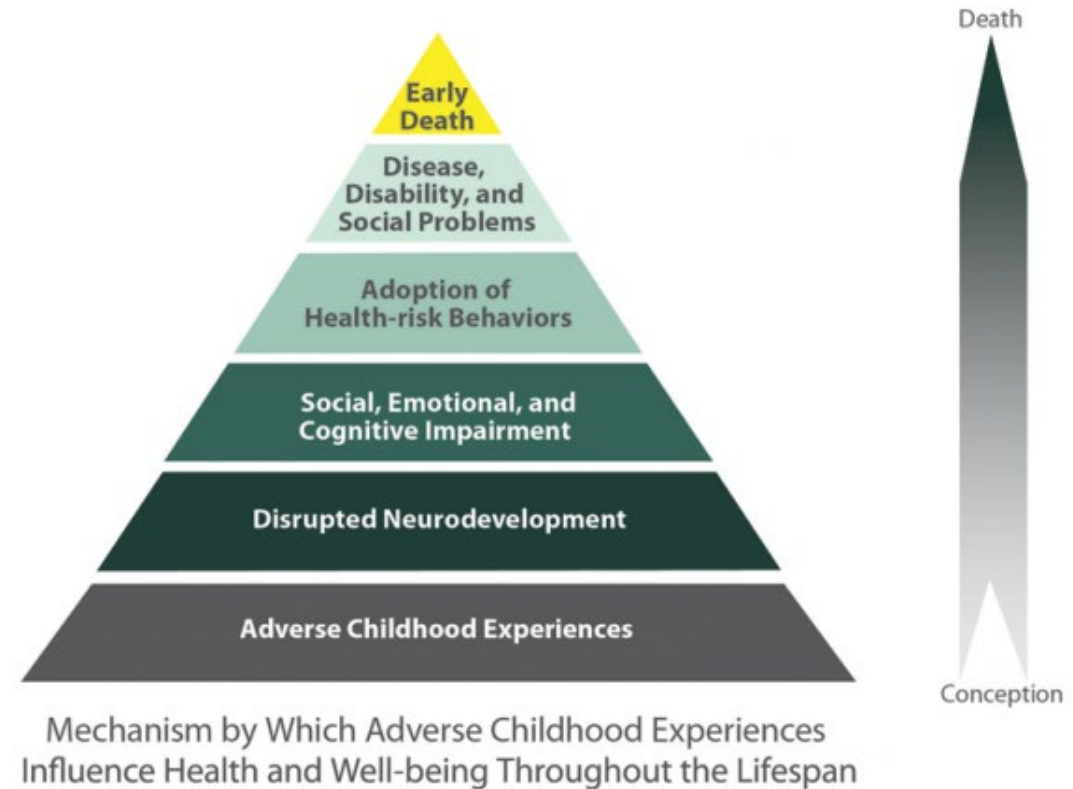
Experiences of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, etc. impact both psychological and physiological wellbeing

Experiences of trauma as a child are strongly related to the development of risk factors for disease and decreased wellbeing throughout life

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

- Highlighted the need for Trauma-Informed Care
- More than 17,000 individuals across the US
- Showed strong associations between childhood and adolescent traumatic experiences and adult health risks, mental health, healthcare costs and life expectancy
- Toxic stress during childhood is linked to chronic physiological, psychological and substance use disorders
- Each person experiences trauma differently
- People who experienced six or more adverse childhood experiences **died nearly 20 years earlier on average** than those without these experiences

ACES Study, Shonkoff et al, 2012



Trauma: Individual, Family & Community Impact

People who experience repeated, chronic, or multiple traumas, including historical trauma, are more likely to have more pronounced symptoms and consequences including: (CDC, 2014)

- Substance abuse and dependence
- Depression symptoms and disorder
- Anxiety symptoms and disorder
- Impairment in relational/social and other major life areas (including treatment)
- Increased risk for mental illness and increases in symptom severity
- Sleep disorders
- Poor work performance
- Financial stress
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended and adolescent pregnancies
- Poor academic achievement
- Heightened risk for intimate partner violence (IPV)
- Numerous health problems, physical disorders, and conditions, including:
 - Liver disease
 - Heart disease
 - Sexually transmitted infections
- Catastrophic expectancy
- Emotional dysregulation

Responses to Trauma

A person's response to trauma is influenced by:

- Whether it is an individual, group or community-based trauma
- Individual attributes
- Developmental factors (including protective and risk factors)
- Life history
- Type of trauma
- Specific characteristics of the trauma
- Amount and length of trauma exposure
- Cultural meaning of traumatic events
- Number of losses associated with the trauma
- Available resources (internal and external such as coping skills and family support)
- Community reactions

Trauma Informed Care

Defining Trauma Informed Care (SAMHSA, 2012)

“A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma
- Understands potential paths for healing
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, clients, and others involved with the system
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.”

What drives Institutional/Organizational Operations?

DOMINANT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Perfectionism
Sense of Urgency
Defensiveness
Quantity
Thinking there is only 1 correct way
Either/Or
Avoid Conflict
Right to Comfort
Object-Oriented
Reason
Numbers Driven
Rules
Single Issue (Fragmentation)
Objectivity
Individual Achievement

RELATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Everything is a Work in Progress
Sustainability
Openness
Quality
Identifying multiple viable paths
Both/And
Conflict is productive/necessary
Discomfort is a teacher
Relationship-Oriented
Emotion
Story Driven
Creativity
Analysis (Whole Picture)
Everything is Subjective
Collective Achievement

Necessity of Being Trauma-Informed

It is important that we assess how our existing spaces may cause distress and may be experienced as traumatizing or re-traumatizing (Kamen et al, 2012).

This requires:

1. Examining the power dynamics of *RELATIONSHIPS*
2. Being mindful of the impact of LOSS
 - Lack of privacy during questioning and/or procedures
 - When there are changes in staff with little or no notice.
4. Being cognizant of the potential discomfort experienced with invasive questions/procedures
 - a. Inform individuals about what is going to be asked/done before proceeding
 - b. Explain what is happening throughout
 - c. Ask, “What will make you feel safer?” “Would you like to have a support person present?”
 - d. Write down important information – *trauma reactions may impair one’s ability to retain information.*

Using Trauma Informed Care in Your Practice



Utilize a strength-based empowerment model, which fosters growth, and recognizes and *promotes strength and resiliency*.



Predominant Medical Model is deficit-focused



Many behaviors that have traditionally been viewed through a pathological lens, may be unsuccessful attempts to cope



Reframing requires that providers turn from “What is wrong with you?” to “*What happened to you?*”

How Do You Promote Strength?



Work together as collaborators to establish mutual goals. This requires being adaptive and valuing differences



“Healing happens in relationship” – this requires reciprocal connections, bi-directional communication, and the deliberate fostering of understanding and shared learning.



Be mindful of your words and language



Allow people to tell their own story. **Supports Self Esteem** - the overall evaluation of one's worth



Active communication and support of one's capability to heal and recover



Ongoing training and capacity building for community and staff. *Be flexible*



FOCUS ON RESILIENCE NOT DISORDER

Support Self-efficacy – perception of having control over one’s circumstances and the perception of capability to effectively carry out actions. (Bandura, 1997). *People who feel in control of their lives may be more likely to engage in health affirming activities, seek help and practice a lifestyle that promotes health* (Brown et al, 2011)

- **Increase access to choices and more options** to increase a sense of control over life decisions
- **Workshops:** stress management, problem solving, effective coping skills, self-care, affect regulation self-esteem- overall evaluation of one’s worth
- **Ask questions to increase self-efficacy:**
 - Tell me about a time you made changes in your life. How did you do it?
 - What personal strengths do you have that would help you succeed?
 - Who could offer you support?

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS NOT DISORDER

Provide Social Support– types of assistance or help received from others that promotes health and has a positive effect in times of stress. *Social support bolsters resilience in stressful situations* (Loseth et al, 2022)

a. Emotional – reassurance of worth, empathy and affection

- Support Groups
- Create a safe and affirming environment
- Community building social activities with a focus on addressing isolation and the diminishing the impact of stigma and discrimination.
- Encourage open discussion of experiences of stigma and discrimination.

b. Informational – advice, guidance, feedback

- Information available in appropriate languages, at appropriate reading level
- Feedback provided in a respectful manner, asking questions, addressing concerns

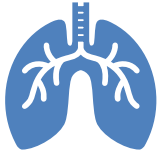
c. Tangible – material, financial, resource assistance

- Basic needs assistance (food, hygiene products, baby supplies), transportation assistance and childcare
- Child-friendly environment with carved out spaces for child play

d. Companionship – sense of belonging, shared social activities



Coping Skills to Address Chronic Stress



Incorporate Deep Breathing Several Times a Day

Breathe in for 4 counts and breathe out for 8 counts – do this about 5+ times

Begin slowly – maybe one time a day, then two, etc.

Some smart watches and smart phones have free breathing apps that will remind you to breath – you can set reminders for your preferred # times/day



Get outside and take brief breaks

Even 5 minutes outside (even if on your porch/deck/front stoop) makes a big difference



Drink plenty of water and identify small nutritious snacks into your diet

Hunger and Dehydration can increase feelings of anxiety and stress



Reward Yourself with Self Care and Mental Health Breaks

Do something fun and uplifting for YOU to reward yourself

THANK YOU!!!

?????QUESTIONS?????