

Becoming Trauma-Informed

Trauma Training for Prisoner Visitation & Support

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Session Overview

- What is trauma?
- Why does trauma matter?
- What are “trauma informed” responses?

Trauma
is....



Everywhere

What is Trauma?

Types of Trauma:

- Individual
- Group
- Historical
- Vicarious

Individual Trauma:

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

The 3Es:

*Event
Experience
Effect*



E¹ = Event

- **Single Event:** Single event, out of the ordinary event, time limited.
- **Ongoing Event(s):** The cumulative experience of multiple traumatic events, either acute or subacute, over a period of time.
- **Historical Event(s):** Accumulative emotional and psychological pain over lifespan or across generations. Results in massive group trauma.

$E^2 = \text{Experience}$

experience



**Dr. Nadine
Burke Harris**

...or Freeze

FIGHT



OR

FLIGHT



Physiology of Flight, Fight, or Freeze

Trauma triggers sympathetic nervous system to fight, flight, or freeze

- ◆ Muscular system - rigid with blood engorgement
- ◆ Digestive system - shuts down
- ◆ Circulatory system - increase heart rate and blood flow, surface level veins constrict, blood gets thick/sticky, blood directed away from cortex to limbs
- ◆ Respiratory system - increase lung capacity and rate of breathing
- ◆ Adrenal glands - secrete cortisol & adrenaline
- ◆ Skin gets sweaty

$E^3 = \text{Effect}$

Effect

Individualized Experiences

RESILIENCE

Family ties

Strong primary relationship

Connection to community

Employment

Biology

Meaningful activity

Strong cultural or religious beliefs



RISK

Health issues

Pre-existing mental health problems

Severity of trauma

Proximity to trauma

Biology

Numerous traumas

Experiences that diminish coping capacity

Prolonged traumatic stress

Chronic trauma is disabling & toxic

- ◆ Digestive problems
- ◆ Heart disease- HBP
- ◆ Blood clots
- ◆ Brain changes
 - ✧ Reduced amygdala & hippocampus
 - ✧ Reduced cognitive ability information processing, concentration & memory

Shapes World View:



**Self
Beliefs
Relationships**

Trauma Symptoms & Effects

Hopelessness and powerlessness	Guilt/ self-blame
Low self-esteem/ poor self-worth	Trust issues
Space and touch issues	Sleep disturbances
Fear and anxiety	Flashbacks and panic attacks
Dissociation and “numbing”	Depression and suicidal thoughts/actions
Self-harm	Risky behaviors
Substance abuse	Dysregulation



Criminalized Behavior may be a Trauma Response

SUMMARY

- Trauma is pervasive
- Trauma = E³ Event, Experience, Effect
- Various types of trauma
- Individual differences – risk and resiliency- impact the overall expression of trauma
- Trauma symptoms and effects
- Criminalized behavior is often a trauma response

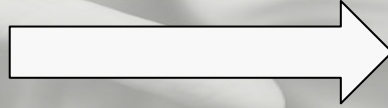
Trauma-Informed Responses

Prevent

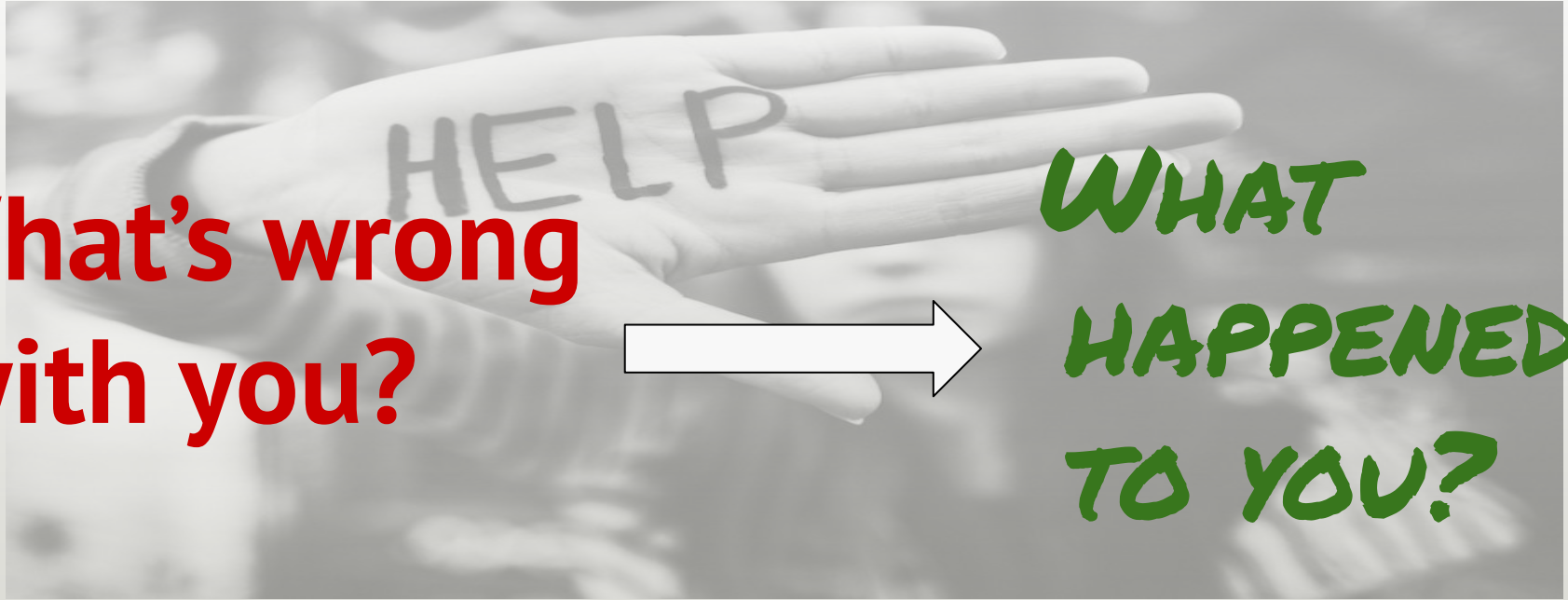
RE-TRAUMATIZATION

Shifting Perspective

What's wrong
with you?



WHAT
HAPPENED
TO YOU?



Or, the 4th E: Empathy

Trauma-Informed Tactics

A background illustration of two children running happily. On the left is a young boy with blonde hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and dark shorts. On the right is a young girl with dark curly hair, wearing a pink shirt and grey pants. They are both smiling and have their arms outstretched as if running.

PATIENCE

TRUST

INFORMATION

ACTIVE LISTENING

CHOICE

GROUNDING

PATIENCE

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

- with their fears
- with their choices
- with their reluctance/distrust of you

SHARE INFORMATION

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

- Understand they may not absorb it
- Avoid being too technical
- Communicate calmly, slowly, and clearly
- Repeat when necessary
- Tell people what is happening next

PROVIDE CHOICE

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

Even a small choice can restore someone's sense of power.

TRUST

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

You build trust
through honesty

ACTIVE/EMPATHETIC LISTENING

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

- Show concern
- Ask specific questions
- Make eye contact
- Don't take things personally
- Be anti-racist and culturally sensitive

GROUNDING

PATIENCE

INFORMATION

CHOICE

TRUST

ACTIVE LISTENING

GROUNDING

Grounding is a strategy to "ground" you in, or immediately connect you with, the present moment.

“Mindfulness”

Use “grounding techniques” instead of asking a survivor to “calm down.”



Put on your own
oxygen mask
before helping
those around you.

Vicarious/Secondary Trauma

Vicarious trauma happens when we **accumulate and carry** the stories of trauma that **we have heard** - sounds, images, and details - which come to **inform our worldview.**

Vicarious Trauma



Putting it to work...

Regularly scheduled moments of care, rest, and grounding:

- **Exercise**
- **Therapy**
- **Breathing Exercises**
- **Walking**
- **Yoga**
- **Fishing**

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- Trauma informed responses can prevent Re-Traumatization
- “What’s Wrong with you?” → “What happened to you?”
- “PIC TAG”: **P**atience, **I**nformation, **C**hoice, **T**rust, **A**ctive Listening, **G**rounding
- Grounding can help combat vicarious trauma

Additional Resources

SAHMSA Trauma and Trauma Informed Responses

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, TED talk: “How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime”

https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en

Anti-racism resources

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRLF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-OgirlTwCTugSfKie5Fs/preview?pru=AAABcnX-s-0*-EjK1_OrRO59Og3y237Auw&fbclid=IwAR3WYFoE4C-K4sPtTdeN5EGEK02GgDp4if00jKRHUg7bXt40Ou1wVekcAEA

Small Group Discussions

Thank you!

Potential questions to discuss:

Has something you've learned today made you want to make any changes with the person you support? Is there something in particular you could share that others might benefit from learning?

Is there anything you don't fully understand that you'd like to ask the small group for clarity about?

Do you have any grounding or self-regulation techniques that have been helpful to you? Of those that were shared, can you envision trying any of them?