TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IN A TIME OF COVID-19: DIRECT CARE PROMOTING HEALING

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A Shattered World
“One size does not fit all”
Individual Responses are Multifaceted

- Pre-pandemic circumstances and resources
  - Prior exposure to adversity
  - Physical and mental health vulnerabilities
  - Economic and social supports

- Exposures encountered since the pandemic:
  - Illness of a family member
  - Loss of job or health insurance
  - Job status – essential health care workers
  - Time immersed in social media, news, over-exposure to information
  - Community-level stressors – e.g., “Hot spots”
Trauma-Informed Care

- SAMHSA’s Trauma-Informed Approach:
  - Behavioral Health is essential to health
  - Prevention works
  - Treatment is effective
Trauma Informed Care Elements

Understanding the *prevalence* of trauma
Recognizing how trauma *impacts* individuals
Putting this knowledge into *practice*
to *actively resist re-traumatization*
Prevalence of Trauma: Approach

- Underlying question = “What happened to you?”
- Symptoms = Adaptations to traumatic events
- Healing happens = In relationships
Prevalence of Trauma: Approach

Video: Power of Empathy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
What is Trauma?

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
### Potential Traumatic Events

#### Abuse
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Physical
- Domestic violence
- Witnessing violence
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Institutional

#### Loss
- Death
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Separation
- Natural disaster
- Accidents
- Terrorism
- War

#### Chronic Stressors
- Poverty
- Racism
- Invasive medical procedure
- Community trauma
- Historical trauma
- Family member with substance use disorder
Exposure to trauma is ubiquitous: seven out of ten respondents worldwide and nine out of ten adults in the USA report experiencing one or more lifetime traumas.
Impact of Trauma
Impact of Trauma on the Brain

- The brain has a bottom-up organization
- Experiences build brain architecture
- Fear activates the amygdala and shuts down the frontal lobes of the cortex.
- Toxic stress derails healthy development, and interferes with normal functioning

Perry, 2006
Impact of Trauma: Adverse Childhood Experiences
Impact of Trauma

The effect of trauma on an individual can be conceptualized as a normal response to an abnormal situation.
Impact of Trauma: Problems OR Adaptations?

Fight
“Non-compliant, combative”
OR
Struggling to regain or hold onto personal power

Flight
“Treatment resistant, uncooperative”
OR
Disengaging, withdrawing

Freeze
“Passive, unmotivated”
OR
Giving in to those in power
Impact of Trauma:  
Signs of Trauma Responses

- Flashbacks or frequent nightmares
- Sensitivity to noise or to being touched
- Always expecting something bad to happen
- Not remembering periods of one’s life
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability
- Excessive watchfulness, anxiety, anger, shame or sadness
Practice of Trauma Informed Care during COVID-19
As residents’ anxiety increases, their “thinking” brains become less engaged and behavior becomes more dysregulated.

YOU can develop skills to help residents regulate and related by becoming calmer and more connected.

This is achieved by:
- Warmth
- Validation
- Flexibility
- Structure
- Hope for the future
- Humor
- Being part of a connected community
Who best to do that?
Skill Development
People who have experienced traumatic events, particularly at the hands of a significant caregiver, were given contradictory messages, dismissed, ignored, silenced, abandoned, blamed, shamed, told they had no rights to feel, etc.

You have repeated opportunities to offer corrective experiences.
Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Identifying and Validating Feelings

I know when I am feeling tired, angry, sad, frightened, etc.

I can read non-verbal emotional cues, e.g., eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, body posture, movement and gestures, rhythm and rate of voice.

I am able to verbally reflect other’s emotional state. “It sounds like you feel very angry about this.”

After reflecting feelings, I am able to validate the emotion. “You had to wait three days for me to return your call, and your question was really important to you. I understand why you’re mad about this.”
A significant outcome of having an overwhelmed nervous system is emotional dysregulation. This can make it harder to use skills learned in the past.

Dementia can also undermine accessing skills to regulate emotions.
Trauma Informed Care Skill Development:
Regulating Feelings

When I start to feel overwhelmed, I know how to bring myself back to emotional balance.

I am equipped to engage with others who are experiencing overwhelming feelings and am able to help them manage these feelings.

I am aware of GROUNDING strategies (e.g., focus on breathing, sensory strategies, redirecting attention).
The nervous system’s most important function is to keep us alive by alerting us to danger.

Many people are under and/or over responsive to even the slightest perception of danger. Behaviors may include violence, running away, self-abuse or shutting down.
Many trauma experiences are dehumanizing, leaving people feeling shame and internalized judgment.

Judgmental or ‘clinical’ language may reinforce these beliefs. This language also allows staff to put clients in an ‘other’ category, ex: ‘this person is very different from me.’

This type of distance may prohibit the formation of a therapeutic/healing relationship.
The survival brain becomes preoccupied with pain & danger but can be distracted when redirected and reminded of pleasure, fun, security, belonging, joy, beauty, humor, etc.
I have a deep connection to things that are important to me.

Most of the time, I believe my life has purpose and meaning.

I am able to talk to other people about what makes them unique and to help them connect with activities that promote a sense of hope and value.
Healing happens in relationships

- Communicate with compassion
- Understand the prevalence and impact of trauma
- Promote safety
- Earn trust
- Embrace diversity
- Share power
- Pursue the person's strengths, choice, and autonomy
- Respect human rights
- Provide holistic care
Thank you
Trauma Informed Care: Further Reading

Judith Herman (2015) *Trauma and Recovery*

Linda Sanford (1991) *Strong at the Broken Places*


Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score*
Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services. Trauma Informed Care. alamedacountytraumainformedcare.org


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html


Read et al, 2008

National Center for PTSD. http://www ptsd va gov/public/pages/ptsd substance abuse veterans asp

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, National Center for Trauma Informed Care. *SAMHSA’s Trauma Informed Approach: Key Assumptions and Principles Curriculum.*


Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Trauma Informed Care Skill Development. Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic/skilldev.pdf
RESOURCES
Trauma-Informed, Person-Centered Care Resources

• NORC
  • Trauma-informed care – https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/trauma-informed-care
  • Person-centered care - https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/person-centered-care

• Consumer Voice
  • Resident-Directed Care/Culture Change  https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/for-advocates/resident-directed-care
  • My Personal Directions for Quality Living - Blank Form & Sample
    • A tool from Consumer Voice, with edits by SAGE, for individuals to share what matters to them for person-centered care.
  • Information for LTC consumers - https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/recipients
  • Information for Family Members - https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/family
Resources

National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC)
www.ltcombudsman.org
  • Coronavirus Prevention in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Ombudsman Programs
    https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice)
www.theconsumervoice.org
  • Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Advocates
    https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19
  • Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Residents and Families
    https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19/residents-families