

Supporting People with Disabilities who Experience Trauma



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Before We Begin

Let's create an environment where we can all feel safe and comfortable.



In the Words of Survivors...

What is Trauma?

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

Prevalence Data - 1

People with disabilities experience sexual assault and other crimes more than twice the rate for people without a disability.

People with developmental disabilities are at greatest risk.

Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Surveys, 2007 and 2008.

Prevalence Data - 2

Other studies have indicated that:

- As many as 90% of people with developmental disabilities will experience sexual assault in their life time.
- Crime rates against people with disabilities is higher in institutional, segregated settings including schools and group homes.

“We need to presume
the clients we serve
have a history of
traumatic stress & exercise
‘universal precautions.’”

~ Modas, 2004

Trauma -1

- An event overwhelms the ability to cope
- War, adverse childhood experiences, violence, disasters, accidents, etc.
- Overloads the brain stress response
- Every person reacts differently
- Can have lasting effects on physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being
- Widespread

Trauma - 2

- The earlier in life, the more damaging the consequences
- People are resilient and can recover even severe trauma; with supports healing is possible
- Core of one's identity can be impacted

Trauma - 3

Big T trauma

Little t Trauma

- Little traumas can accumulate and be as damaging as bigger Traumas
- A response more intense than a situation warrants is often trauma-based

The Little t's Add Up

- A lifetime of people trying to fix you
- The trauma of people calling you names
- The trauma of invalidation

Trauma can change a person's core identity and relationship with self and others



Trauma Responses -1

The Three F's

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze

Trauma Responses - 2

- Created for safety and survival
- Worked when younger and in danger
- May cause problems now in many life areas
- May be viewed as a “behavior”
- May be viewed as part of a person’s diagnoses

Trauma Effects

- Lack of Sense of Safety
- Disconnected
- Powerlessness



Coping with Trauma

Hypervigilance

- may be seen as high strung, needy, non-complaint, inappropriate, difficult

Numbing

- may be seen as detached, non-caring, unmotivated

Heightened Emotional States

- may be seen as overreacting, attention-seeking, unreliable

Behavior



Emotion



Trauma

Triggers

- Something that brings up a memory of a trauma
- Can be internal or external
- May result in a trauma response
- May result in re-experiencing the event
- The person and/or others in the environment may not recognize what is happening

We did what we had to... in order to survive

- Coping skills may no longer serve the person well

“It is better to have bad breath than no breath at all”

- Can you imagine the person without the problem behavior?
- The question is not, “What’s wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?”

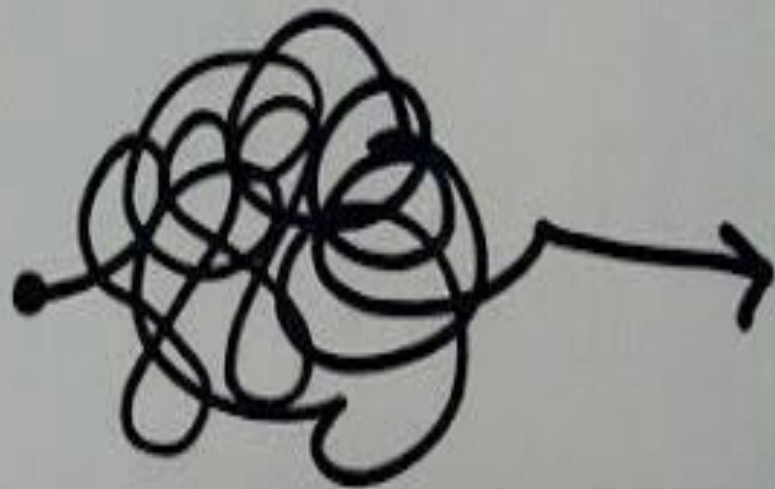
Risk Assessment/Screening

- How do we know if the individual has a history of trauma?
- What areas of your assessment would lend itself to discussing trauma? Health, Safety, Supports.
- What indicators may be present that indicate past trauma or current abuse?

HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK



HOW GRIEF
ACTUALLY
WORKS



In Order To Heal...

SAFETY

The diagram consists of three light blue rounded rectangular boxes with dark blue outlines, arranged in a triangular pattern. The box labeled 'SAFETY' is at the top center. The box labeled 'CONNECTION' is at the bottom left. The box labeled 'EMPOWERMENT' is at the bottom right. The boxes are interconnected by a network of lines forming a triangular shape with internal connections.

CONNECTION

EMPOWERMENT

When Someone Discloses Trauma...

- Trust factor
- The problem with “just ignore it”
- Most likely to tell when no one else is present
- Creating a pattern of seeing the person in private
- Recanting doesn't mean it didn't happen
- Start by Believing

START BY

believing



WHEN SOMEONE COMES TO YOU...
WHAT WILL YOUR REACTION BE?

www.startbybelieving.org

Responding to Disclosures - 1

- Provide Privacy
- Explain Options
- Support Choices
- Ensure Safety

DO

Believe
Respect
Support
Assist

DON'T

Doubt
Judge
Blame
Punish

Responding to Disclosures - 2

SAY: I believe you. I'm sorry this happened to you.

ASK: How can I help you? What do you need right now?

TELL: We have services that can help you.

HELP: Would you like to call them? I can help you with that.

PROTECT: What would make you feel safe right now? Let's make a safety plan.

Mandatory Reporting

- Tell the person that you are a mandatory reporter
- Offer to report with them
- Offer an advocate
- Engage person in follow-up

Service Planning

- **Safety first** — and emotional
- **Empowerment** — real choice and power
- **Connections** — recovery can only take place in the context of relationships, it cannot occur in isolation. (Herman, 1997).

Behavior Programs

**“No intervention
that takes power away
from the survivor,
can possibly foster his or her
recovery.”**

~ Judith Herman

Trauma-Informed Services - 1

- Do not re-traumatize
- Remember that the survivor is the expert on their own life
- Ask the person what will help in feeling more comfortable feel more comfortable and how you can best provide support
- Remember it is hard to give up a behavior that kept you safe in the past

Trauma-Informed Services - 2

- Maintaining boundaries contributes to a sense of safety
- Healing happens in relationships
- Requires us to pay attention to ourselves
Understand 'symptoms' may reflect an adaptation to trauma
- Confront power, prevent violence and coercion, and work together for change

Trauma-Informed Services - 3

- Survivors need an opportunity to tell their stories

“When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery.”

~ Judith Herman

The Good News

Trauma-Informed Services are good for
everybody,
not just those who have been
traumatized.



Resources - 1

- www.illinoisimagines.com
- www.accessingsafety.org
- www.samhsa.gov/nctic
- WRAP – Wellness Recovery Action Planning
www.mentalhealthrecovery.com/wrap/
- Trauma Informed Behavior and Interventions: What Works and What Doesn't by Karyn Harvey, PhD book

Resources - 2

Materials for Positive Identity Development

- Psychological Needs Survey
- Happiness Assessment
- Change Inventory
- Behavior Planning Template
- My Book About Myself!
- My Goodbye Book
- My Book About Recovery!
- My Book About Solving My Problem
- My Book About Making a Difference!
- My Book About My Relationship
- My Book About My Addiction

pid.nadd.org

**“How wonderful it is that
no one has to wait
a single moment
before starting
to improve the world.”**

~ Anne Frank



What You Do Matters



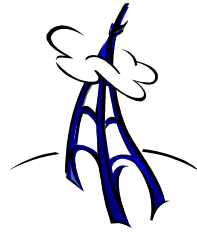
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