Trauma Informed Practice

FDCW

17th June 2021

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Self care

Talking about trauma will bring up issues for many of us.

It is not just about treating others with compassion – but also treating ourselves as we would a dear friend!

Non judgement and self compassion will create the basis for kindness to others.

Take care of yourself and others in this session.

What is trauma

Trauma is an experience not an event. It is what happens inside of us, in response to what happens to us.

- Event/s
- Experiences
- Effects

Types of Trauma

Shock trauma – accident, assault, natural disaster.

Developmental and relational trauma – abuse and neglect (ACE's), separation from caregivers. Abuse by teacher & spiritual abuse. Betrayal of trust.

Environmental stressors and adverse conditions such as chronic toxic stress, including poverty, violence, racism. Transgenerational trauma. Vicarious trauma.

IMPACT

- Physical health
- Emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Relationships

Unresolved trauma can manifest in many ways, including anxiety disorders, phobias, panic attacks, intrusive memories (flashbacks), obsessive-compulsive behaviors, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, complex trauma syndrome, addictions, self-injury and a variety of physical symptoms. Trauma may increase health-risk behaviors such as problems associated with eating, smoking, drinking and risky behaviors. It can also cause physical symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains and stomach aches.

Unaddressed trauma can significantly increase the risk of mental and substance use disorders, suicide, self harm, chronic physical ailments, as well as premature death.

Severe and enduring PTSD sometimes leads to work-related problems and impacts on relationships

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, cancer.
- **Trauma impacts an individual's ability to**: trust, cope, form healthy relationships.
- **Trauma disrupts:** emotion identification; ability to self-sooth or control expression of emotions; one's ability to distinguish between what's safe and unsafe and alters the stress response mechanisms. Trauma can induce powerlessness, fear, hopelessness and a constant state of alert, as well as feelings of shame, guilt, rage, isolation and disconnection.
- **Trauma shapes:** a person's belief about self and others; one's ability to hope; one's outlook on life.

- Trauma response - is the brain in survival mode – it is on the lookout for danger
- It is a normal response to abnormal events
- Problems arise when the trauma response is triggered in situations where the danger is no longer a factor
- When judging what is safe and unsafe becomes faulty –it can compromise the ability to remain regulated.
- When triggered, seeking safety and protection is prioritised

Flip the Lid (Hand Model of the Brain)

Make a **Fist** with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain.

Figure 1. A model of the brain.

Thumb = Midbrain (Stem & Limbic) = Emotional Brain. This is where emotions and memories are processed. This is where the fight, flight & freeze is triggered.

Fingers = Cerebral Cortex = Rational Brain. Houses our ability to think and reason.

Fingernails = Prefrontal Cortex = Problem-Solving

When something triggers us, we are prone to **"Flip our Lid"** which means the Prefrontal Cortex (Fingernails) have a very poor connection with the Midbrain (Thumb), and we're not able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. Our emotions are overriding our ability to think clearly.

-Dr. Dan Siegal

Figure 2. Flipping your lid.

Fight Flight Freeze is not a conscious choice – it is an automatic reaction, releasing hormones and preparing the body to react or feel less pain if injured.

Fight: physically fighting, pushing, struggling, and fighting verbally e.g. saying 'no'.

Flight: putting distance between you and danger, including running, hiding or backing away.

Freeze: going tense, still and silent. This is a common reaction to rape and sexual violence. Freezing is not giving consent, it is an instinctive survival response. Animals often freeze to avoid fights and potential further harm, or to 'play dead' and so avoid being seen and eaten by predators.

Flop: similar to freezing, except your muscles become loose and your body goes floppy. This is an automatic reaction that can reduce the physical pain of what's happening to you. Your mind can also shut down to protect itself.

Friend: calling for a 'friend' or bystander for help, for example by shouting or screaming, **and/or** 'befriending' the person who is dangerous, for example by placating, negotiating, bribing or pleading with them. Again, this is not you giving your attacker consent, it is an instinctive survival mechanism.

Re-experiencing

Re-experiencing is the most typical symptom of PTSD.

This is when a person involuntarily and vividly relives the traumatic event in the form of:

- flashbacks
- nightmares
- repetitive and distressing images or sensations
- physical sensations, such as pain, sweating, feeling sick or trembling
- Some people have constant negative thoughts about their experience, repeatedly ruminating and being overcome by shame

Hyperarousal

Some people become very anxious and find it difficult to relax. They may be constantly aware of threats and easily startled.

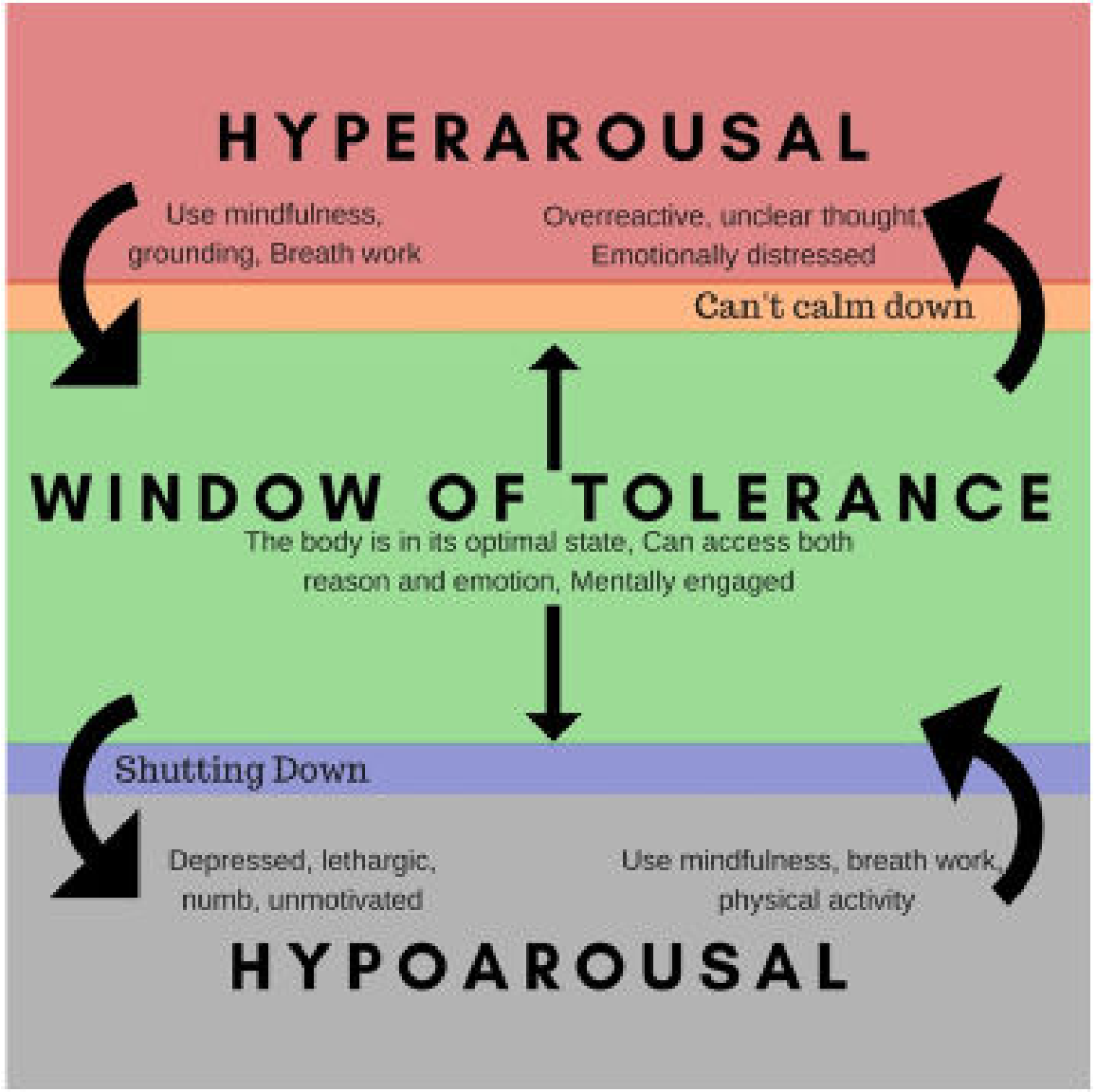
Hyperarousal often leads to:

- irritability
- angry outbursts
- sleeping problems
- difficulty concentrating

Hypoarousal
Shutting down and dissociation

Avoidance and Emotional Numbing

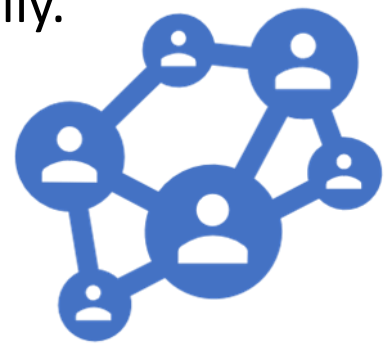
This can lead to the person becoming isolated and withdrawn, and they may also give up pursuing activities they used to enjoy.



Window of Tolerance

Trauma Informed Practice

- Relationships matter and every contact with someone who has experienced adversity and trauma can be an opportunity for healing and growth. To make every contact count, it is vitally important to take time to listen to the people we encounter, avoid jumping to conclusions, making assumptions or offer solutions. To work in an adversity and trauma-informed way, is to be sensitive to the wider context of the person's life, and how this impacts them, and any support you might be able to give them.
- Trauma informed practice is less about "what" you're doing, and more about "how" you're doing it. It requires being mindful of ways in which your interactions with others might inadvertently make them feel unsafe, either physically or emotionally.



Grounding techniques

- Trauma treatment is helping people be here now – enabling learning to tolerate what they are feeling. Recognising trauma can be held in the body. Allow for relaxation, movement.

- Orientate and connect to present
- Breathing techniques
- Sensitive mindfulness - anchoring

- dinscounseling.com/grounding-techniques-self-soothing-emotional-regulation/

Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness David Treleaven

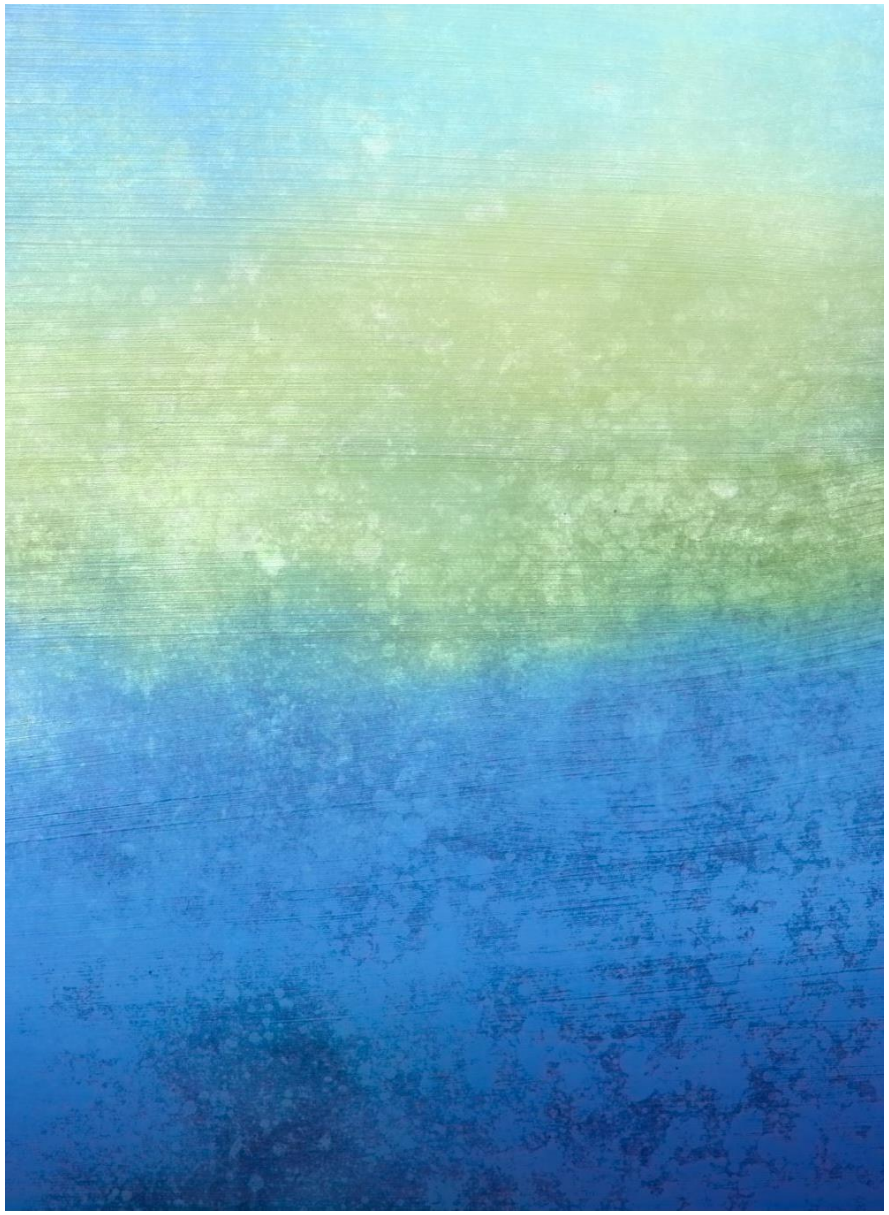
- ‘Anywhere mindfulness is being practiced, someone in the room will likely be struggling with trauma.’
- Breath is not always the best focus. It can be re triggering for some people. Offer different anchors of attention. So sound might be an alternative to breath. Just be with the experience of hearing. This might be an anchor of attention and a place to return to. Or to focus different physical sensations, e.g. feet on ground. Buttocks on the chair, or another sensation in the body. Then prepare to shift into the next step or back to the main meditation.
- We can overwhelm people with too many options. We need to give choice, but often one or two is best.
- Mindfulness is enough to heal trauma is a myth. Often additional skills are needed. e.g. Self compassion or embodiment practices, resilience tools, accessing support.

https://davidtreleaven.com Access the free webinar and podcasts

Co- regulation

When we are with others who are stressed, we pick up on this.

When others we are with are calm and happy. it makes us feel better



Strengths based approach

Universal Education (UE) involves inner transformation. Empowering individuals to manage their own learning by taking responsibility and making their own choices can reduce the possibility of inadvertent re-traumatisation.

Valuing diversity, ensuring equality and practicing inclusivity will enable individuals and the FDCW community to flourish.

Resilience: It is useful to recognise that many people work through the challenges of traumatic experiences and develop increased compassion and wisdom in their relationships with others. The opportunity for this to occur can be enhanced by genuine respect, understanding and empathic interactions from others.

Empowerment and Safety

- Communication - deep genuine respect
- Content – universal concepts and language
- Inquiry and discernment – encourage people to make choices
- Allow for and respect disagreement
- Pacing and preparation for participants - not sudden instructions
- Empowering participants to lean in or step back to regulate
- Attention and attunement – growing a sense of group cohesion.
- Responsive to the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals served; there is a responsiveness to gender, sexuality, age, ability etc. and consideration of historical trauma.

Trauma informed practice

- Safety – creating a calm environment
- Choice – giving options
- Empowerment – recognising capabilities
- Collaboration – working together
- Trustworthiness - clear and consistent honest information

Warning!

Beware

- Of falling into deficiency models
- Of pathologising language and labels
- Of over emphasising what is trauma – remember it is an individually determined
- Of being over protective leading to avoidance

Instead: Focus on respect, empowerment, strengths and resilience.

Potential for Post Traumatic Growth

- Increased inner strength
- Appreciation for life
- Improved relationships
- New possibilities
- Spiritual Growth

- https://hbr.org/2020/07/growth-after-trauma

Brain - hand model

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw

Quick introduction with Dan Siegal

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CpRY9-MIHA

For reference - more detailed explanation of the brain hand model

Additional References

Trauma and the Nervous System (The Trauma Foundation)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdIQRxwT1I0

Childhood Trauma and the Brain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYBUY1kZpf8

dinscounseling.com/grounding-techniques-self-soothing-emotional-regulation/