UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

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THE ROOT OF TRAUMA

COLONIZATION
- Relocation and Reserves
- Criminalization of Culture and Theft of Rights
- Indian Residential School
- Social Services

COMMUNITY TRAUMA

FAMILY TRAUMA

PERSONAL TRAUMA
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
SYMPTOM CLUSTERS

• **Re-experiencing**
  - nightmares, intrusive thoughts, “flashbacks”

• **Avoiding**
  - avoiding anything related to the trauma, places, people, and activities that remind them of what happened to them, and suppressing feelings or thoughts about the trauma

• **Heightened Arousal**
  - heightened physiological arousal and increased reactivity to stress and trauma. May be jittery and are startled easily. They often have problems with concentration because they’re constantly alert and looking for danger. Hyperarousal often leads to irritability and trouble sleeping.

• **Changes in thoughts, feelings and beliefs**
  - feeling sad, anxious, or afraid most of the time, becoming emotionally numb, losing interest in activities and relationships, thinking of themselves as a bad or guilty person, believing that the world is a scary, dangerous place and people can’t be trusted
TRAUMA & THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Conserving
(DVC)

Escalated

(Shut Down)

(“Anxiety”)  ("Depression")  (Rage)

Reacting
(SNS)

(Flight)  (Freeze)  (Fight)

Relaxed/
(VVC)

(Alert)  (Relaxed)  (Social)

PNS
Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress

Traumatic Event

Stuck on “On”

Stuck on “Off”

Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity
Exaggerated Startle
Inability to relax, Restlessness
Hyper-vigilance, Digestive problems
Emotional flooding
Chronic pain, Sleeplessness
Hostility/rage

Depression, Flat affect
Lethargy, Deadness
Exhaustion, Chronic Fatigue
Disorientation
Disconnection, Dissociation
Complex syndromes, Pain
Low Blood Pressure
Poor digestion

Normal Range
TRAUMA AS A TORNADO
TRAUMA BRAID

Traumatic Event

Instinct

FLIGHT  FREEZE  FIGHT

Trauma

“ANXIETY”  “DEPRESSION”  “RAGE”

Colonization

“ADDICTION”  SUICIDE  VIOLENCE
3 Ways PTSD Affects the Brain

- The threat perception system is enhanced – brain becomes a fear driven brain
- The ability to distinguish between what stimuli is relevant and what can be dismissed is challenged
- The self sensing part of the brain becomes blunted
Trauma - Brain Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Region</th>
<th>Normal Function</th>
<th>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amygdala</strong></td>
<td>Sets off fight or flight in response to danger</td>
<td>Sets off fight or flight in response to memories or thoughts about danger</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hippocampus</strong></td>
<td>Transfers and stores information into memories</td>
<td>Stores memories incorrectly and affects memory retrieval</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prefrontal cortex</strong></td>
<td>Complex thinking, decision making and appropriate behavior</td>
<td>Dysfunctional thought processes and decision making; inappropriate responses to situations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis</strong></td>
<td>Releases hormones like cortisol to help manage and direct efforts to stressor</td>
<td>Overactive, which leads to imbalances in hormone levels and increases stress and anxiety</td>
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# TRAUMA IMPACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>IMPACTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL</td>
<td>Affect Dysregulation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suppression</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relational Ambivalence/Instability</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENTAL</td>
<td>Black and White Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idealize or Demonize Others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Problem Solving</td>
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<td>Personalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL</td>
<td>Self Mutilation</td>
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<td>“Addictive” Behaviours</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Somatic Complaints</td>
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<td>SPIRITUAL</td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shame</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disconnection from Spirit/Cultural Tradition</td>
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INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY TRAUMA

• Intergenerational Trauma
  – How does it happen?

  • Direct (learned)
  
  • Indirect (environment)

  • Epigenetic ("blood memory")
Key Points In Working with Trauma

• Hold the perspective that we have an innate capacity to heal and transform trauma; given the right environment our systems can find their way back home.

• Creating a felt sense of SAFETY and connection is essential. You must become a “safe haven”.

• Work with building resources and strengths. Highlight strengths already present – Wellness Model

• Trauma impacts the physiology, therefore it is necessary to include working SOMATICALLY (with the body) in the healing of trauma.
“Trauma can be hell on earth, but when transformed, it is a divine gift.”

~ Dr. Peter Levine