

# Trauma Incident Reduction

## Theories and Practice

Fran Baker, LCSW, PhD



▶ **List 8 activities/things you did this morning before 8:00 AM...**

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○ —

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# Workshop Objectives

- ▶ Concepts of trauma
    - Definitions of trauma
    - Causes and reactions
    - Reactions to trauma
  - ▶ Assessment process
    - Effects on individual
    - Effects on family dynamics
  - ▶ Interventions
- 

# Trauma



- Trauma occurs when an actual or perceived threat of danger *or loss* overwhelms a person's usual coping ability. (Beverly James, 1994)

# Vicarious Trauma

- ▶ **Vicarious trauma is a process, not an event:**
  - ...our strong reaction of grief, rage, outrage, which grows as we hear about and see people's pain and loss and are forced to recognize human potential for cruelty and indifference
  - ...it is our numbing, our protective shell, and our wish not to know which follow those reactions
  - The alternating states of numbness and overwhelming feelings parallel PTSD.

Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996, pg.41

# Secondary Trauma Stress

- ▶ Emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.

# Secondary Traumatic Stress

## Symptoms

- ▶ Hypervigilance
- ▶ Hopelessness
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ No time or energy for oneself
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Anger and cynicism
- ▶ Insensitivity to violence
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Chronic Exhaustion
- ▶ Poor Boundaries
- ▶ Loss of Creativity
- ▶ Inability to embrace complexity
- ▶ Inability to listen
- ▶ Diminished self care
- ▶ Illness

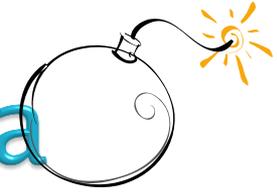
# Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ A less stigmatizing way to describe secondary traumatic stress; has been used interchangeably with secondary trauma.

# Secondary Trauma: Coping Mechanisms

- ▶ Trauma is a relatively common event.
  - Feeling overwhelmed, or a loss of control, can cause physical and psychological reactions.
- ▶ Ways of coping with the traumatic event can be varied such as:
  - eating too much or not enough
  - self medicating (drugs or alcohol) to mask feelings and emotions
  - sleeping a lot or having trouble sleeping

# Women and Trauma



- ▶ Unresolved trauma has been identified as the biggest health threat to women.
  - 2001 – SAMSHA Conference on Women’s Health



# The Effects On Women

- ▶ Continuing psychological reactions are usually unconscious and can confuse and exacerbate the problem.

We will discuss trauma as it relates to action, reaction, and intervention.

# Pre-Trauma Vulnerabilities

Schiraldi

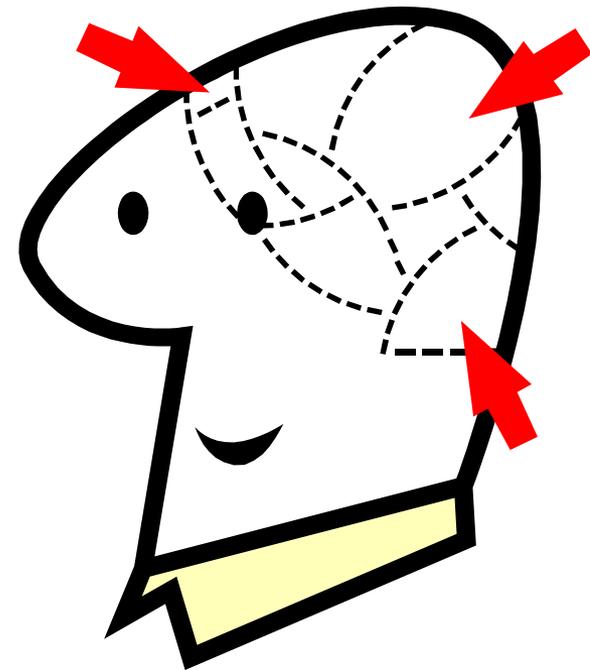
- ▶ Previous Trauma
- ▶ Underdeveloped skills:
  - learning to protect self,
  - problem-solving,
  - self-esteem,
  - resilience,
  - creativity, humor,
  - ability to express emotion
  - less tolerant of stress.
- ▶ Lack of support system
- ▶ Personality
  - habitually negative thought patterns
- ▶ Biology/heredity
  - over-reactive nervous systems.
- ▶ History of drug use

# Bio-chemical Effects of Trauma on the Brain

# Post Traumatic Injury

- ▶ **Chemistry of trauma injures the brain**

Dr. Charles Figley, PhD. editor in chief of Traumatology,  
(International peer-reviewed journal of Trauma) ,  
currently faculty at Tulane University.



# Effects of Stress

- ▶ Brain Scan Studies on Vietnam vets and victims of sexual assault show:
  - 5 –18% less brain mass than control groups.
  - The hippocampus in the brain has actually *shrunk*
    - creating the possibility of impaired learning/problem solving, relationships, and effects of poor health.

Brenner, 2002



# Body and Mind



- ▶ **Body/brain can't tell the difference between a mental image and an actual event.**
  - Imagined exercise achieved a 16% increase while actual exercise achieved 30% increase muscle mass for those who actually exercised.  
(David Smith, U of C, UK ODE magazine 1/07)
  - **Alternative trauma (*not experienced personally*)**
    - Fear imagery – news and negative focus
    - Procrastination – keep thinking and revisiting but not finishing process.

# Normal Chemical Responses

## ▶ Cortisol

- Regulates Adrenalines
- Increase of energy

## ▶ Adrenalines (fight or flight)

- Sharpens focus
- Stimulates memory
- Increases:
  - Blood Pressure
  - Heart rate
  - Shunts blood away from systems not needed to the brain and to muscles

## ▶ Natural Opioids

- Prevents:
  - experiencing pain
  - memory consolidation

## ▶ Oxytocin

- Inhibits forming memories

## ▶ Vasopressin

- Prevents dehydration

- ▶ **Oxytocin** Inhibits memory recall, has a calming effect. Is present during and after a trauma to give calming effect that helps us to function.
- Ex. Narcotics for dental pain – we have the pain but a sensation of being *over there* or *floating away*.
  - Ex. Oxytocin is bonding the hormone which initiates childbirth labor and bonds mother and child.  
*Could be the reason anyone would have a second child!*
  - Ex. Oxytocin is present after traumatic event. Biological reason victims bond with their perpetrator.

**Estrogen enhances this chemical reaction, therefore women are more receptive to this bonding.**

# Biochemical Reactions Over Time

## ▶ Adrenaline

increased levels cause:

- hyper-stress
- inability to distinguish danger signals
- inability to sleep
- flashbacks
- trouble concentrating

Shuts off the brain

## ▶ Cortisol – Chronically low or high levels

- reduces immune function
- impair the part of the brain responsible for memory
- Is stored in mid-section of our bodies

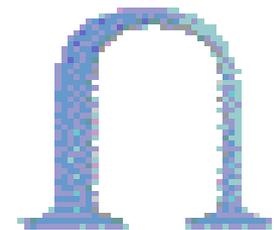
Shuts off memory

# Inverted “U” Response

- ▶ At optimum levels, biochemical changes allow us to function better during stressful events.

*However,*

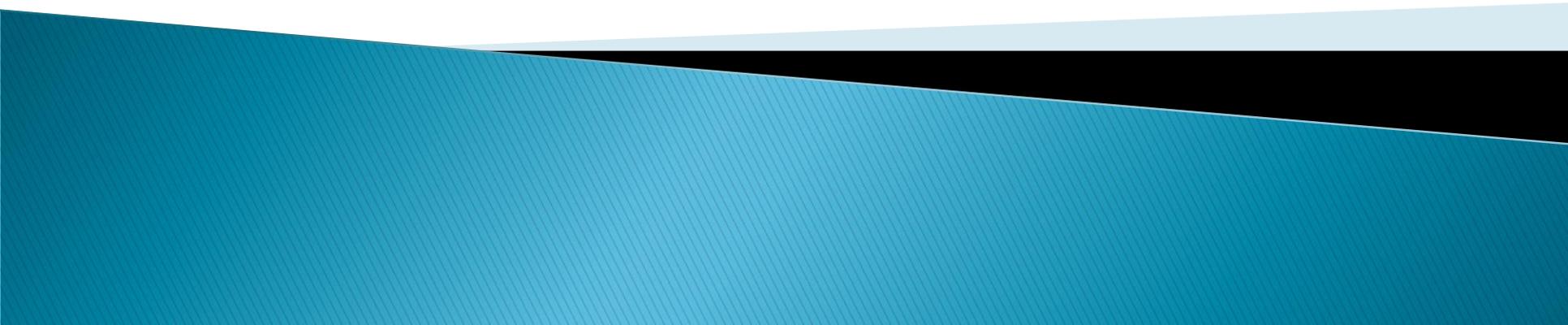
- ▶ If the *stress continues too long* or is *too overwhelming*, functioning becomes impaired rather than enhanced!

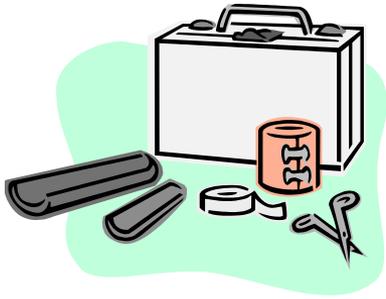


# Secondary Trauma Effects

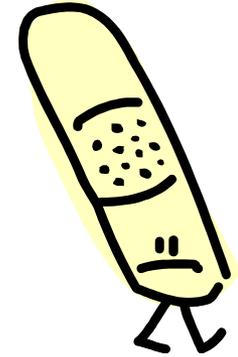
- ▶ Secondary Trauma Affects are similar:
  - Hyper stress and hyper-vigilance
  - Possible permanent memory loss
  - Low energy, reduced immune functioning
  - Trapped in a cycle of physiological emergency reactions – creating new brain pathways
  - In a word ----- STRESS -----

# Interventions





# Trauma First Aid



- ▶ Moderate/heavy exercise within 48 hrs of trauma
- ▶ Drink lots of water
- ▶ Verbalize what happened only in a safe setting
- ▶ Journal writing

***Brain cells can rebuild with learning and avoidance of further trauma.***

# Caretaker vs Caregiver

## ▶ **Caretaker**

- No clear boundaries
- Not able to manage discomfort
- Takes ownership and responsibility for client issues
- Tries to fix or solve problems belonging to others

## ▶ **Caregiver**

- Sets appropriate boundaries
- Developed ways to manage discomfort
- Assists in prioritizing issues
- Provides support and encouragement
- Supports resolution of problems of others

# “Wise–Selfish vs Foolish–Selfish”

## H.H. Dalai Lama

- ▶ “Human beings may naturally be selfish, but they are also naturally compassionate. By helping others, you are building your own happy future – that is “wise–selfish.”
- ▶ By blocking your pain with unhealthy behaviors like taking drugs or over working is “Foolish–selfish”.

[http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/10/dalai\\_lama\\_helping\\_others\\_is\\_w.html](http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/10/dalai_lama_helping_others_is_w.html)

October, 2013, Decatur, Ga.

# “Wise Selfish” vs “Foolish Selfish”

- ▶ The list of 8 things from this morning – how many of them were “wise selfish”?
  - Not for kids or husband
  - Not to be presentable for or to please others
  - Not to prevent trouble later
- ▶ Just for YOUR own self pleasure, comfort, relaxation or to put a *smile on your face*?

# “Wise Selfish” vs “Foolish Selfish”

- ▶ We have time for ourselves, we just need to hunt for it.
- ▶ Time is:
  - too slow for those who Wait/
  - too swift for those who Fear/
  - too long for those who Grieve/
  - too short for those who Rejoice/But for those who Love/time is not!

Poet: Henry Van Dyke

# Ways to be “Wise Selfish”

- ▶ Do something each day, just for you
- ▶ Envision events you wish to happen – as already having happened
- ▶ Hug another person, it releases endorphins which will relax your being
  - if you are not a hugger, find something beautiful in life to focus on

# Ways to be “Wise Selfish”

- ▶ Identify moments of time to reinforce your positive mood –put a smile on your face.
  - Take time to see the positive in anything, just pick one thing.
  - Smell the coffee or tea before you drink it.
  - Look into the mirror each morning and say “I love you”.

# Ways to be “Wise Selfish”

- ▶ 8 things to do tomorrow morning...
  - Wake up and stretch
  - Ask yourself: “How do I want to feel today?”
  - Feel your feet on the floor
  - Tell yourself: “This is the best day I have ever experienced.”
  - Look out the window
  - Think of a way to be “wise selfish” today.
  - Close the bathroom door
  - Look into the mirror, smile, and say “I love you, you gorgeous creature” – and mean it!

# Noteworthy for Professionals

## Remember for the client:

- ▶ Initial memories can be fragmented
- ▶ “Just Listen”
- ▶ Normalize and educate
- ▶ Write down and remind

## Remember for you:

- ▶ Breathe (Belly Breathing)
- ▶ Relax
- ▶ Escape
- ▶ Action
- ▶ Touch
- ▶ Hydrate

# Trauma Incident Reduction

**Everyone  
has the innate ability  
heal [her]self.**

Gerbode,1989



# Trauma Incident Reduction

- ▶ **Trauma Incident Reduction (TIR) is based:**
  - on the client's knowledge, perspective, internal awareness and timing.
  
- ▶ **Trauma Incident Reduction is:**
  - client focused,
  - client centered, and
  - client driven.

# Trauma Incident Reduction

- ▶ **Clinicians must be able to:**
  - create a continuous safe space
  - carry each session to success
  - maintain a primary intention
  - facilitate client-identified issues; NOT interpret information
  - be prepared to listen without resistance
  - be prepared to listen for as long as it takes for resolution.  
(Allow for two hour sessions.)
  - be prepared to comprehend what the client is saying

*Be **interested** in the client is; instead of  
**being interesting** to the client.*

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- ▶ The Trauma Incident Workshop, 6<sup>th</sup> Addition, French, Harris
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- ▶ The Trauma Resolution Center, Teresa Descilo, MSW
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- ▶ [www.thetrcenter.org](http://www.thetrcenter.org)
- ▶ [http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/10/dalai\\_lama\\_helping\\_others\\_is\\_w.html](http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/10/dalai_lama_helping_others_is_w.html)

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## ▶ **Trauma Incident Reduction**

Learn the Client-Centered Exposure Treatment  
that is defining the field.

[www.thetrcenter.org](http://www.thetrcenter.org)