Trauma in the Workplace Series

Workshop #1:
Trauma and the Impacts
1.19.23
Who We Are

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• Contributions by LaVerne Miller, Esq.
Hopes for Our Time Together

On this Journey We Will...

- Consider strategies to support self-awareness and self-care
- Define trauma
- Share examples at the intersection of trauma and the workplace
- Explore the impacts on people as we work
Self-Awareness and the Invitation to Self-Care

“In the thick of this work we often forget about our own needs until they are so big we can no longer meet them in simple ways”

Shery Mead
Grounding = Connecting to Myself
Experience Shapes Us: How We Are, Think, and Engage
Defining “Trauma”

**Individual Trauma** is the unique personal experience of an event or enduring condition:

- The individual experiences a threat to their life or safety or harm to a loved one
- The individual’s coping capacity or ability to integrate their emotional experience is overwhelmed

Defining “Collective and Historical Trauma”

Collective Trauma: Group or Community Experience

Cultural Trauma (genocide): The systematic destruction of traditions, values, language, and other elements that make one group of people distinct from another

Historical Trauma:
The cumulative emotional, psychological, and spiritual wounding over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group cultural trauma experiences

The Essence of Our Work
What Would You Add?

- Kindness
- Respect, Dignity
- Empathy
- Choice
- Transparency
- Non-coercion
- Listening
- Understanding
- Effectiveness
- Trustworthiness
- Mutuality
What Gets in the Way?
Experience and Impact

Prisonization

Institutionalization
The 4 Realms of Aces

1. **Adverse Household Experiences**
   - Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
   - Maternal Depression
   - Physical and Emotional Neglect
   - Divorce
   - Incarcerated Family Member
   - Domestic Violence
   - Parental Mental Illness
   - Emotional and Sexual Abuse
   - Bullying

2. **Adverse Community Experiences**
   - Violence
   - Discrimination
   - Food Scarcity
   - Poor Housing Quality

3. **Adverse Climate Experiences**
   - Record Storms, Flooding & Mudsides
   - Wildfires
   - Tornados & Hurricanes
   - Earthquakes
   - Natural Disasters
   - Pandemic

4. **Adverse Cultural Experiences**
   - Lack of Social Capital and Mobility
1 Person:
Multiple Traumatic Impacts

- Impacts on identity and belonging
- History (dislocation)
- Experiences with violence
- Coercion in all of its many forms
- Microaggressions
- Barriers to accessibility
- Trauma reminders
- Secondary Trauma
- Harms replicated in the workplace
- What else?
When the Workplace Perpetuates Traumatic Harms

- Intentional or unintentional
- Othering staff
- Inequitable treatment
- Over-surveillance based on identity
- Deficit-based
- Lack of focus on growth and learning
- Ineffective supervision
- Lack of trauma-informed approaches
Distress: We are Wired for Survival

Information from internal and sensory sources

What does this look like from the outside?

Moss 2013, Cave and Curley 2015
In the Aftermath, the Alarm is Constantly “On”

• There is recent or current threat, danger, and violence
• Our bodies and brains continue to be on constant alert for danger
• Reassurance that we are safe may not help turn off the alarm
• Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is only one of many ways to define these experiences
Common Trauma Reminders and Your Work

- Specific actions, feelings or sensory stimuli of past events
- Lack of power and control
- Relationship conflict
- Separation or loss
- Transitions
- Disruption of routines
- Feelings of vulnerability or rejection
- Feeling threatened or attacked
- Loneliness
- Sensory overload
- Current Lack of safety

Cave and Johnan 2015
Dysregulation and Overwhelm

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical awareness (body placement and movement)
- Energy
- Felt sense of safety
- Felt sense of connection
- Presence in the here-and-now

NCDVTMH 2016
Disruptions in How We Function

- Planning, organizing, and perseverance
- Impulse control
- Self-monitoring and internal supervision
- Problem solving, critical thinking and forward thinking
- Judgment, learning from experience and mistakes

Cave and Johnan 2015
This May Look Like...

• Being overwhelmed by or having strong reactions to seemingly “minor” irritants
• Scanning for danger, worry that something bad will happen
• Numbing, checking out
• Not being able to “get over” things that happen in day-to-day life
• Disengaging and avoiding interactions
• Minimizing or compartmentalizing
• Not being able to plan
How are responses to threat labeled?
Labels Can Undermine Healing

• May not define current experience
• May not translate across culture, language or ability
• Applied during time of greatest distress
• Used to “screen in” and “screen out”
• Often assigned without a trauma lens
• Linked to demands for compliance
• Keep person designated as “other”
Healing from Trauma Requires

• Control over one’s life and environment
• A sense of physical and emotional safety
• Ability to trust self and others
• Connection with trustworthy others
• Supportive opportunities for healing

Cave and Penney 2014
Resources for Support
Welcome

Welcome to the New York State Trauma-Informed Network. Our goal is to support champions of trauma responsive practices across the state with improved connection and access to quality resources. Here you can connect with other organizations around New York State, search resources and events on a variety of topics, and post resources and events that promote trauma-responsive practices. Together we can increase the collective understanding of trauma, improve practice, and support resilience throughout New York State.

Not sure where to begin? Consider using the Trauma-Responsive Understanding Self-assessment Tool (TRUST), a free online assessment to determine where your organization might have the greatest opportunity for change.

**TRUST**

Formerly the TIC-OSAT, this online tool is designed for organizations of all types and sizes to assess their own progress in implementing trauma-informed practices.

**TRUST for Schools**

Specific version for schools to assess their own progress in implementing trauma-sensitive educational practices.
The NYS Trauma-Informed Network

Purpose

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www.traumainformedny.org

✓ Cross-Sector
  • OMH – CCSI – MHANYS - CTAC
  • Peers
  • Health
  • Education
  • Justice
  • Government
  • Early Care
  • Community-Based Organizations
  • Regional Coalitions

✓ Network Website:
  • 550 Registered Users
  • 53 Registered Organizations
New York City Resilience Collaborative (NYCRC)

James Rodriguez, LCSW, PhD
Clarencetine (Teena) Brooks, LMSW, M. Phil, ABD

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“Healing from trauma, like healing from a physical injury, is a natural human process. Healing is possible.”

Richard Mollica
Questions and Reflections

...I was born to shiver in the draft of an open mind.

Phyllis McGinley
Additional Resources


• See Handouts from the New York State Trauma-informed Network
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