



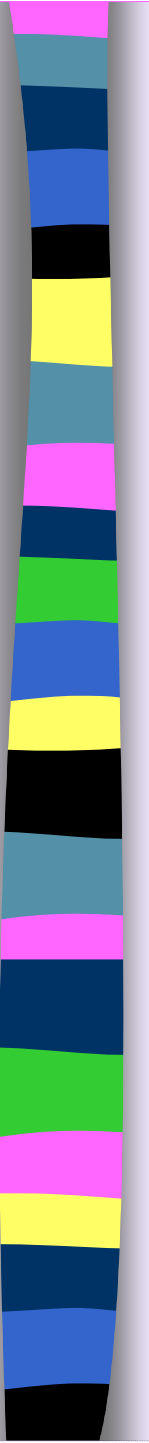
A Community Response to Healing Trauma and Violence

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The Trauma Healing Project

www.healingattention.org

www.healingattention.org/nwhs07.pdf



“The stakes have never been higher, the odds have never been better, we’ve never had so much going for us. Let us take charge and set things right.”

~ Harvey Jackins



Assumptions

Unresolved trauma negatively impacts our quality of life, our ability to be effective in our work, and our capacity to create just societies.

We are all impacted by trauma – individually and collectively – there is no “us and them”

Many aspects of our lives, communities and societies are organized around either experiences or fear of trauma, or both

Interpersonal violence (the most devastating trauma) is rooted in, and provides the framework for, collective oppressions

Trauma is political – as is our work to heal and end it



How We Get Hurt

Contagion - impacted by others' hurts

Abuse - intentional/patterned

Accident - “things happen”

**Oppression - the institutional,
systematic mistreatment of one group
of people by another.**



Statistics, or “How bad is it, really?”

- **One study found that 15% of pregnant women reported physical abuse during their present pregnancy, and one in four reported physical abuse in the last calendar year. These numbers are true for Lane County.**
- **An Oregon Needs Assessment found that 1 in 6 children lived in homes where there was domestic violence in the last year.**
- **38% of youth assessed at DYS Intake in 2003 reported histories of exposure to family violence. 98% of girls in detention report abuse histories**
- **One study of adolescent girls served through OSLC Programs found that 81% had documented histories of physical abuse and 84.5% had documented histories of sexual abuse.**
- **Between January 2002 and June 2003 17.5% of women visiting the Emergency Departments at Sacred Heart and McKenzie-Willamette Hospitals reported domestic violence in their current relationships. During the same time period, 31% (male & female) came in with serious emotional distress and 38% were actively using substances. 56% were dealing with at least one of these issues, 22% were dealing with two or more.**
- **Oregon received more than 40,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in 2003. From the founded reports, about 9,500 victims of abuse or neglect were identified.**



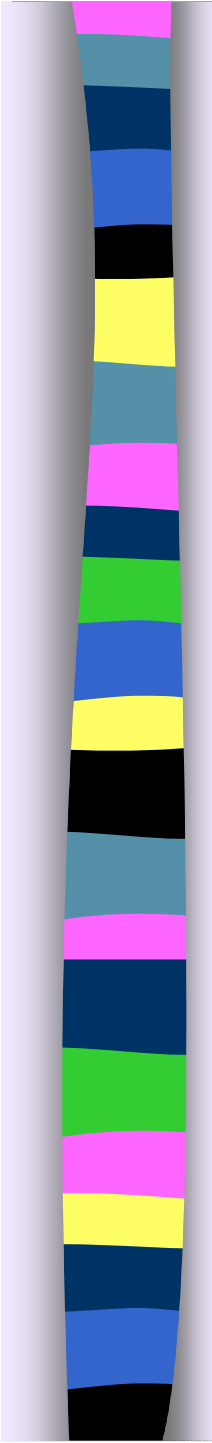
Statistics (cont.)

- **At Lane County Psychiatric Hospital in 1998, 68% of (male and female) patients had a recorded history of childhood abuse. A subsequent chart review of female patients in 2002 found that 74% reported histories of childhood abuse, 62% were abused as adults and 30% reported being in current danger.**
- **Domestic violence is the #1 cause of death for African-American women aged 15-34.**
- **One study found that in the U.S. approximately 1.5 million women and 834,700 men are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner each year.**
- **A 2002 study found that of women with physical and physical and cognitive disabilities 67% experienced physical abuse and 53% experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime.**
- **In 2000, more than 2,200 Americans aged 18 and under died from bullet wounds, which equals six young people per day.**
- **In 2000, 55,087 nonfatal firearm injuries were treated in US emergency departments.**
- **Over 3000 people died on September 11, 2001 in the attacks on the World Trade Center.**
- **Over 1000 US soldiers and more than 11,000 Iraqi civilians have died since the US Occupation began in March 2003.**



Defining Trauma

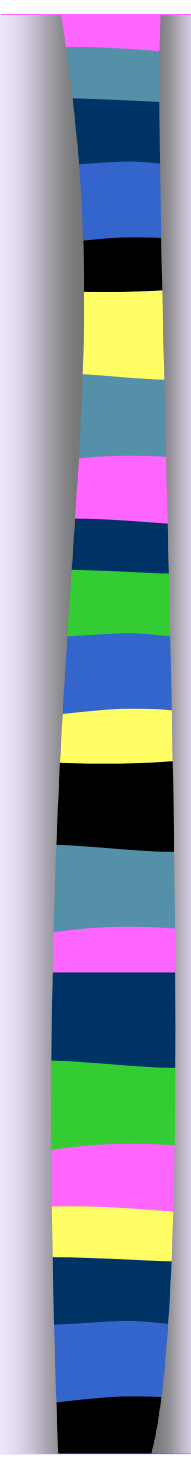
- “an experience that is (or experiences that are) emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects”
- “an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and which is so seriously distressing as to overwhelm the mind's defenses and cause lasting emotional harm”
- “an inescapably stressful event that overwhelms people's normal coping mechanisms”



“Trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound. It is a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed, to a world in which people are routinely wounded.”

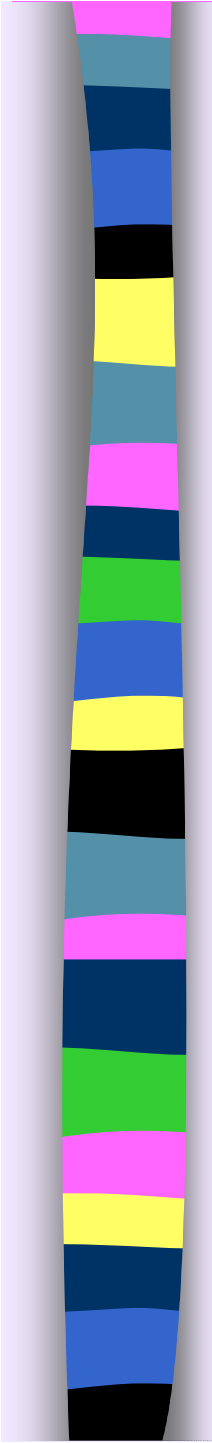
“Trauma is a concrete physical, cognitive, affective, and spiritual response by individuals and communities to events and situations that are objectively traumatizing. On a simple level, for the most part, people feel traumatized or wounded because they *have been* wounded.”

~ Bonnie Burstow



Trauma occurs in layers, with each layer affecting every other layer. Current trauma is one layer. Former traumas in one's life are more fundamental layers. Underlying one's own individual trauma history is one's group identity or identities and the historical trauma with which they are associated.

Bonnie Burstow



“Betrayal trauma occurs when the people or institutions we depend on for survival violate us in some way.”

~ Jennifer Freyd

Violence and the Developing Brain

In Utero to Perinatal Period Brainstem Development	Symptoms of Anxiety
Perinatal And First Few Years Midbrain Development	Impulsive and Aggressive Symptoms
Infancy and Childhood Sub-Cortical and Limbic Development	Dysthymic, Depressed Or Unattached Individuals
Throughout Childhood Cortical/Cognitive Development	Processing And Problem-Solving Styles Which Predispose To Violent Solutions



IMPACT ON ADULT VICTIMS

Primary Distress is the Violent Partner

- When the person is safe, the distress tends to be ameliorated.
- Psychological injuries do not meet the criteria for clinical diagnosis, but the person may be suffering great distress.


Long Term Exposure

- Exhibit the behavior of a hostage held captive for an extended period
- Post Traumatic Stress Reactions
- Depression
- Affective, dissociative and anxiety disorders/responses

Childhood Victimization

- Borderline personality characteristics
- Dissociative Symptoms

Internal	External
Withdrawn/Hypervigilant	Hyperactive
Suicidal	Aggressive
Self-Destructive	Delinquency
Drug Addiction/Numbing	'Thrill' Seeking
Self-Mutilation	Violent
Lack Of Boundaries – No Right To Say No	No Empathy – Entitlement
Victims	Perpetrators



**EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO
VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN
MAY BE MISTAKENLY
VIEWED AS ADHD**

Individuals and Organizations Under Stress

Sandra Bloom

Individuals

- Irritability, aggression, anxiety, tension
- Hair-trigger tempers
- Mood instability
- Poor impulse control
- Dichotomous, extremist thinking and behavior
- Increased attachment to groups
- Hostility and violence projected outward
- Multiple addictions & compulsive behaviors

Organizations

- Atmosphere of constant crisis
- Increased territoriality, in-group cohesion - attachment
- Out-group rejection - projection onto external enemy
- Increasingly autocratic leaders, increasingly passive followers
- Pressure on leaders to just DO something - Emphasis on action
- Dichotomous, extremist thinking and behavior
- Poor, impulsive, autocratic decision-making or “groupthink”



Individuals and Organizations Under Stress (cont.)

Individuals

- State of high alert, hyper-vigilance
- Action, not thought
- Decreased ability to think clearly or completely
- Inability to tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity =
- dichotomized, extremist thinking
- Attention to threat – tagged for mental priority
- Intense and prolonged anxiety

Organizations

- High level of tension, frustration, easy aggression
- Punitive, controlling behavior toward clients
- Poorly constructed, extreme responses –Cliques, power imbalances, loss of minority voice
- Other units, systems, agencies bad, we are good
- Bossy leaders who make unilateral decisions angering and further splitting staff
- Increased aggressive behavior of clients and staff



Survival Response Can Become Patterned & Rigid

- **Denial or lack of memory**
- **Avoidance**
- **Altered belief systems**
- **Addiction/compulsion**
- **Depression/numbness**
- **Violence/aggression**
- **Risk taking**
- **Self-Abuse**



Guiding Principles

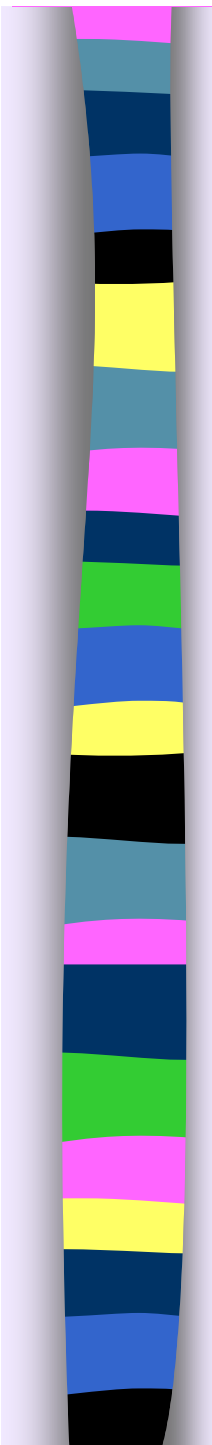
(for care givers, survivors, families, and the community)

- Safety - immediate/long-term, basic needs, safe space, advocacy
- Healing - therapeutic, strength-based, effective
- Liberation - empowerment focused, partnership models
- Justice - prevention, intervention, activism and social change



Challenges to Supporting Individuals and the Community Heal from Trauma

- **Care-givers are afraid to address trauma**
- **Options for healing and recovery are inconsistent**
- **Options for healing and recovery are not well known**
- **Resources and services seem inadequate to meet the need**
- **We have been taught to be afraid of emotion and distress**
- **Systems and institutions (and the people working within them) reinforce denial and distress and can inflict or perpetuate trauma**



**It is essential to recognize and acknowledge
“the impact of various institutions that have
traumatized or might traumatize clients and
the importance of helping clients protect
themselves and resist.**

**“Just as it is important to help our clients
understand the oppressive institutions that
control them and to mount a resistance, it is
important to help clients protect themselves
from traumatizing institutions.”**

~ Bonnie Burstow



Burstow goes on to say, “practitioners should be joining with clients in acknowledging and lamenting the utter inadequacy of conventional views.”



The Hope

- **People can completely recover and heal from trauma**
- **We have more information and skills than ever before**
- **Good resources and services exist**
- **Survivors are speaking up and taking action**



What do you need to know to help?

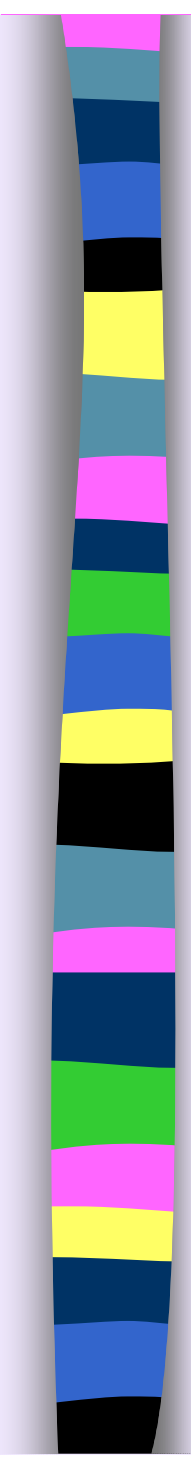
(a.k.a. Assessment)

- * safety and stability of current environment
- * age & developmental level at time of exposure
- * quality of pre-traumatic & current care-giving environment
- * type of violence experienced
- * presence of continued threat
- * acuteness verses chronicity of trauma
- * Expressions of traumatic stress & coping strategies
- * strengths & protective factors in the person and their environment



Intervention Goals

- * Establish short and long-term safety plans**
- * Break silence about trauma and abuse**
- * Shift blame away from survivor**
- * Contextualize & Normalize the experience**
- * Validate coping strategies**
- * Learn new ways of relating and coping**
- * Integrate and reconnect/connect**



“[I]nstead of working to eliminate traumatized ways of coping, for example, counselors should honor these ways, co-investigating with the client the various purposes served.

“More generally, insofar as regaining power is central to what so much traumatized coping is about, an absolutely critical direction for radical trauma praxis is redirecting some of the focus off controlling self and onto acquiring real power in the larger world.”

Bonnie Burstow



Strategies for Healing

Humanistic - Language of Feelings

Kinesthetic - Tactile Integration

Re-evaluative - Emotive Integration

Behavioral - Conditioning & Containment

Expressive - Holistic/Multidimensional

Relational - Healing Through Connection



Actions that counter alienation should be encouraged and supported. Possible examples include:

- telling one's story
- naming one's own experiences
- debunking myths about one's community
- creating public rituals and ceremonies for expressing grief and outrage
- rebuilding community ties, traditions, and models
- reclaiming personal, community, or national space
- reclaiming the product of one's labor
- reconnecting with nature
- activism



The Key Components of a Healing Environment*

An understanding and acceptance of the wide range of human emotion and the emotive healing process

Relationship based

Social milieu – working agreements, democratic participation

Valuing of each life/Respect based

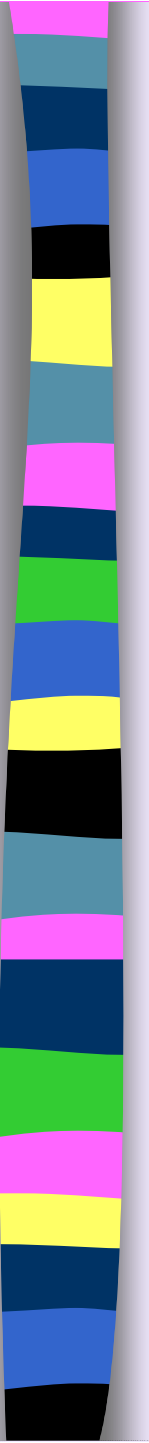
Normalizing of experience

Consciousness of relations of power

Expectations of self-care

**Conflicts expected, acknowledged and addressed
(nothing off limits)**

Change and learning is facilitated and accepted



“We can’t keep trauma from happening, but we can heal completely. Healing requires connection and action. The active healing process becomes the foundation for ending oppression and violence.”

~ Me