



Working with Clients through a Trauma- Informed Lens

WDA/WACDL Second Chances CLE

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A black and white photograph of a child lying on a bed in a room. The child is wearing a dark shirt and dark pants, and is looking down. The room has a bed with a white sheet, a wall with several posters, and a window with a grid pattern. The text "WHAT IS TRAUMA?" is overlaid in the center of the image.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?









The streets of Seattle turned violent Saturday when protesters set fire to a youth detention center and a leading cops to declare protests had turned into 'riots' that afternoon

Trauma Defined

- DSM-5:
 - actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence through direct exposure, witnessing in person the traumatic event as it occurs to others, learning that violent or accidental trauma occurred to family or close friend, repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of a traumatic event.
- SAMHSA
 - The psychological response to violence or adverse events when they are experienced as physically or emotionally harmful/threatening and has lasting adverse effects on functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA 3 E's of Trauma

Events

Experiences
(of the event)

Effects
(of the event)

Don't Neglect Neglect

- Most common and most chronic maltreatment
- Most difficult to self-identify
- Kids who are ignored don't learn to self-soothe, ask for help, or respond with empathy to others

Traumatic Effects & PTSD

Hypervigilance or
constant state of
arousal

Numbing or
avoidance

Nightmares

Anxiety/panic

Phobias

Depression

Emotional
numbness

Substance abuse
(self-medicating)

Somatization
(physical symptoms
for which there does
not appear to be any
organic cause)

Intrusive thoughts
or flashbacks

Dissociation

Avoiding all
reminders of trauma

Sense of
foreshortened
future



U.S. adults with at least
one ACE



U.S. adults with three
or more ACEs

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

IMPACTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA



Complex Trauma Symptoms

Inability to self
regulate emotions

Amnesia and
dissociation

Chronic guilt

Shame

Trauma bonding

Intense difficulties
with trust and
intimacy

Conversely
difficulty
determining
harmful situations
or people

Self-medicating

Self-harming

Trauma-Informed Paradigm

Traditional Paradigm		Trauma-Informed Paradigm
Clients are sick or bad	⇒	Clients are wounded
Bad behavior is due to immorality, bad character, lack of motivation	⇒	Bad behavior is viewed through the lens of early experiences
Emphasis on control and compliance	⇒	Emphasis on Collaboration
We need to manage client behaviors	⇒	We need to help clients develop self-regulation skills
Clients are resistant	⇒	Clients are ambivalent about change
Addictive, self-destructive, or abusive behaviors are choices	⇒	Maladaptive behaviors are reflective of survival skills
Focus on presenting problems	⇒	Presenting problems are often symptoms of underlying trauma response



WHAT DO WE DO?

Trauma-Informed Approach to Client Meetings



Don't have an agenda - except the client's



Active Listening



Don't rush the process



First date



Observations



Team Approach

Motivational
Interviewing
(OARS)

Open-ended questions

Affirmations

Reflections

Summaries

Trauma Measures

- ACEs & PEARLs
- Childhood Trauma Questionnaire
- Life Events Checklist
- Trauma History Questionnaire
- Life Stressor Checklist-Revised
- PTSD checklist

Record Review through a Trauma-Informed Lens

School
Records

Child
Protective
Services

Client Legal
Records

Substance
Use History

Mental
Health
Records

Employment
and Tax
Records

Parent Mental
Health and
Legal Records

Trauma Narrative

Trauma for our clients
is not a discrete event
but a set of experiences
that define and organize
World view and personal identity

Reframe Trauma and Refocus the Story

What happened to you?

Who was there for you (then and now)?

Who took positive interest in your life (then and now)?

Who stood up for you or took care of you?

What made you keep going?

What opportunities did you have?

What interventions would have been helpful then (now), but were omitted or unavailable to you?

What interventions are (or would be) useful and available now?

Framing Resilience as Mitigation

- Opportunity to talk about hope, change
- Plan now for safe return to the community
- Focus on development, change, growth
- Who was (is) there
- What can go right in the future
(with support)

Resource List

Books

- *The Body Keeps Score*, Bessel van der Kolk
- *Miller's Children*, James Garbarino
- *Lost Boys*, James Garbarino
- *Listening to Killers*, James Garbarino
- *The Deepest Well*, Nadine Burke Harris
- *The War on Kids*, Cara Drinan
- *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson
- *Age of Opportunity*, Laurence Steinberg
- *Childhood Disrupted*, Donna Jackson Nakazawa
- *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, Father Gregory Boyle
- *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*, Father Gregory Boyle

Videos/TEDTalks

- [Healing Trauma: Beyond Gangs and Prisons \(bravenewfilms.org\)](http://bravenewfilms.org)
- [James Garbarino: "Listening to Killers" - YouTube](#)
- [Adolescent Brains and Criminal Justice Reform - YouTube](#)
- [Nadine Burke Harris: How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime | TED Talk](#)
- [The War on Kids - 2009 Documentary - YouTube](#)

Podcast

- NACDL Presents The Criminal Docket, Episode #54: "The War on Kids"

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