Trauma Healing

Adapted from the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) in the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University
Goals for Today

• Better understanding of high stress and trauma and how it affects us. Normalizing it.

• Present possible tools for reflection (brain session and v/o cycle).

• In the least a common language for talking or relating to others.
Remember

• Today is not therapy. The hope is to create a learning environment
• You know the basic principles of the information shared today
• If something today triggers thoughts and feelings that are difficult, talk with someone. The Program Coordinator and counselors over at IHS are here for you.
Trauma
Trauma

• Experiencing or witnessing an event or events involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or threat to the physical or psychological integrity of oneself or others.

– What is happening within us during high stress situations or trauma?
Symptoms

- Emotional
- Cognitive (thinking)
- Behavioral (doing)
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Societal Effects
These are normal or common reactions to difficult or abnormal situations
COMMON SHOCK

• Common Shock is when our chronic exposure to the violence and violation of everyday life takes a traumatic toll on us physiologically, psychologically and spiritually. — Kaethe Weingarten

Common Shock: Witnessing Violence Every Day

common shock— the biological and psychological responses that are triggered when we witness violence or violation. It is common, because it happens all the time, to everyone in any community. It is a shock, because whether our response is spaciness, numbness, distress, or bravado, it affects our mind, body, and spirit.
Common Shock examples

- Witnessing Violence on TV and in movies
- News Papers and websites
- Internet
- Witnessing Violence & Violation in everyday life (domestic, traffic, neighbors, etc.)
- Poverty
- Racism
- Criminal Justice System/School System
- Antagonism
PTSD & PITS

• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
• Perpetration (or Participation) Induced Traumatic Stress
  – From U.S. government data on its Vietnam veterans, those who say they killed have more severe PTSD than those who say they did not. (even in light combat)
Dignity Violations

• Dignity threats call up a reaction from our ancient emotion center as if our lives were on the line even when they are not.

• ...our instincts do not know the difference between a physical threat and a psychological threat

• Dignity is our inherent value and worth as human beings; everyone is born with it. Respect, on the other hand, is earned through one’s actions.

(Dignity, Donna Hicks)
ACE

• Adverse Childhood Experience(s)
  – Kids are tough
  – The brain and the body remember

• The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health and well-being (17,500 adults).
• Lived with a parent or guardian
  – 1) who got divorced or separated;
  – 2) who died;
  – 3) who served time in jail or prison;
• Lived with anyone
  – 4) who was mentally ill or suicidal, or severely depressed for more than a couple of weeks;
  – 5) who had a problem with alcohol or drugs;
• 6) Witnessed a parent, guardian, or other adult in the household behaving violently toward another
• 7) Was ever the victim of violence or witnessed any violence in his or her neighborhood; and
• 8) Experienced economic hardship “somewhat often” or “very often” (i.e., the family found it hard to cover costs of food and housing).
ACEs

• 67% had at least one ACE
• 12.6% had four or more ACEs
  – Hepatitis and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) 2.5 times higher than zero
  – Depression 4.5 times
  – Suicidality 12 times
  – More likely to develop heart disease and cancer
    • Repeated stress activation
      – Brain structure and function
      – Developing immune system
Brains to Fit the Life We’ll Live

Neutral Start:
All brains are made to adapt

Toxic Stress

DEVELOPMENT
Wired for protection:
- Emotion processing regions smaller, less efficient
- Efficient production of stress-related chemicals
- Dis-regulated happy hormones
- Fewer receptors for calming
- Less white matter

INDIVIDUAL characteristics & traits
- Competitive
- Hot tempered
- Impulsive
- Hyper vigilant
- “Brawn over brains”
- OR
- Withdrawn
- Dissociated
- Numb

WHY IT WORKS
Under the worst conditions, such as war & famine, both the individual & the species survive.

INDIVIDUAL characteristics & traits
- Laid back
- Relationship-oriented
- Reflective
- “Process over power”

WHY IT WORKS
By striving for cooperative relationships, individual & species live peacefully.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who has been Harmed?</th>
<th>Community Person Harmed</th>
<th>Person who harmed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the Needs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose Obligations?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Homework?

• Think back to your homework and what we have discussed so far to answer the following questions.
  – Were there significant parts of the videos for you? What were they?
  – What are things necessary for breaking the Victim/Offender cycle?
  – What might a healing path look like?
• What are the steps on that healing path?
Sticky Message

TRAUMA

NOT

TRANSFORMED

IS

TRANSFERRED
Trauma Healing Journey: Breaking the Cycles

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- **Mourn. Plumb, Explore,**
  - Express grief and other emotions
  - Accept Loss
  - Commitment to take risks
  - "Why them?"
  - Understanding root causes
  - Rehumanizing the aggressor/ enemy. Facing own shortcomings.*

- **Engaging offender or society**
  - (if offender not available.)
  - Tolerance
  - Coexistence
  - Interconnectedness
  - Commitment to take risks

- **Choosing to forgive**
  - Choosing to live
  - Possibility of reconciliation

- **Establishing justice**
  - Reviewing History: Reconstructing a meaningful narrative together
  - Negotiating solutions
  - Joint Planning
  - "Creative Justice"

- **Integrating trauma into new self/group identity**

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*This does not apply to all cases; for example, child abuse.
Mourn.

Plumb,

Explore,

Express grief

and other

emotions

Breaking Cycles of Violence • Building Resilience

RECONNECTION

Engaging

the offender

(or society)

Choosing
to forgive

Establishing justice;

acknowledging responsibility;

exploring restitution

and "creative justice"

Transforming conflict;

negotiating solutions;

constructing joint narratives

Integrating trauma

into new self and/or

group identity

Possibility of reconciliation

Committing
to take risks

Practicing tolerance

and coexistence

Reflecting on root causes;

acknowledging the other's story


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Memorializing

Naming and/or

confronting fears;

accepting loss

Mourning,
grieving

Trauma Experience

Victim Cycle

(Acting In)

Aggressor Cycle

(Acting Out)

Finding safety and support

BREAKING FREE

START

BEGIN HERE
Reflect

– Find a partner

– Share at least one thing that you are going to take away from today.

– Why does that one thing stand out to you?
TRANSFERRED

IS HEALING

TRANSFORMED

TRAUMA

TRAUMA
Come up with three questions about the healing path (but not about forgiveness).
1. What keeps you from forgiving?
2. Forgive and Forget?
3. How do we, as victims, acknowledge the victim in our offender?
4. What role, if any, does forgiveness play in healing our traumas?
5. Talk about self-forgiveness.
   • What is it?
   • How to do it?
Group Work

• Talk about a time you forgave someone else.
• Talk about a time you were forgiven.
• How do you forgive violations created by systems (corporations, government, etc.) and society?
RED
BLUE
GREEN
RED
BLUE
GREEN
BLUE
RED
BLUE
GREEN
BLUE
GREEN
RED
BLUE
GREEN
Mourn. Plumb, Explore, Express grief and other emotions Accept Loss

Name / confront fears Commitment to take risks

"Why them?" Understanding root causes Rehumanizing the aggressor/ enemy. Facing own shortcomings.*

Tolerance Coexistence Interconnectedness Commitment to take risks

"Why them?" Understanding root causes Rehumanizing the aggressor/ enemy. Facing own shortcomings.*

Accept Loss Name / confront fears

Establishing justice: Reviewing History: Reconstructing a meaningful narrative together Negotiating solutions Joint Planning

Choosing to forgive Engaging offender or society (if offender not available.)

Possibility of reconciliation

Integrating trauma into new self/group identity

Trauma Healing Journey: Breaking the Cycles

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For Reflection

1. Reflect on the model in relationship to your life experience with your own healing path. With your partner, invoke facts, feelings, thoughts, physiological reactions, behaviors, tools, and anything else that resulted.

2. Consider the entire model in light of your life philosophy and/or faith tradition.

3. What understandings would you add to the model that reflect your understandings---and where? For example: confession, vindication, mercy, etc.

4. Have you experienced something that is not presented in the model? How would that change the model?

5. How might your life philosophy or faith practice alter the model? What changes would you make?

6. How do you work with your own common shocks?

7. How might this healing model be used in some of our own common shocks?
What does it take to break free of the cycle of victim/offender?

What are tools you have used for transformations?
• Safety: emotional, spiritual and/or physical
  – The danger here is when safety is a substance.
• Choice/decision of victim/survivor;
• An awareness of healing options (seeing hope).
• An understanding of trauma and what it does to us
• Available support:
  • Ways victims/survivors memorialize: Hero’s story
• Willingness to break patterns of learned helplessness and hopelessness
• Pain (facing it is better than re-cycling)
• Willingness to break patterns of learned helplessness and hopelessness
• Leadership
• An awareness of healing options (seeing hope)
• An understanding of trauma and what it does to us
Leadership
(for communities, and individuals)
• Ways victims/survivors memorialize
• Pain (facing it is better than recycling)
• Willingness to break patterns of learned helplessness and hopelessness
Trauma Healing Journey: Breaking the Cycles

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- Understanding root causes
- Rehumanizing the aggressor / enemy. Facing own shortcomings.*
- Commitment to take risks
- Tolerance
- Coexistence
- Interconnectedness
- Choosing to forgive
- Engaging offender or society (if offender not available.)
- Establishing justice:
  - Admitting guilt
  - Public apology
  - Restitution
  - "Creative Justice"
- Possibility of reconciliation
- Integrating trauma into new self / group identity

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