

Trauma – They MUST have it??

Foster Care Conference

Hobart 2010

Bryan Jeffrey – MOAT: Mental Health



Trauma

Traumatic incidents plunge people into themselves; they become disbonded from each other

They can become oblivious to others around them

MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy



MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy



MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy



MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy



A woman cries as she waits with a young child at the New Orleans Convention Center. Thousands of people who were told to gather at the center for relief, found no one in authority to hand out water, food or information.



Trauma

After a traumatic experience, some information isn't available to the brain
People may attempt to construct the "full picture" from their available information

May search for facts to fill the gaps in their account

Even when appearing to support each other, traumatised individuals are isolated

MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy





Trauma

- ✓ The longer someone remains traumatised, the more likely that the trauma will be identified as a central feature for the person
- ✓ These people need to be brought back into the common world
- ✓ Simple, practical social interactions are needed



The traumatised brain

Two main areas of the brain are affected by trauma – The Amygdala and the Hippocampus

Amygdala:

- involved in the assessment of threat-related stimuli
- necessary for the process of “fight or flight”
- neuroimaging studies have shown amygdala hyperresponsivity in PTSD

Hippocampus:

- involved in explicit memory processes
- provides context in “fight or flight” process for the amygdala
- hippocampal volumes are decreased in PTSD



Which scenarios could result in PTSD?

Bank robbery

Car accident

Kidnapping

Terrorism

Terminal Illness

Natural disaster

War

Abuse

Experienced, witnessed, or learnt about



Sexual abuse CAN be a factor in PTSD



Stats from Childwise



Symptoms of PTSD

Re-experiencing Symptoms



- Frequently having upsetting thoughts or memories about a traumatic event.
- Having recurrent nightmares.
- Acting or feeling as though the traumatic event were happening again, sometimes called a "flashback."
- Having strong feelings of distress when reminded of the traumatic event.
- Being physically responsive, such as experiencing a surge in your heart rate or sweating, to reminders of the traumatic event.



Symptoms of PTSD

Avoidance Symptoms



- Making an effort to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations related to the event.
- Making an effort to avoid places or people that remind you of the traumatic event.
- Having a difficult time remembering important parts of the traumatic event.
- A loss of interest in important, once positive activities.
- Feeling distant from others.
- Experiencing difficulties having positive feelings, such as happiness or love.
- Feeling as though your life may be cut short.
- Objects to discussing the event, or denies it ever happened.



Symptoms of PTSD

Hyperarousal Symptoms

Amygdala role – immediate emotions including terror and horror

Hippocampus role – puts memories into perspective

In PTSD, the Amygdala is overactive, and Hippocampus is underactive

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Feeling more irritable or having outbursts of anger.
- Having difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling constantly "on guard" or like danger is lurking around every corner.
- Being "jumpy" or easily startled.
- Catastrophic anxiety





How to help after a traumatic event

- Let the person tell their story if they want to – don't pressure them to do so.
- Be a patient, sympathetic listener – don't give a lot of advice.
- Validate that stress reactions are normal responses to abnormal events.
- If you are concerned – seek secondary consultation.
- Look after yourself!



Compounded Trauma

- Care-giving that is consistently erratic, rejecting, hostile or abusive leaves a child feeling helpless and abandoned
- In order to cope, the child attempts to gain control, often by disconnecting from social relationships or by acting coercively towards others
- These children often have great difficulty regulating their emotions, managing stress, developing concern for others, and using language to solve problems
- Without the necessary professional support, this combination of factors can result in a “high-risk adolescent” presentation
- In an environment where emotional expression is rare and discouraged, children may assume that other people don’t experience the natural emotions that they are becoming aware of



How to help someone with Compounded Trauma

There are 3 important factors when working with people with compounded trauma :



S

Safety – The person needs to feel safe.

P

Predictability – If life is predictable, it takes away uncertainty and makes them feel safer. Routines etc.

C

Consistency – If everyone responds consistently to the person, life is more predictable and therefore feels safer.

Wrap these factors in a nurturing model



How to help someone with Compounded Trauma

The *Complex Trauma Workgroup*, of the *National Child Traumatic Stress Network* has identified six core components of complex trauma intervention:

1. SPC – Safety at home, school, and in the community
2. Self-regulation – Supporting children to learn ways to recognise and address the discomfort experienced with dysregulation of mood, behaviour, social interaction, physiology and behaviour
3. Self-reflection – Help the child to construct a framework to make sense of the past, and to develop skills to process similar experiences in the future
4. Traumatic experience integration – Enable the child to acknowledge the trauma, manage the symptoms, and develop behavioural and cognitive coping skills for future trauma
5. Relational engagement – Modeling and teaching the child appropriate attachments, and relationship development skills, with emphasis on interpersonal skills: limit-setting, boundaries, reciprocity, social empathy and the capacity for physical and emotional intimacy
6. Positive affect enhancement – Enhancing a child's sense of self-worth, esteem and self-appraisal

MOAT

Mental Health Outreach Assessment & Therapy



Questions??