

What is trauma and how can we provide trauma informed care?

(Part 1)

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Disclaimer

- If anything in today's presentations are triggering for you please take care of yourself. Feel free to turn off your camera/sound, step out, go for a brief walk, take care of yourself however feels helpful.



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Objectives

- To understand what trauma is
- To understand how trauma impacts the body
- To understand its impact on us as helpers as well as the populations we serve
- Practical Implications



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What do you see?



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What is Trauma?

SAMHSA describes individual trauma as resulting from "an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."



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Have you Experienced Trauma?

- We all have!
- There are different types of trauma...



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- Trauma theory suggests that many of the behavioral symptoms that we see in individuals are a direct result of coping with adverse experiences.
- What we identify as maladaptive behaviors are really misapplied survival skills.

(Andrus, 2011)



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Types of Traumatic Stress

- **Acute trauma** is a single traumatic event that is limited in time. (rape, natural disaster, car crash, medical emergency)
- **Chronic trauma** refers to the experience of multiple traumatic events. The effects of chronic trauma are often cumulative, as each event serves to remind the child of prior trauma and reinforce its negative impact. (Domestic violence, bullying, homelessness, witnessing abuse of a family member)



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Big T or Complex Trauma

Complex traumatic events and experiences can be defined as stressors that are:

- (1) **repetitive, prolonged, or cumulative**
- (2) most often **interpersonal**, involving direct harm, exploitation, and maltreatment including neglect/abandonment/antipathy by primary caregivers or other ostensibly responsible adults
- (3) often occur at **developmentally vulnerable times** in the victim's life, especially in early childhood or adolescence, but can also occur later in life.

-Trafficking, childhood abuse, slavery, DV, victim of war



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Impact on Survivor's Beliefs

- This is my fault
- I'm bad
- Should have known better
- People use me
- Don't feel – love hurts
- This is what I deserve
- This is as good as it gets
- I am not a victim

***Sometimes these beliefs are reinforced by the world, families, friends, helpers etc.



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The Stress Response

Thinking brain
checks out
situation

If there is no danger,
the doing brain goes back to
normal functioning.

If there is danger, the
thinking brain shuts
down, allowing the
doing brain to act.

Doing brain
senses danger



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The Stress Response and Trauma



- When danger is ever-present, alarm goes off too frequently.
- Brain treats all potential threats as actual threats.
- Brain continues to release chemicals, so body becomes unbalanced.

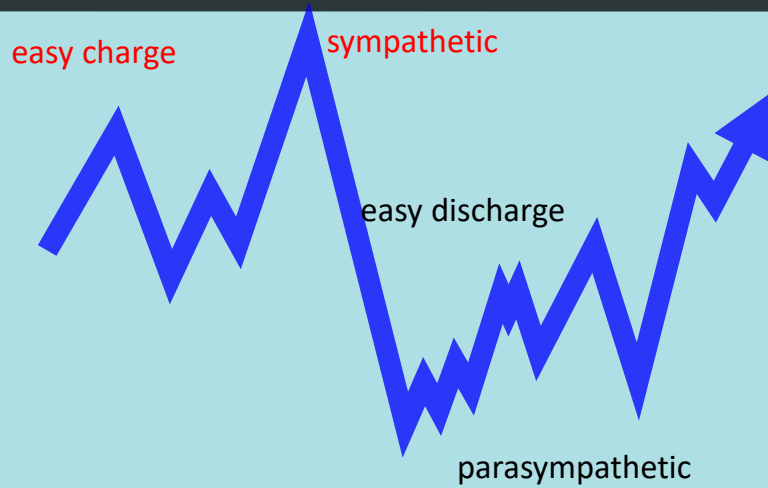


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Autonomic Arousal is Designed to Adapt to Environmental Demands

Sympathetic Hyperarousal

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Window of Tolerance

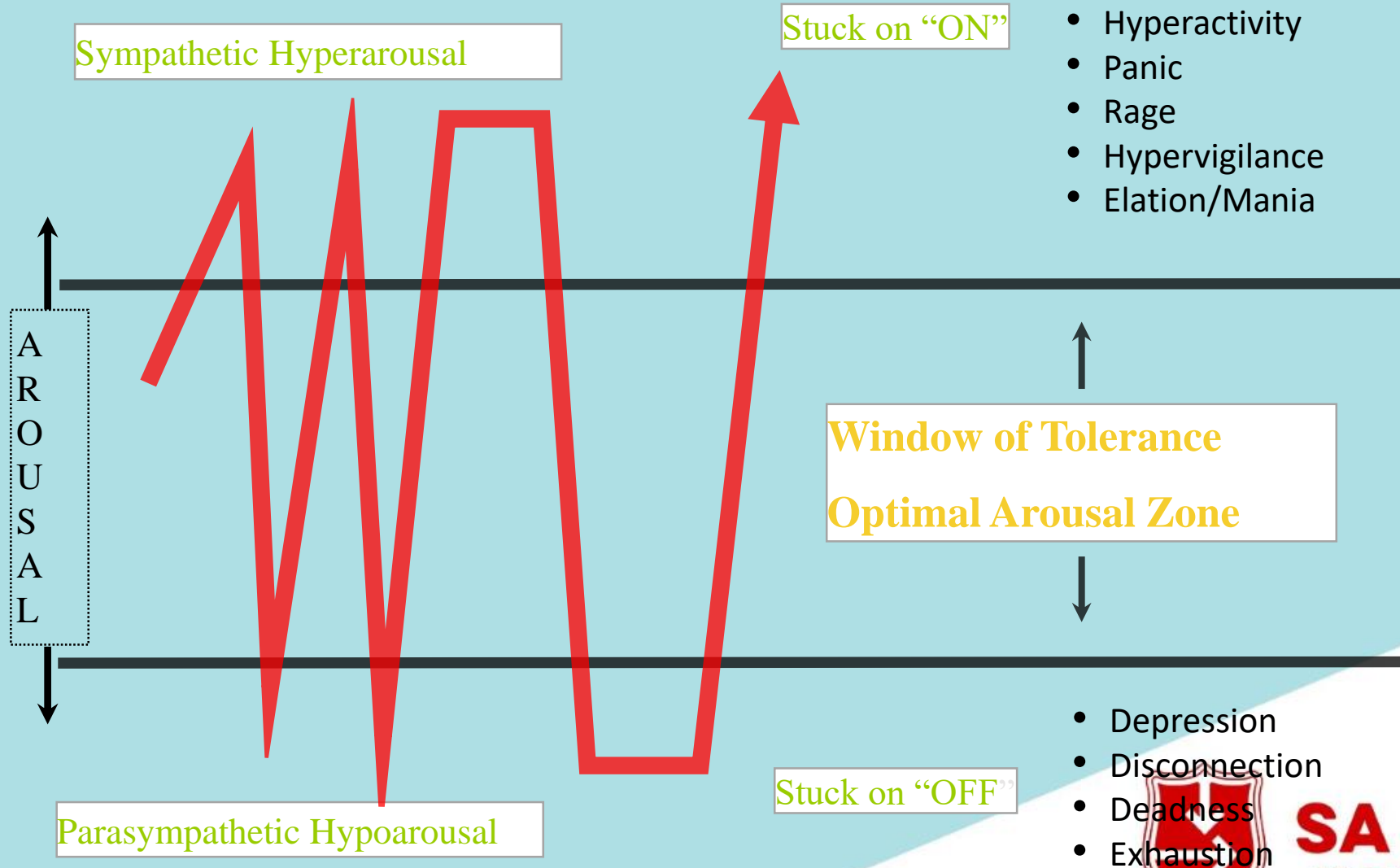
*feelings can be tolerated, able to think **and** feel*

Parasympathetic Hypoarousal



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Autonomic Adaptation to a Threatening World



Victor Frankl



(Holocaust Survivor)

“An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior.”



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Traumatic experiences



- Can significantly alter a person's perception of themselves, their environment, and the people around them
- As traumatic experiences accumulate, responses become more intense and have a greater impact on functioning.



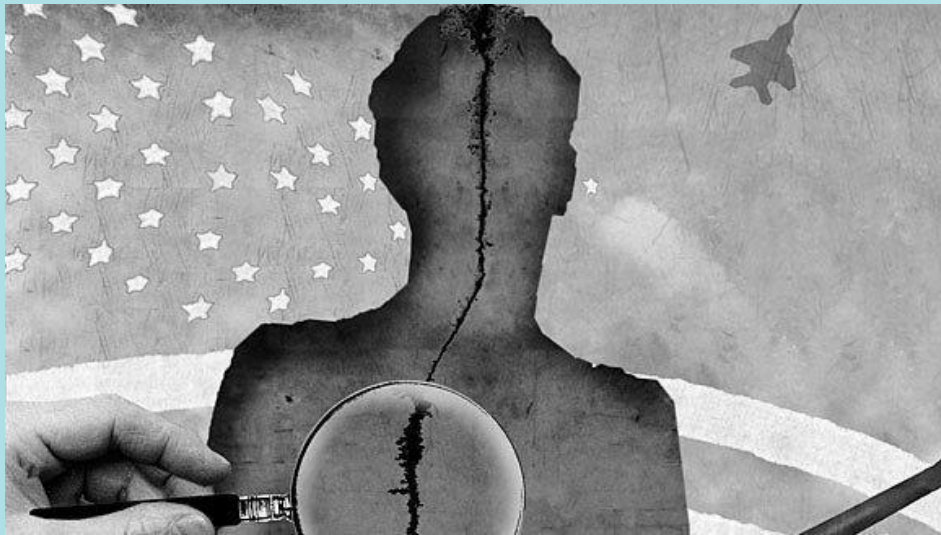
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Ongoing exposure to traumatic stress

Can impact all areas of people's lives including

- Emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Behavioral
- Identity formation

interactions/relationships



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Impact of Trauma

• Emotional

- Emotional dysregulation
- Numbing



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Impact of Trauma

- Physical

- Somatization
- Lives in the body-sometimes our body lets us know something is wrong before we even are aware
- Hyperarousal and sleep disturbances



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Impact of Trauma

- Views about the world
- Views about self
- Views about future



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Impact of Trauma

• Cognitive

- Triggers
- Flashbacks
- Dissociation and depersonalization

“The body remembers. Stuffed until an event, a sound, a sight, a touch, a word or a person awakens them.”



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Impact of Trauma

• Behavioral

- Self-harm and self-destructive behaviors
- Consumption of substances
- Avoidance
- Re-enactments



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Things to consider....

- Mistrust is prevalent
- Survivors may be unable to remember certain events or may seem confused if asked to share past trauma
- Manipulation and dishonesty are adaptive survival strategies
- Trauma bonding may be strong(in cases of prior DV or HT)
- Survivors may experience relapse or return to the life many times before exiting for good

***While frustrating or hurtful all of these are to be expected.**



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How Trauma impacts our Work

- How we interact with one another
- How we view our work
- How we feel internally
- Interactions at home etc.
- Make sure you are checking in with yourself and staff



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Thank you!

Thank you for all that you do!
You matter and the work you do has
profound impact in the lives of many!



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Questions?

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