Trauma-Informed Peer Support webinar series
Session 1: Trauma & Its Impact/
Cultural Considerations
September 9, 2014

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National Center for Trauma-Informed Care
The TIPS webinar series

Session 1: September 9, 2014
- Peer Support sound bite / Trauma & its Impact / Cultural Considerations

Session 2: September 16, 2014
- Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices

Session 3: September 23, 2014
- Applying Trauma-Informed Practices to Peer Support
PEER SUPPORT: A SOUND BITE
Peer Support

- Some organizations define it as a “helping relationship” like the top-down roles of professionals

- We define it as a flexible approach to building healing relationships among equals, based on a core set of values and principles.
What is Peer Support?

A system of giving and receiving help in relationship with others with shared experience, based on values of:

- Respect
- Shared responsibility
- Mutual agreement of what is helpful

- Shery Mead, founder

Intentional Peer Support
Practices based on the proven idea that people who share common experiences:

- Are best able to understand and empathize with each other
- Can offer each other the benefit of what they’ve learned
Self-Awareness

“In the thick of this work, we often forget about our own needs until they are so big we can no longer meet them in simple ways.”

- Shery Mead

Self-care is essential!

SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
Defining Trauma

Extreme stress brought on by shocking or unexpected circumstances or events that overwhelm a person’s ability to cope.

- Results in feelings of helplessness, extreme fear and horror.
- Threats are perceived as psychological and/or bodily violation, threat of death, or serious injury to self or a loved one.
- The event may be witnessed or experienced directly.
SAMHSA’s Trauma-informed Approaches Framework

The Three Es:

• **Events** and circumstances cause trauma.
• The person’s **Experience** of these events determines if the event is traumatic.
• The **Effects** of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional or spiritual consequences.
Some Potential Sources of Trauma

- Childhood sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment
- Rape, sexual assault, trafficking
- Domestic violence; experiencing/witnessing other violent crime
- Catastrophic injury or illness, death, loss, grief
- Institutional abuse and neglect
- Abuse using religion
- War/terrorism/ combat
- Community and school violence, bullying
- Hate crimes
- Cultural dislocation or sudden loss, historical/generational targeted violence
- Chronic stressors like racism, poverty
- Natural disasters
- Invasive medical procedures
- Any misuse of power by one person over another
Talking About Trauma

• If, how, and when a person chooses to talk about experiences is personal

• Some may not label what happened as “trauma”

• Be aware of the words you use and be prepared that other’s words may be different
Trauma Affects Development

Early experiences, especially traumatic ones, shape human development.

We develop ways to cope, survive, and defend ourselves against deep and enduring wounds.
Flight, Fight, or Freeze

- The brain signals the body to respond to a perceived threat and the body prepares

- Ordinarily, when the threat is gone, the body returns to “baseline”

- If an ongoing threat is perceived, the body doesn’t return to baseline, remains prepared for threat, resulting in a “trauma response”

- The switch is stuck in the “on” position
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverse Childhood Experiences</th>
<th>Biological Impacts and Health Risks</th>
<th>Long-term Health and Social Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more types of adverse childhood experiences...</td>
<td>The greater the biological impacts and health risks, and...</td>
<td>The more serious the lifelong consequences to health and well-being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Felitti, V.J., Anda, R. F., et al., 1998
Trauma Can Lead to Changes
People may move between extremes

Arousal
Hyperarousal       Numbing
Attention
Dissociation       Hyper-focus
Emotion
Absent             Overwhelming

N. Miller
Factors That May Intensify Trauma

- The earlier in life trauma occurs, the more severe the likely long-term effects
- Deliberate violence is particularly damaging, especially when inflicted by trusted caregivers
- Violence - compounded by betrayal, silence, blame, or shame - impacts the ability to form intimate relationships
Impact of Trauma

- Survivors may be responding to the present through the lenses of their past
- Things survivors do to cope may be misinterpreted by staff as “non-compliance”
- Can lead to punitive reactions by staff to people who are struggling with trauma responses
- Often, people are unaware that their challenges are related to trauma
Trauma Disconnects. It can...

- Leave people feeling powerless
- Have lasting effects on the ability to trust others and form intimate relationships
- Impact relationships with self, others, communities, and environment
- Create distance between people
Trauma is Widespread

- Studies show that 90%+ of people with psychiatric diagnoses are trauma survivors \(^1\)

- Similar rates among people with histories of substance abuse, foster care placement, homelessness, and incarceration \(^2,3,4,5\)

- Nearly 100% of incarcerated women are trauma survivors \(^6\)

- Both staff and people using services may be trauma survivors

\(^1\) Mueser et al, 2004; \(^2\) Goodman et al, 1997; \(^3\) Buhrich et al, 2006; \(^4\) Moncrieff et al, 1996; \(^5\) Greeson et al, 2014; \(^6\) VA et al, 2011.
Healing from trauma, like healing from a physical injury, is a natural human process.

- Richard Mollica, 2006
Healing From Trauma Requires

- Gaining a sense of control over one’s life and one’s environment
- Finding/maintaining a sense of safety
- Developing the ability to trust self & others
- Reconnecting with others
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.

– Anais Nin
What is Culture?

The shared values, traditions, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people that are unified by race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religious beliefs, spirituality, socioeconomic status, social class, sexual orientation, politics, gender, age, disability, or any other cohesive group variable.

- Singh, 1998
Cultural Considerations

Self Identity
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Language
- Family
- Beliefs about capabilities
- History
- Country where born

Belonging and Participation
- Spirituality
- Education
- literacy
- Incarceration
- Military
- Employment/Income
- Where you live
- Immigration status
- Illness/wellness
- Parenting
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TRAUMA
Culture Counts

• Culture influences:
  • the experience of trauma
  • the meaning people make of what has happened
  • how and if people express their pain

• One’s cultural experience affects beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes toward others

• Assumptions made about others may become barriers to effective support
No Assumptions

• Every conversation can be a cross-cultural conversation

• We may not know the source of someone’s joy, pride, or pain

• We do not know how oppression/trauma have impacted a person’s life

• We do not know what self-protecting coping strategies people need to use
BE CURIOUS,
BE EMPATHETIC,
BE FLEXIBLE
Next webinar in the TIPS series

Session 2: September 16, 2014
Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices