TRAUMA: AN INTRODUCTION

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WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT THIS MORNING?

• 1. You will understand how trauma is defined.
• 2. You will understand how the brain mediates between:
  The event(s) +
  Perception (interpretation) +
  Response =
  Ongoing coping behavior

3. You will understand how false beliefs about ourselves develop.
3. You will understand how healing takes place.
WHAT IS TRAUMA?
Types of Traumas

- Natural disasters
- Kidnapping
- School violence
- Community violence
- Terrorism/war
- Homicide
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Medical procedures
- Victim of crime
- Accidents
- Suicide
- Extreme neglect or deprivation
RANDOM ACTS THAT DESTROY ONE’S SENSE OF ORDER AND PREDICTABILITY IN THE WORLD

SHATTERED ASSUMPTIONS
AIRPLANE LANDS ON YOUR ROOF
OR A CAR
RANDOM DISASTERS:
WHAT ASSUMPTIONS DEVELOP ABOUT SAFETY IN THE WORLD?
WHAT IS TRAUMA? NATURAL DISASTERS

MUDSLIDE IN CALIFORNIA
WHAT IS TRAUMA? NATURAL DISASTERS

HURRICANE SANDY IN NY
WHAT IS TRAUMA? NATURAL DISASTERS

FLOODING IN NEW ORLEANS
WHAT IS TRAUMA? NATURAL DISASTERS

EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN
WHAT IS TRAUMA? NATURAL DISASTERS

WILDFIRE IN CALIFORNIA
NATURAL DISASTERS: WHAT BELIEFS DEVELOP?
WHAT IS TRAUMA? TERRORISM

BRUSSELS AIRPORT BOMBING
ACTIVE SHOOTER REPORTED AT FORT HOOD
SCOTT & WHITE RECEIVING PATIENTS
WHAT IS TRAUMA? TERRORISM

9/11
WHAT IS TRAUMA? TERRORISM

SAN BERNARDINO  2015
WHAT IS TRAUMA? TERRORISM

BOSTON MARATHON 2015
WHAT IS TRAUMA? MILITARY TRAUMA
WHAT IS TRAUMA?
FIRST RESPONDERS’ TRAUMA
THE LATEST

- 50 people killed
- 53 people hurt
- Gunman pledged alliance to ISIS
- Carried assault rifle

NIGHTCLUB MASSACRE
TERROR IN ORLANDO
WHAT IS TRAUMA?
NURSES’ TRAUMA
IS ANYONE HERE PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY???

• Let’s start at the beginning: Healthy Attachment
• What does it look like???
WHAT IS NEEDED FOR HEALTHY ATTACHMENT TO DEVELOP?
WHAT IS NEEDED FOR HEALTHY ATTACHMENT TO DEVELOP?

- Safety (emotional and physical)
- Having physical needs consistently met
- Receiving appropriate loving touch
- Consistent behavior from parents/caregivers
- Being supported in developing autonomy, rather than having to meet parents’/caregivers’ needs
WHAT DOES GROWING UP WITH “HEALTHY ATTACHMENT” PROVIDE FOR THE CHILD?
WHAT DOES GROWING UP WITH “HEALTHY ATTACHMENT” PROVIDE FOR THE CHILD?

- Healthy sense of self-esteem
- Healthy self-confidence
- Good ability to set appropriate boundaries
- Good model for having healthy emotional and physical relationships
WHERE DOES HEALTHY ATTACHMENT GO WRONG?
WHERE DOES HEALTHY ATTACHMENT GO WRONG?

- Death of parent(s)
- Separation from parent(s): deployment, divorce, family needs, cultural child rearing practices, incarceration
- Neglect by parents
- Unpredictable/unreliable behavior in parent(s): mental illness, physical illness, substance abuse
- Sensory deficits in child or parent(s)
- Some religious practices
- Prolonged hospitalizations of child or parent(s)
HOW DO CHILDREN RESPOND WHEN ATTACHMENT NEVER FORMS OR IS DISRUPTED?
HOW DO CHILDREN RESPOND WHEN ATTACHMENT NEVER FORMS OR IS DISRUPTED?

- Low self-esteem
- Feeling unlovable
- No trust in others
- Anger
- Anxiety

- Difficulty forming healthy relationships
- Fear of depending on other people
- Personality styles are developed in response to not having needs met
AND THIS IS THE CORE OF THE PERSON WHO THEN GOES ON TO EXPERIENCE TRAUMA.
TRAUMA DURING CHILDHOOD
FROM IMPERSONAL TO PERSONAL

• Child abuse: emotional, physical, sexual
FROM IMPERSONAL TO PERSONAL

- Child abuse: emotional, physical, sexual
1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused by their 18th birthday in the US.
FROM IMPERSONAL TO PERSONAL

- Child abuse: emotional, physical, sexual
FROM IMPERSONAL TO PERSONAL

• Child abuse: emotional, physical, sexual
Incest
Put your sister to the test
You can spend a lifetime trying to forget a few minutes of your childhood.
FACT: Victims of sex trafficking can be girls or boys, women or men.
POWERFUL TRAUMATIC IMPACT WHEN: THE VIOLENCE/TRAUMA IS DONE INTENTIONALLY BY ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER, ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT PERSON SHOULD BE THE ONE TO KEEP YOU SAFE.
ABUSE DURING CHILDHOOD: WHAT BELIEFS DEVELOP ABOUT ONESELF?
BELIEFS ABOUT SELF

- I must be bad. Why else would she abandon me?
- I must be bad. Why else would they hurt me?
- I must be sick and dirty because I became aroused.
- I will never amount to anything.
- I am worthless, unlovable.
- They divorced because I am bad.
- I deserved it.
- I am so ashamed.
- They didn’t help me because I am invisible.
- I am a slut.
Shame.....

Worthlessness....

Self-loathing....
ASPECTS OF TRAUMA (SUMMARY):

• Childhood attachment quality
• Type of disaster: Natural versus human-to-human
• Impersonal versus personal violence and disaster
• Beliefs about the world and self that develop
AND THEN WE GROW UP
TRAUMA LAYERS ON TOP OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES
TYPES OF PERSONAL, FAMILY, COMMUNITY TRAUMAS ARE ENDLESS

- The trauma(s) rest on the back of all that has gone before in the person’s life.
WHAT IS TRAUMA?
NURSES’ TRAUMA
HOW DOES THE BRAIN RESPOND?

1. In the emergency (fight or flight)
2. Chronic danger (survival processes backfire)
FIGHT OR FLIGHT (ACUTE RESPONSE)
GOAL IS SURVIVAL: ADRENALIN
The Triune Brain model, introduced by physician and neuroscientist Paul D. MacLean, explains the brain in three parts:

- **Reptilian (brain stem):** This innermost part of the brain is responsible for survival instincts and autonomic body processes. *THIS RESPONDS TO DANGER*

- **Mammalian (limbic, midbrain):** The midlevel of the brain, this part processes emotions and conveys sensory relays.

- **Neomammalian (cortex, forebrain):** The most highly evolved part of the brain, this outer area controls cognitive processing, decision-making, learning, memory and inhibitory functions.
THREAT PERCEPTION, AROUSAL, MOOD LOOP

- Prefrontal Cortex
- Hippocampus
- Anterior Cingulate Cortex
- Amygdala
Throughout the brain several chemical and biological imbalances can present after trauma. Their effects are especially exacerbated by three major brain function dysregulations:

1. Overstimulated amygdala: An almond-shaped mass located deep in the brain, the amygdala is responsible for survival-related threat identification, plus tagging memories with emotion. After trauma the amygdala can get caught up in a highly alert and activated loop during which it looks for and perceives threat everywhere.
THREAT PERCEPTION, AROUSAL, MOOD LOOP

Diagram showing the brain with labeled regions:
- Prefrontal Cortex
- Hippocampus
- Anterior Cingulate Cortex
- Amygdala
2. **Underactive hippocampus:** An increase in the stress hormone glucocorticoid kills cells in the hippocampus, which renders it less effective in making synaptic connections necessary for memory consolidation. This interruption keeps both the body and mind stimulated in reactive mode as neither element receives the message that the threat has transformed into the past tense.

3. **Ineffective variability:** The constant elevation of stress hormones interferes with the body’s ability to regulate itself. The sympathetic nervous system remains highly activated leading to fatigue of the body and many of its systems, most notably the adrenal.
THREAT PERCEPTION, AROUSAL, MOOD LOOP
THERE ARE REAL CHANGES IN THE BRAIN

Healthy Brain

PTSD
CHRONIC ADRENALIN AROUSAL: IMPACT ON BRAIN AND BODY

- Depressed immune system
- High blood pressure
- GI ulcers
- Depression
- Insomnia
LONG TERM EFFECTS: HOW IT FEELS
DEFINING SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

• Re-experiencing
• Numbing
• Hyperarousal (insomnia, nightmares, startle reflex, hypervigilance)
• Self-regulation difficulties
  • Difficulties in regulating emotions (depression, anxiety, irritability, quick to rage)
DEFINING SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

• Difficulties in relationship capabilities (difficulties with emotional intimacy)
• Dissociations (difficulties in maintaining attention and consciousness)
• Adversely affected belief systems
• Bodily distress
OTHER TRAUMA SYMPTOMS?

- Avoidance
- Foreshortened sense of the future
- Substance abuse
- Self-harm
- Eating disorder
- Risky behavior
- Repeating traumatic situations (hoping for different ending?)

- EVERY SYMPTOM MAKES SENSE!!!!!!
The body remembers what the conscious mind chooses to forget
TRAUMA CHANGES OUR WAY OF THINKING

- Cognitive errors
- Excessive/inappropriate guilt
- Idealization of perpetrator
- Trauma-induced hallucinations or delusions
- Intrusive thoughts and memories
COGNITIVE TRIAD OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

Views about the world
“The world is a dangerous place”
“People cannot be trusted”
“Life is unpredictable”

Views about self
“I am incompetent”
“I should’ve reacted differently”
“It is too much for me to handle”
“I feel damaged”

Views about the future
“Things will never be the same”
“What is the point? I will never get over this”
“It is hopeless”
THE MIND CANNOT ALWAYS HANDLE KNOWING WHAT HAS HAPPENED

= PROTECTION FROM UNBEARABLE FEELINGS

- Yet the power of the feelings is still there, circling around the limbic system
NUMBING FEELINGS BECOMES A SURVIVAL NEED

- NUMBING: Emotions become detached from thoughts, behaviors, and memories
WAYS OF NUMBING

- Rage
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Sex
- Eating
- Gambling
- Relentless exercise
- Relentless work
HOW DO YOU STOP THE NUMBING AND FEEL WHAT IS WAITING TO BE FELT?????
VICARIOUS
TRAUMATIZATION
HOW DOES TRAUMA TREATMENT WORK?

- Safe place.
- Safe people.
- Get out the trauma poison, over and over.
- FEEL the FEELINGS and realize that they will not kill you.
- Being accepted, as a whole person, by clients and staff, despite disclosure of behaviors that cause shame.
- Realization that YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE.
- Realization that THAT IS WHAT YOU DID, THAT IS NOT WHO YOU ARE.
- Awareness of faulty cognitive beliefs.
- Exploration and skill building of wider range of coping strategies.
- Development of supportive resources in the community.
HOW DOES TRAUMA TREATMENT WORK?

- Learning techniques for self-regulation of the arousal system:
  - Relaxed muscle body
  - Meditation
  - Breath work
  - Yoga
  - Mindfulness practices
  - Becoming aware of numbing and countering these behaviors
  - Embracing one’s whole self
  - Spirituality
  - Forgiveness
THE BAD PART
ABOUT BEING SO NUMB
IS THERE WILL COME A
TIME WHEN YOU'LL WANT
TO FEEL SOMETHING,
BUT YOU WON'T KNOW
HOW TO.

INSTAGRAM - THEGOODQUOTE
Together We Heal
The butterfly is proof you can go through tremendous darkness, yet become something beautiful.