SUPPORTING EACH OTHER & Ourselves:
TRAUMA INFORMED STRATEGIES AND TOOLS
FOR PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS, PEER WELLNESS SPECIALISTS & RECOVERY MENTORS

Beckie Child Ph.d.c., MSW
HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

• Self-care... You may find that some aspects of this event may be activating. Take care of your self.
• Step out of the room, walk or get some water
• Ask TIO staff (Lee Ann) to talk outside if needing support
• Play with fidget toys on the table
• Take breaks as you need them
• Go to the restroom when needed
• Stand up and move around even if it’s not the official break time
• Questions... write on paper on the table and hand to TIO staff.
• This is a pilot training. Please write comments for Beckie on PPT copy and/or the evaluation and leave on table.
GROUP AGREEMENTS

• What is said here, stays here. Ask permission to share someone else’s story before you share it

• Keep cell phones on silent and step out to talk if needed

• Be respectful to folks around you (clicking of pens, bouncing knee)

• Others?
AGENDA

• Overview
• Principles of Peer Support and Trauma Informed Care
• What is Trauma
• Trauma and the Brain
• Things to do when Activated
• Through a Trauma Lens Activity
HOW MANY YEARS OF PEER SUPPORT EXPERIENCE?

A. 0-1 year
B. 1-3
C. 4-5 years
D. 6 years +
• How this relates to you

• How this relates to the people you support

• How this relates to your role

• How you can use this info when working with each other

• How you can use this with other staff who may not identify as peers
### PRINCIPLES OF PEER SUPPORT AND TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

#### Peer Support
- Nonjudgmental & transparent
- Collaborative & caring
- Authentic relationships
- Use cultural humility to understand differences
- Reduces the power differential
- Strengths-based
- Establish safety and trust

#### Trauma-informed Care
- Build trust through transparency, clarity & consistency
- Focus on the person’s strengths—not behavior or symptoms
- Use cultural humility when interacting with people
- Ensure people’s physical and emotional safety “Do No Harm!”
- Avoid re-traumatization
- Give choices/options
- Empowerment—include voice in all aspects of care
Mental Health Empowerment Project

Trauma-Informed Peer Support

Darby Penney

Equality in helping relationships

New Conversations - Top Down

Be Transparent

Create Safe Space

Social Action

Reclaim Power

All Peer Support Should Be Trauma-Informed

Shared Adversity

Consciousness Raising

Healing is a Natural Process

Not:

Focused on diagnoses

Hierarchical

Being a counselor

Shift "What Happened?" Not "What's Wrong with You?"

What does it mean to you?

Create Reconnection

Ownership of Power

Shared power

Safety's Context

Autonomy Voice Choice

Trauma-Informed Practices

Anyone may be a trauma survivor

Train everyone on staff

Long Term Questions

Celebrate the Light Within

www.mhepinc.org 518-484-1393
OUR WORK IS TO

Prevent re-traumatization – Activators (sometimes called triggers)

• How can you know?
  • WRAP Plans—

Recognize early warning signs

• Know your work and the people you support
• Know yourself

Intervene – deescalate

• Multi-level – micro, mezzo, macro
TAKE A STEP BACK...

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY TRAUMA?
Trauma can be defined as “Any negative life event that occurs in relative helplessness”.

Dr. Robert Scaer, Neurologist, Traumatologist
WHAT IS TRAUMA?

• Can be single event.
• More often multiple events, over time (complex, prolonged trauma).
• Interpersonal violence or violation, especially at the hands of an authority or trust figure, is especially damaging.
• Violence
• Oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, misogyny, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, sanism)

Three E’s of Trauma
(SAMHSA, 2014)

• Events
• Experience
• Effects

http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf
WHEN TRAUMA HAPPENS....

Freeze, Flight, Fight, Fright
Fawn,

Complex trauma - Chronic Trauma overtime

Traumatic Stress – Toxic stress

How does this “look” in parents, families, children? In staff?
WHAT IT DOESN’T MEAN

- It doesn’t mean excusing or permitting/justifying unacceptable behavior
  - Supports accountability, responsibility

- It doesn’t mean just being nicer
  - Compassionate yes, but not a bit mushy

- It doesn’t ‘focus on the negative’
  - Skill-building, empowerment
  - Recognizing strengths
Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Early Death
Disease, Disability, and Social Problems
Adoption of Health-risk Behaviours
Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Early Death
Burden of disease, distress, criminalization, stigmatization
Coping
Allostatic Load, Disrupted Neurological Development
Complex Trauma/ACE
Social Conditions/Local Context
Generational Embodiment/Historical Trauma

Trauma and social location

HOW TRAUMA CAN AFFECT YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE
Freeze Response

Hypoarousal

- Fane death response
- Dissociation
- Not present
- Unavailable
- Shut down

Fight/Flight

Hyper-arousal

- Anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Chaotic responses
- Outbursts (emotional/aggressive)
- Anger/aggressive rage

Disregulated

This is where you start to feel agitated, anxious, or angry. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

Widening the window for psychological flexibility

Window of Tolerance

Comfort Zone

Able to self-soothe

Window of Tolerance

Comfort Zone

Able to self-regulate

Staying within the window of tolerance makes for better relationship interactions

Disregulated

When you begin to feel like you’re shutting down. You may feel a little spacy, you may lose track of time.

You may feel sluggish. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

Widening the window for psychological flexibility

Fight/Flight

Hyper-arousal

- Rigidness
- Obsessive compulsive behavior/thoughts
- Overeating/Starving
- Addictions
- Impulsivity

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This is where you start to feel agitated, anxious, or angry. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

Freeze Response

Hypoarousal

- Disconnected
- Auto pilot
- No display of emotions/flat affect
- Separation from self, feelings and emotions
• Anxiety
• Overwhelm
• Chaotic responses
• Outbursts (emotional/aggressive)
• Anger/aggressive rage

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Videos

• [The Three Main Parts of Your Brain](#)
• [Flipping Your Lid](#)
• [Stress Response](#)
• [Sympathetic Nervous System](#)
• [Parasympathetic Nervous System](#)
• [HPA Axis](#)
• [Three meanings of freeze](#)
Flip the Lid (Hand Model of the Brain)

Make a Fist with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain.

**Thumb** = Midbrain (Stem & Limbic) = Emotional Brain. This is where emotions and memories are processed. This is where the fight, flight & freeze is triggered.

**Fingers** = Cerebral Cortex = Rational Brain. Houses our ability to think and reason.

**Fingernails** = Prefrontal Cortex = Problem-Solving

When something triggers us, we are prone to "Flip our Lid" which means the Prefrontal Cortex (Fingernails) have a very poor connection with the Midbrain (Thumb), and we’re not able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. Our emotions are overriding our ability to think clearly.

*Dr. Dan Siegal*
JUST BREATHE

"Just Breathe" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman (Wavecrest Films)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg&t=9s
BREAK
There are at least four types of memory that trauma can impact—they can be categorized into two broad categories:

- **Explicit Memory**
  - Semantic (general knowledge of facts)
  - Episodic (autobiographical memory of an event or experience, who, what, when, where)

- **Implicit Memory**
  - Emotional (the emotions you felt during an experience)
  - Procedural (how you do a task without actively thinking)
How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

Explicit Memory

Semantic Memory

You remember this is a picture of a bike.

Trauma can prevent information like words, images, sounds, etc.) from different parts of the brain from combining to make a semantic memory.
How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

Explicit Memory

Episodic Memory

The autobiographical memory of an event or experience—who, what, where, when, how.

Trauma can shutdown episodic memory and fragment the sequence of events.
How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

Implicit Memory

Emotional

The emotions you felt during a memory or experience.

Trauma can prevent information like words, images, sounds, etc.) from different parts of the brain from combining to make a semantic memory.
How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

Implicit Memory

Procedural

The memory of how to perform a common task, e.g., tying your shoe.

Trauma can shutdown episodic memory and fragment the sequence of events.
PEOPLE MAY...

- Feel unsafe
- Engage in harmful behaviors
- Tend toward anger and aggression
- Feel hopeless or helpless
- Continue unhelpful patterns of behavior
- Feel hyper aroused with memory and communication problems
- Have trouble managing emotions
- Be overwhelmed, confused, depressed
- Not be able to imagine any other future
PEOPLE MAY...

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EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Bouncing leg
- Fist clenching
- Hand wringing
- Giggling or other emotional responses (that seem out of context)
- Pacing
- Loud voice
- Can’t sit still
- Restlessness
- Swearing
TRAUMA AND THE BRAIN

Over-developed amygdala (limbic system).
  • Fight, flight, or freeze reactions

Under-developed frontal lobe.
  • Harder to bring on-line when amygdala is working so hard

The good news?
  • The brain is plastic; rewiring is possible.
  • Healing/recovery are possible
CREATE PHYSICAL SAFETY

What does physical space look like?
Where and when are services?
Who is there/allowed to come?

Attend to unease...

Is there anything I can do to help you feel more safe?

- Lighting
- Bathrooms
- Exits/entrances
- Signage about what to expect, where to go...
- Home visiting plans.
- End with “what’s next”
- Vicarious trauma prevention plans
- Space for self-care
- Training
- Scripts
CREATE EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Transparency
• Explain the “why”
• Clear and specific language

Predictability
• What’s next

Clear & consistent boundaries
• Be able to state and model
• Allowed to speak up re: vicarious trauma
• Vicarious trauma prevention plans

Choice
• Understanding your role
• Being able to say no.
• Access to records
• Access to job expectations before hire
• Psych evals and assessments
CREATE EMOTIONAL SAFETY

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- Being able to say no.
- Access to records
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RESTORE POWER

Empowerment
• Advocate, model

Choice
• As much as possible
• Keep it real; explain the why

Strengths Perspective
• Adaptability
• Focus on the future

Skill building
• Every encounter

Things to think about
• Learned Helplessness
• Competence & confidence
• 3 choices
• Relationships not used as threat
• Frontal lobe
• Peer Support
HOW TO SAY NO

I don’t think so
Let me think about it
I’ll get back to you
I’m not sure
I’ll consider it
VALUE THE INDIVIDUAL

Respect
- Life experience and strengths

Collaboration
- Referrals, teams, meetings

Compassion
- Not an excuse but an explanation
- Self Care

Relationship, Mutuality, Authenticity
- Modeling, boundaries, learning, partnering

Things to think about
- Structure to have voices heard
- Acknowledgement
- Giving voice to –
- Advocating for...
THINGS TO DO WHEN ONE’S TRAUMA GETS ACTIVATED
All bodies are whole. All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.

We are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.

We move together, with no body left behind.

This is disability justice.
SLOWING DOWN YOUR BREATHING

Clasping your arms behind your back can help you shift your breathing from your chest to your abdomen.

Breathe in on a count of 4 or 5. Breathe out on a count of 4 or 5. Repeat as needed.

Helps you breathe from your abdomen rather than your chest.

When people experience anxiety or panic attacks, they often are breathing from their chest.

For modification:

If you don't have a chair handy, simply stand or sit and clasp your hands behind your back.
GROUNDING—USING OUR 5 SENSES

What this tool does:

Helps orient you to present time and place. If you are still struggling after naming 5 things for each sense, repeat with 4, and then 3 and then 2 and then 1.

For Modification:

It's okay to repeat things more than once. (There's no wrong way to do this exercise). Sometimes if you're frozen, it's difficult to move your eyes to look around the room that you're in. If that's the case, describe the textures of the things that you can see, feel, or taste. Be patient with you. You will come out of the frozen state. It won't last forever.

Name 5 things that you can see.
Name 5 things that you can hear.
Name 5 things that you can feel.
Name 5 things that you've tasted today.
Name 5 things that you've smelled today.

If you can't think of things that you've tasted or smelled in the same day—you can name things that you've tasted or smelled in the past 2-3 days.
Helps slow your breathing down and times it. Here's a link to the breathing gif. It starts as a line and expands into several geometric shapes and then does the reverse process as you exhale.

For modification:

You can exhale on the inhale and inhale on the exhale. There is no wrong way to do this exercise.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wdbbtgf05Ek
It gives you a pleasant memory to focus on. You can tell people that you trust if they notice that you’re having a hard time, have them ask you to show you pictures/videos of your pets and/or children. It may make you smile or laugh.

Have a video/picture(s) of your pets and/or your children doing something cute on your phone.

Pictures of favorite nature scenes such as waterfalls, the beach, the desert, etc.

Take them out and look at them. Remember the details of the day that you took the video and/or picture(s).

Keep a copy on your phone.

Print a copy (even on plain paper) that you can stick in a book or bag to remind you of better times.
KOOSH™ BALLS AND OTHER STRESS BALLS

What this tool does:
This is a way to work off some of the energy from the panic or anxiety attack that you have.
You can play with them between your hands; pull on them, smash them or whatever else you want to do with them.
Koosh™ balls have gotten me through many meetings that I might not otherwise have been able to through.

For Modification:
Worry stones can also help and may be preferred over Koosh™ balls.
ZIPLOC™ BAG OF RICE

What this tool does:
Running your hands through grains of rice or sand can be calming to your over-stimulated body.

This tool can also be taken to public places.
You can leave the rice in your bag and no one needs to know that you are calming yourself.

Just make sure your cat doesn’t chew on the plastic and leave a hole in the bag.

Sometimes, it’s a good idea to double bag these items in case an accident occurs.

For Modification:
Sand is also an option, too. You can use beach sand or colored sand. Dried legumes can also be used.
TAPPING

What this tool does:

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), is a type of Meridian Tapping that combines ancient Chinese acupressure and modern psychology. Many people find tapping is helpful at calming and soothing themselves. Tapping also helps some people change negative thoughts into different, more positive thoughts. Your local library or bookstore may have several books on tapping. There are also several Youtube videos that demonstrate tapping.

For Modification:

Some places where you tap may be triggering. If you find that you have triggers in certain areas when you tap, then don't tap in those areas.
STRETCHING/MOVING

What this tool does:

Stretching/changing positions/moving.

Sometimes when we’re frozen or stuck—it’s really hard to move or change positions.

Start small when you’re frozen or stuck. Think about just moving your fingers $\frac{1}{2}$ inch...or just lifting them up and down.

Some people find yoga helpful for coping and dealing with trauma stress. Look for videos by Jessamyn Stanly on Youtube. She takes no crap about not having a perfect body. “Life is about falling and getting back up!”

For Modification:

Some stretches and poses may not feel comfortable and may feel scary. Focus on doing it for a short period of time and then extending the length of time.
COUNTING

If someone is having difficulty staying grounded, counting can be a useful tool. Have the person repeat the numbers that you say. For example:

You: 7
The other person: 7

You: 8
The other person: 8

You: 9
The other person: 9

You: 21
The other person: 21

You: 43
The other person: 43

You: 75
The other person: 75

Repeat, if necessary with another sequence of three numbers in a row and three numbers out of order.
For Modification:

Find music you like. Music that makes you want to move. Music that makes you smile. Find music that helps express your rage. Create a Youtube playlist.

- Michael Franti’s The Sound of Sunshine
- Kari Kimmel’s Slow Down, Love

“Music in the soul can be heard by the universe.” — Lao Tzu, Ancient Chinese Philosopher
SHREDDING PAPER

What this tool does:

Shredding paper is a great way to relieve frustration, tension and anger. You can shred the paper as tiny or as big as you like.

Shredding old bills and other personal information that is no longer needed is a great way to protect yourself from identity theft.

Be careful to not shred documents that you might want later.
ADULT COLORING BOOKS

What this tool does:
1. Your brain experiences relief by entering a meditative state
2. Stress and anxiety levels have the potential to be lowered
3. Negative thoughts are expelled as you take in positivity
4. Focusing on the present helps you achieve mindfulness
5. Unplugging from technology promotes creation over consumption
6. Coloring can be done by anyone, not just artists or creative types
7. It’s a hobby that can be taken with you wherever you go

You can find swear word or other types of adult coloring books on Amazon or in megastores and bookstores.
ARTS, CRAFTS, & PUZZLES

What this tool does:

Sometimes working on arts and crafts such as putting a model airplane, car or other vehicle together, knitting, sewing, crocheting, scrapbooking, etc. can also help people when their trauma has been activated.

For people who don’t feel creatively gifted, putting a puzzle together can also be helpful.
WHAT ELSE HELPS?

Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.
PRACTICING TRAUMA INFORMED PEER SUPPORT

On your table are some scenarios. After you read the scenarios, answer the following questions:

• What is a non-trauma informed way to respond to the situation?
• What is a trauma-informed way to respond to the situation?
Scenario 1

The person you’re supporting is in the lobby and is pacing - seems unable to settle down and keeps asking for water.

A Colleague says:

“You should give her a surprise UA”
Scenario 2

You’re in a group setting and a member says “I can only calm down by drinking or smoking pot and taking the Klonapin my psychiatrist gave me.”

Colleague says:

“Does your psychiatrist know you’re drinking and smoking pot? That sounds really dangerous, especially since you’re also taking Klonapin!”
John is a new member to group and on the first day he moves a chair out of the circle and puts it near the door to sit.

Colleague says:

“Sorry dude. This is not an “all about John” group. If you want to get credit for being here I suggest you bring your chair back and join the group.”
Scenario 4

“You are asking me about my abuse history, what about you, have you experienced abuse?”

Colleague says:

“We are not here to talk about me. It’s not appropriate for me to answer that”
Scenario 5

Colleague says:

Simone seems really delusional. She’s making up stuff that there’s no evidence it occurred.
WHAT ARE THINGS YOU OR YOUR COWORKERS HAVE SAID THAT DON’T COME FROM A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS?
THANK YOU!

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