Transforming Stress and Trauma: Fostering Wellness and Resilience

Healing Organizations: Trauma Transformed

Adapted from UCSF Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) Curriculum by

Joyce Dorado, Ph.D.
Director, UCSF HEARTS
Child and Adolescent Services
UCSF-San Francisco General Hospital

Lynn Dolce, MFT
Director, Foster Care Mental Health
Children Youth and Families System of Care

Santa Clara County TIS 101 Trainers: Cross Systems Collaboration
Goals of Trauma-Informed Systems Initiative
To create a trauma-informed public health system that fosters wellness and resilience for everyone in the system

Goals for Today
To develop a shared understanding and language about stress and trauma
To provide guiding principles and practical tools to support you at work

Outline for Today
• Overview
• Understanding Stress and Trauma
• Cultural Humility
• Break
• Safety and Stability
• Compassion and Dependability
• Collaboration and Empowerment
• Break
• Resilience and Recovery
• Commitment to Change Activity

Resources
We can be resilient and heal from chronic stress and trauma.
We support Trauma-Informed Care.
Why Is a Trauma-Informed Approach Important to Me?

Because stress and trauma impact all of us

These People Made it Through and Changed the World

These People Made it Through and Changed the World

San Francisco Department of Public Health, Trauma Informed System Initiative.
Reflection
Community Meeting Structure
– What is your name?
– How are you feeling? (One word in your bubble)
– What is one goal you have for this training?
– Name one success you have had this week
– Reflect on your own reaction to the video

Let’s Talk About Stress

How Stress Affects Our Job Performance:
The Yerkes-Dodson Law

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Stress and Trauma Are Public Health Issues

- Stress linked to 6 leading causes of death
  - Heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide
- Trauma impacts more than just the individual
  - Ripple effect to others
- Some communities disproportionately affected:
  - Bigotry + Urban Poverty + Trauma = Toxic
- Intergenerational transmission of trauma
- Systemic, preventative approach needed

Vignette

What is wrong with Anthony?
What is wrong with Vanessa?

Shift Your Perspective
from
"What is wrong with you?"
to
"What has happened to you?"
(from Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic)

Provides context, fosters compassion, helps us to see strengths in face of adversity

Trauma-Informed Principles for Promoting Wellness and Resilience

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Understanding Trauma and Stress

“Learning about the psychobiology of stress, toxic stress, and trauma is liberating for people. It gives us explanatory reasons for some of the puzzling behaviors we engage in and the feelings that can come to dominate us.”

(Bloom, 2013, p. 48)

What has happened to Anthony?

What has happened to Vanessa?
**Trauma** = **Event, Experience, & Effect**

**Event**  
Actual or extreme threat of harm

**Experience**  
“Fight, flight or freeze”  
Helpless to escape  
Overwhelms brain and body

**Effect**  
Dis-integration  
Dysregulation  
Lasting adverse effects

(Emerson, 1997; Van der Kolk, 1995; DSM-5; Siegel, 1999; Herman, 1997; Bloom, 2013)

**Complex Trauma**

Repetitive harm, neglect, or abandonment by people we depend upon can compromise development

(Courtis and Ford, 2009)

**Building a Trauma-Informed, Healing System**

Structure:  
- Safety & Stability  
- Compassion & Dependability  
- Collaboration & Empowerment  
- Resilience & Recovery

Furniture:  
- Trauma-Informed Practices

Foundation:  
- Trauma Understanding  
- Cultural Humility & Responsiveness

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Chronic Stress Causes “Wear and Tear” on the Body

- Medical illnesses
- Immune system suppression
- Inflammatory diseases
- Obesity
- Adverse effects on brain and cognitive functioning
- From stressors that are chronic, **uncontrollable**, experienced **without support** from caring others
- Can result from stressors like bigotry, poverty, chronic hunger

Neurons that fire together wire together
(Hebb’s Rule)

Trauma “Wears a Groove” in the Brain

“The Fear Song”
Survival Mode: Fight/Flight/Freeze
Frontal lobe (prefrontal cortex) goes offline
Limbic system / mid and lower brain functions take over

Thinking Brain
(Prefrontal Cortex)

Survival/Emotion Brain
(Limbic System)

Thinking Brain and Survival Brain

- **Thinking Brain = Rider**
  Makes informed, rational decisions
- **Survival Brain = Horse**
  Protective instincts based on feelings
- **When triggered, the rider falls off the horse**

Dysregulation

- Dysregulation is difficulty controlling the influence of stress arousal on how we think, feel, behave and interact with others
- This can happen when we are “triggered” into Survival Brain
Key Tool: Get Your Rider on Your Horse

- Aggravating behavior is “a cause for a pause”
- Pause and take a breath
- Ask yourself
  - “What has happened to you?”
  - “What is happening here?”
  - “What is the need behind this behavior?”
  - “How can I respond to this need?”

What is happening here?

Anthony

Vanessa

- My son is going to die
- He’s dangerous
- I’m never going to catch up
- She is abandoning us
- He is bullying me

Systemic Level: Chronic Stress and Trauma Can Lead to Dis-organization
A Trauma-Informed System Takes Care of the Caregivers

Transforming Our Organizations

Trauma-Informed Principles for Promoting Wellness and Resilience
Trauma-Informed System: Core Guiding Principle
Cultural Humility and Responsiveness

We come from diverse social and cultural groups that may experience and react to trauma differently. When we are open to understanding these differences and respond to them sensitively we make each other feel understood and wellness is enhanced.

Cultural Humility

“More than a concept, Cultural Humility is a process of communal reflection to analyze the root causes of suffering and create a broader, more inclusive view of the world.”

- Lifelong learning and critical self-reflection
- Recognizing and changing power imbalances
- Developing institutional accountability

Shift Your Perspective

from
"What is wrong?"
to
"What has happened?"
(from Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic)
San Francisco Department of Public Health, Trauma Informed System Initiative.

What’s Wrong:
A Public Health Example

Health Disparities and Trauma

Race + Place = Health

Health Disparities:
What Happened?

Insidious Trauma
Historical Trauma
Institutional Racism
Community Violence

Insidious Trauma
“like drops of acid falling on a stone”
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Context Matters
- Oppression
- Racism
- Homophobia
- Sexism
- Classism
- Xenophobia

Synergistic Trauma
- Inequity

Historical Trauma
- Intergenerational poverty
- Disinvestment
- Unsafe public spaces
- Deteriorated environments
- Unhealthy products

Understanding Community Level Trauma

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Stress Often Interferes with Creating Shared Culture

Adapted from presentation by Dhant Ippen, 2012

Cultural Humility Exercise

- Race
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Appearance
- Body structure
- Physical ability

- Gender
- Age
- Occupation
- Sexual orientation
- Education
- Class

- Primary language
- Family constellation
- Immigration status

Awareness and Accountability

We all have implicit biases
Take the test: Implicit.com
Must become aware of our biases
Need to prevent our biases from harming others


Trauma-Informed Principles for Promoting Wellness and Resilience

- Understanding Trauma & Stress
- Resilience & Recovery
- Collaboration & Empowerment
- Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
- Safety & Stability
- Compassion & Dependability
- System & Service Perspectives
- Neurobiology & Development

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Trauma-Informed System: Core Guiding Principle
Safety and Stability

Trauma unpredictably violates our physical, social, and emotional safety resulting in a sense of threat and need to manage risks. Increasing stability in our daily lives and having these core safety needs met can minimize our stress reactions and allow us to focus our resources on wellness.

Key Tool:
Establish Safety

Physical safety
- Protection from harm
- Reduction of unnecessary triggers

Social safety
- Build positive working relationships that can provide support and calming in times of stress

Emotional safety
- Build skills in managing emotions

Stability
- Routines, predictability and consistency

Emotional Safety: Emotion Regulation

Capacity to:
- **Identify** emotions
- **Express** emotions
- **Modulate** emotions

(NCTSN, 2003)
Avoid Re-escalation: Where Are You in the Cycle?

Tools for Stress Relief at Work

- Physical movement
  - Stretching
  - Going for a walk
- Tactile grounding
  - Lotion
  - Stress balls
- Drink water
- Breathing exercises (belly breathing)
- Sleep well, eat healthily, exercise

Keys to wellness break:
- One thing at a time
- Enjoyable
- Physical activity
- Breathe deeply

Belly Breathing
Slow breath out through mouth
Empty chest, then belly
(empty belly air all the way out)
Slow breath in through nose
Fill belly, then chest with air

- Exhale activates “brakes” in body
- Re-sets brain and body
- Allows body to metabolize stress arousal

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Re-visiting the Vignette

Vignette: Applying Trauma-Informed Principles
Understanding Trauma & Stress
Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
Safety and Stability

Apply your knowledge about stress, trauma, and trauma-informed principles to the vignette to improve the outcome.

Trauma-Informed Principles for Promoting Wellness and Resilience

- Understanding Trauma & Stress
- Resilience & Recovery
- Collaboration & Empowerment
- Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
- Safety & Stability
- System & Service
- Neurobiology & Development
- Compassion & Dependability

San Francisco Department of Public Health, Trauma Informed System Initiative.
Trauma-Informed System:
Core Guiding Principle
Compassion and Dependability

Trauma is overwhelming and can leave us feeling isolated or betrayed, which may make it difficult to trust others and receive support. However, when we experience compassionate and dependable relationships, we reestablish trusting connections with others that foster mutual wellness.

Relationships Are Central to Healing

Humans Are Hard-wired for Connection

- Need connection as much as food (Harlow, 1958)
- Healthy relationships involve attunement
  - Being sensitive, responsive, and in harmony with the feelings and needs of ourselves and of others
- Attuned interactions help us to feel safe and calm down when we are stressed out
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Complex Trauma Interferes with Co-Regulation

- If child’s caregiver is source of trauma or unavailable to provide co-regulation, can derail development of healthy emotion regulation skills
- This affects relationships in adulthood

Reframing Risk Behaviors

Tension reduction behaviors
- Drugs and alcohol
- Risk-taking behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- Compulsive stealing
- Aggression
- Problematic sexual behaviors (where any connection feels better than abandonment and isolation)

relationshipDifficulties

When humans have experienced complex trauma:
- Overly clingy/dependent
- Push others away
- Don’t know how to make use of helpful others (including providers)

Working with trauma can pull for intense emotions in staff:
- Vicarious/Secondary trauma

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What pushes your buttons?

Out of proportion reactions

Confusion between “there and then” and “here and now”

Relationship Building Tool:
**Connect, then Re-Direct** (Siegel)

- **Partnership** “Let’s work together”
- **Empathy** “That sounds frustrating”
- **Apology** “I’m sorry that happened”
- **Respect** “You have gone through a lot”
- **Legitimation** “It makes sense that you feel this way”
- **Support** “Let’s see what we can do”

(American Academy on Communication in Health)

You Can Make a Difference

“Big I” = Interventions

“Little i” = interactions

(CAPPD - calm, attuned, present, predictable & don’t escalate)

(Multiple Connections, Philadelphia training)
Trauma involves a loss of power and control that makes us feel helpless. However, when we are prepared for and given real opportunities to make choices for ourselves and our care, we feel empowered and can promote our own wellness and the wellness of others.
San Francisco Department of Public Health, Trauma Informed System Initiative.

- **Moving Through Trauma**

- **Empowerment: Promoting a Sense of Agency**

- **Collaboration Tool: Foster Voice and Choice**
  
  **ARCC**
  - Ask
  - Respond
  - Clarify
  - Confirm
  
  • "Does this work for you?"

  (Adapted from American Academy on Communication in Health)
Trauma-Informed Principles for Promoting Wellness and Resilience

- Understanding Trauma & Stress
- Resilience & Recovery
- Collaboration & Empowerment
- Safety & Stability
- Compassion & Dependability
- Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
- Neurobiology & Development
- System & Service Perspectives

Trauma-Informed System: Core Guiding Principle
Resilience and Recovery

Trauma can have a long-lasting and broad impact on our lives that may create a feeling of hopelessness. Yet, when we focus on our strengths and clear steps we can take toward wellness we are more likely to be resilient and recover.

Habits of Happiness

- People who practice mindfulness have stronger immune systems, are more likely to be happy and enjoy greater life satisfaction, and are less likely to feel anxious or hostile.
- Being kind to others makes us feel good. Altruistic acts light up the same pleasure centers in the brain as food and sex.
- Regular exercise increases self-esteem, reduces anxiety and stress, and may well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all.

In conclusion, by implementing these principles and habits, we can promote wellness and resilience, overcoming the effects of trauma and stress.
Resilience Tool: Cultivating Gratitude

• Keep a Gratitude Journal
  • List 5 things that you are grateful for once per week
• Count your blessings once a day  (Emmons, 2010)

Practicing Gratitude Increases Well-Being

• Physical
  • Stronger immune systems
  • Lower blood pressure

• Psychological
  • More alert, alive, and awake
  • More optimism and happiness

• Social
  • More helpful, generous, and compassionate
  • Less lonely and isolated  (Emmons, 2010)

The Goodness of Gratitude

• Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present
• Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions
• Grateful people are more stress resistant  (Emmons, 2010)
What are you grateful for?

Applying Trauma-Informed Principles
Resilience and Recovery

- What steps will you take to take care of yourself?
- What are some things you can do for/with each other?
- What do you need from your workplace to enhance well-being for all?

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A Trauma-Informed System isn’t a training, or an idea, or a buzzword – it’s an experience.

It’s your experience.

Applying the principles in our worklives is good for us, good for our colleagues, and good for the people we serve.

How can we make a difference in your worklife?

Big, policy level system changes are necessary but not sufficient...

Small individual changes that you implement have a big impact on you.
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What about you? What are your small steps?

- Ideas from today that inspired you
- Principles that are important to you
- Examples that resonated with your life

"I will meet with my supervisor to discuss a safety concern and get support resolving it."

In the next month, let's all take one small step toward experiencing a trauma informed worklife.

Over 6,000 SFDPH employees have committed to a C2C project!

It was difficult at first. But as I put it into practice, I felt a sense of relief because it became easier to incorporate it in my attitude and thinking. "It makes coming to work worthwhile."

70% are successful
75% will continue change
"one of the best things to ever happen to me" empowerin g
Your Commitment 2 Change Project

Share & Inspire

If you feel comfortable, share your ideas with your group.

Help inspire, plan, and support each other’s C2C projects.

Then turn in your C2C Plan!

In order to wrap up today, we need you to:

1. Complete the confidential C2C handout due today
   - There will be a giftcard drawing for completing a follow-up survey!
2. Keep the yellow sheet, turn in the white sheet
3. Complete and turn in the blue Training Evaluation form

Thanks! Our trainer will close us out...
A trauma-informed system understands how chronic stress and trauma affects human beings AND creates safe and supportive care environments that foster strength and resiliency, so that everyone in the system can develop, grow and thrive.