

Trauma

A definition of Trauma

A psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience, often involving a sense of intense fear, terror, and helplessness (Perry,2006)

What is deemed as traumatic can vary from person to person. This also includes Adverse Childhood Experiences (A.C.Es) which refers to traumatic experiences which can have lasting effects into adulthood, such as:

- Physical, Sexual, & Emotional Abuse
- Exposure to domestic abuse
- Living with someone with substance abuse

Key Principles of Trauma Informed Practice

Relationships are key in enabling recovery for those who have experienced trauma.

As practitioners we should focus on:

Safety: Including physical, psychological and emotional safety. Recognise their perspective and validate their feelings. How can you make the environment less intimidating in order to avoid re-traumatisation?

Choice: Ensuring individuals have a voice in the decision making progress and listening to their needs and wishes.

Trustworthiness: Explaining what you are doing and why, then doing what you say you will do. Being consistent and predictable in our communication can reduce individuals anxiety.

Collaboration: It is important to foster a culture of 'doing with' people. However, where there may be legal restrictions that prevent this, it is important to discuss and explain to the individual.

Empowerment: Focus on the individuals' and communities strengths supporting them to take control of their lives. Giving service users, families and staff, a voice in the organisation. Focussing on what everyone can do whilst also having room for difficulties to be heard and support put in place when needed.

Cultural Consideration: Asking people about their cultural values, beliefs and experiences to understand how this might influence their experience of contact with services.

The Types of Trauma

Type 1 Trauma = Single incident trauma, e.g. a car accident, natural disaster and sometimes assault. It is an event that happens one time and may be considered an exceptional circumstances.

Type 2 Trauma: Multiple traumas, usually involving prolonged, repeated exposure.

Type 3 Trauma = Multiple traumas from an early age that continue over a lengthy period of time.

Terr (1991) & Heide and Solomon (1999)

Trauma Symptoms

➤ **Dissociation-** This involves distancing or shutting down in order to cope. This can look like spacing out, a glazed over look or taking a while to respond.

➤ **Derealisation,** the individual may feel as though the world around them isn't real or it is 'lifeless'.

➤ **Flashbacks-** These are sudden, uncontrollable sensory memories that make it seem like the trauma is reoccurring.

➤ **Hypervigilance-** This includes exploring others faces for sign of disapproval. The individuals regulatory systems prime the body to stay on full alert at all times.

➤ **PTSD-** Is often a combination of intrusive flashbacks and dissociation.



The importance of being trauma informed

Trauma in early childhood can have a severe impact through the course of someone's life.

➤ 'Evidence suggests that at least half of the population have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience in their lifetime.' (Bellis et al,2015)

➤ Research has shown that unresolved trauma can increase risks later in adult life and not responding to harms in early adulthood may mean that individuals will require more complex support later.

➤ Trauma informed practice seeks to look beyond a person's presenting behaviours and instead asks 'What does this person need?' Increasing professionals awareness of how trauma can negatively effect individuals abilities to develop trusting relationships with health and care services.

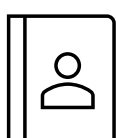
➤ Rather than treating trauma-related difficulties, trauma informed practice seeks to remove barriers. Including fear, lack of choice and loss of control caused by traumatic experiences. It aims to increase service accessibility through culturally sensitive, safe services that people trust. Whilst also preparing practitioners to work in partnership with individuals and empower them to make choices for their own wellbeing (**Fallot and Harris 2009**)

Contact details:

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Worried about an adult?

[How to report concerns - Oxford Safeguarding Adults Board \(osab.co.uk\)](http://www.osab.co.uk)



Resources

[A Trauma-Informed Approach to Workforce \(nationalfund.org\)](http://nationalfund.org)

[Trauma and the Brain – YouTube](#)

[Good relationships are the key to healing trauma | Karen Treisman |](#)

[TEDxWarwickSalon - YouTube](#)

