Trauma and Complex Trauma

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Poll #1
Have you or someone in your family experienced trauma?

- Yes
- No
Advances in Recognizing Trauma

One positive consequence of 9/11 and other recent catastrophes and wars is that the public is now more aware of trauma and its potential consequences than ever before.
Advances in Recognizing Trauma

Trauma is a public health risk of major proportions

Dealing with the effects of trauma is a health-care priority; it is as serious as any major medical illness

(US Surgeon General, 1999)
Defining Trauma

“...the *unique individual experience*, associated with an event or enduring conditions, in which the individual’s ability to integrate affective experience is overwhelmed or the individual experiences a threat to life or bodily integrity…”

(Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1990)
Types of Trauma

- Type I: Impersonal
- Type II: Interpersonal
- Type III: Lifelong
- Type IV: Identity
- Type V: Community
Interpersonal Trauma

“A break in the human lifeline”

Robert J. Lifton
Diagnostic Definition of Trauma

(DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

A person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

**Objective**: 1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical* integrity of self or others

(* should include emotional integrity, as well)
Diagnostic Definition of Trauma

(DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

Subjective: 2) the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror*

Note: in children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.

* Revised definition will include other common emotions such as shame, anger, disgust, etc.
Trauma Sequence

- **Peri-trauma:** at the time and immediately afterwards: shock; disorientation; dissociation
- **Acute:** ongoing disorientation & shock; other reactions; beginning reorientation; beginning processing—to the point of resolution or the development of symptoms
- **Chronic:** persisting symptoms and generalizing (may be due to avoidance); lack of resolution
- **Delayed/chronic:** may emerge later in response to triggers: out of time and place
Poll #2
Have you or the person you know who’s experienced trauma had these symptoms?

- Yes
- No
Risk and Protective Factors

- interpersonal vs. accidental
- duration/repeated/chronicity
- severity
- life-threat
- entrapment and powerlessness
- exposure to death/dying/horror
- bereavement/loss
- single vs. multiple stressor
- potential for re-occurrence
- relationship issues
- forced silence
Risk and Protective Factors

- Experience and complexity of the trauma
  - alone or with others
  - community-based or not
  - moral conflict
  - role in trauma and after

- Posttrauma atmosphere
  - level of support/understanding
  - opportunity for ventilation/discussion
  - treatment availability & quality
  - cultural issues/rituals for recovery
  - societal attitudes
Risk and Protective Factors

- Individual **resilience** and vulnerability

- Biological/physiological factors
  - genetic predisposition, development

- Personal development at time of the trauma
  - developmental level
  - attachment history
  - personality and defenses
  - beliefs, values, abilities

- Prior and subsequent life events
  - other trauma/revictimization
  - pre- and post-trauma adaptation
Post-trauma Conditions

**Note:** *most* individuals who are seriously traumatized have posttraumatic *reactions*; not all develop posttraumatic *disorders*. 
Post-trauma Conditions

- **Acute**
  - clinical
  - non- or sub-clinical

- **Chronic**
  - clinical
  - non- or sub-clinical

- **Delayed onset**
  - “sleeper effects”

- **Complex: self and life course development**
Trauma Has A Wake: Pebble in a Pond

- **Primary victim**

- **Secondary victims**
  - family
  - friends
  - emergency workers, police, journalists
  - therapists

- **Third level victims**
  - other supporters
  - community/social group
  - society
Poll #3
Do you or someone you know have PTSD?
- Yes, diagnosed
- Yes, but not diagnosed
- Unsure
- No
Symptom Categories of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

- A. Exposure or experience
- B. Persistent re-experiencing, intrusions, dreams of trauma, distress at re-exposure
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing
- D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal
PTSD

- A complex dynamic disorder
  - fluctuating, not static
  - variable in form, presentation, course, degree of disruption

- A multi-dimensional bio-psycho-social/spiritual stress response syndrome

- An allostatic condition
Complex PTSD
Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified (DESNOS)

- *Distinct from or co-occurring with PTSD*

- Developed to account for developmental issues, associated conditions, memory changes and to reduce stigma of the symptoms

- Other associated conditions
  - depression and anxiety
  - dissociation
  - substance abuse/other addictions
  - impulse control/compulsive disorders/risk
  - personality, medical conditions and ability to function
Symptom Categories of Complex PTSD

- 1. Emotion identification and regulation
- 2. Attention or consciousness
- 3. Self-perception
- 4. Perception of perpetrator
- 5. Relations with others
- 6. Somatization
- 7. Systems of meaning
Treatment

General Goals

- reduce levels of hyperarousal
- reestablish normal stress response
- decrease numbing/avoidance strategies
- face rather than avoid trauma, process emotions, integrate traumatic memories
- reduce comorbid problems
- educate about and destigmatize PTSD sx
Treatment

- General Goals (cont’d):
  - restore self-esteem, personal integrity
    - normal psychosexual development
    - reintegration of the personality
  - restore relations with others
    - trust
    - ability to be intimate
    - attachment to and connection with others
  - restore physical self
  - restore spiritual self
Treatment

Variable Adaptations

Variable and Multi-modal Treatments
Treatment

Like PTSD

Comprehensive treatment must be

BIO-

PSYCHO-

SOCIAL/SPIRITUAL
Treatment

- Education
- Safety/stabilization
- Emotion regulation and other skill-building
- Health and stress status
- Medication? for symptoms and sleep
- Treatment alliance
- Treat addictions simultaneously and make connection to trauma history
Treatment

- Mind-body treatment
- Exposure to the trauma to process and reduce symptoms
  - In CPTSD treatment, later in the process
- Create a narrative
  - Meaning-making
  - Spirituality
- Resuming life apart from the trauma
  - new normal/survivor missions?
- Couple, family, and group models now available
The Good News

- We know more about trauma and responses/disorders
- We know more about what works
- We know more about resilience
- We can help build resilience
- We are learning more every day
- We need to remember secondary survivors
  - for themselves and to support primary survivors
Summary

Trauma studies have increased information and understanding
- Trauma can vary dramatically, as can responses
- New conceptual and diagnostic models account for variability

Treatment
- Is multimodal
- Is bio-psycho-social/spiritual
- Must be individualized
  - type of trauma response/disorder
  - individual needs

More information to come!!!
Good Resources

- ISTSS.org
- ISSTD.org
- NCPTSD.org (info and links)
- NCTSN.org (child resources)
- Sidran.org (books and tapes)
'Coming later this year

- Courtois & Ford, *The Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-based Approach* (Guilford)

and

- Ford & Courtois (Eds.), *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children and Adolescents: An Evidence-based Guide* (Guilford)
Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders
An Evidence-Based Guide
Christine A. Courtois
Julian D. Ford
Recollections of Sexual Abuse

Treatment Principles and Guidelines

Christine A. Courtois
Upcoming CE Webinar
with Christine Courtois, Ph.D.

Complex Forms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
3 CE Credits - $35
September 24, 2012 – 4pm - 5:30pm PST

Learn more or register at
http://www.psychalive.org/2012/01/upcoming-webinars-2/
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  CE Webinar
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