

Trauma Informed Workshop

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Trauma is an emotional response to a very stressful, frightening event/incident that is difficult to cope; however, it's not only the incident itself but what happens after the incident as well.

There are 3 types of traumas:

- **Acute trauma** is a singular traumatic event like a car accident
- **Chronic trauma** is a prolonged event that happened multiple times like domestic abuse
- **Complex trauma** is varied and multiple traumatic events like a domestic abuse and loss

No matter the type of trauma, it changes the brain; Trauma can cause an imbalance of its activity level, as well as a hormonal and neurotransmitters imbalance. It affects the limbic system, which is a part of the brain involved in behavioral and emotional response, memory and learning.

As the trauma is stored in the body and brain, Trauma response can vary between flight, fight, flop, fawn and freeze. These responses differ from a person to another – they feel they are out of control of their own lives that's why all their internal resources go toward survival.

Trauma can impact individuals on different levels: emotionally, physically, cognitively, developmentally (especially when trauma occur in childhood), spiritually and can cause body dysregulation.

There are different trauma reactions that can one experience on the emotional, behavioral and cognitive side, some toward oneself and some toward others and the environment as trauma affects one relationship with self and others as well.

-Emotional reactions like; anger, guilt, fear, helplessness, feeling overwhelmed and denial, irritability, mood swings, grief and shame.

-Behavioral reactions like; restlessness, avoidant behavior, disturbed appetite and sleep, substance use, difficulty expressing, less or over reaction, withdrawal change in activity level.

-Cognitive reactions like; difficulty concentrating, memory problems, distortion of time and space, flashbacks, self-blame, magical thinking, feelings perceived as bad.

There are reactions that will appear directly after a traumatic event, they are called “**immediate reactions**”, and there are “delayed reactions” that can appear after months or even years after the traumatic event, and this is not necessarily related to some trigger or memory of the event.

Individuals who experienced traumatic event/s, will feel worthlessness, blame, guilt, fear, shame, anger, and confusion.

They will learn their self-worth from people around and how to operate in survival mode. They struggle from low self-esteem and poor self-image, and they will lose the ability to make difference in their own lives as for them the world is not a safe place, they will trust nothing and they have no power over their circumstances.

They view themselves as powerless and they perceive positive actions as useless, however, negative expectations always come first. They have trouble feeling hopeful, so they live moment to moment without dreaming or planning for the future

Trauma can impact attachment styles (especially if it happened in childhood), relationships, physical health, emotional management, self-regulation, thinking and learning that's why a person can act violently to situations, trouble managing and expressing his/her emotions and is more vulnerable to stress.

How to support people who experienced trauma in their lives?

At first, we need to be aware that we are not mental health professionals, rather, we are responsible for them in the ministry / school ... and realizing what symptoms they are experiencing can help a lot, by addressing the symptom itself.

The support we need to provide

- Address our own trauma / distress (what can trigger us)
- Listen / allow them to express
- Accept their emotions
- Avoid underestimating their experience
- Build on their reactions instead of criticising
- Stability and consistency (create a routine)
- Trustworthiness
- Confidentiality and respect
- Encourage boundaries
- Reframe our words / phrases for the best for them (ex; not: what is wrong with you – but: what happened?)
- Create an environment that allows acknowledgment of the trauma
- Discuss what they want to express without going into details
- Draw a connection between the trauma and trauma related symptoms
- Explore their support system and fortify them
- Identify their triggers
- Develop strategies to manage symptoms and triggers

At the end, traumatized individuals need to feel safe and understood.

Life does not stop here, and there are a good number of people who heal from their trauma with the right support and treatment, to open a new chapter in their lives.

After trauma, individuals can experience:

- The meaning of life
- Finding purpose and goal
- Priorities and values
- Growth
- Commitment to a personal mission