Goals and Objectives

Be able to define trauma and the trauma response

Understand how our clients are impacted by trauma

Identify the effects of trauma on the brain
Trauma — physical, sexual and emotional — is both a cause and a consequence of homelessness.
A recent study in Massachusetts found that 92% of homeless women surveyed had experienced severe physical and/or sexual assault at some point in their lives.
I has a sad.
## What is Trauma?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trauma?</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A trauma is an incident or event that is, or is perceived to be, threatening to one's own life or bodily integrity</td>
<td>Combat/War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a subjective experience of terror and helplessness</td>
<td>Sexual or Physical Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tornado/Earthquake/Hurricane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trauma

- *Trauma* begins with an event or experience that overwhelms normal coping mechanisms.

- Retraumatization refers to the psychological and/or physiological experience of being “triggered,”

- Although environmental triggers cannot be completely eliminated, it is important for homeless service agencies to create an environment in which the trauma survivor feels safe.
Trauma & the Brain
Trauma & the Brain

- **Limbic System**: center of survival functions

- **Amygdala**: signals alarm in the brain when danger is perceived

- **Epinephrine & Norepinephrine**: released to mobilize the body for fight or flight
Trauma & the Brain

- **Cortisol**: released to return the body to homeostasis

- **Tonic immobility**: occurs when death feels imminent, escape is impossible, or the trauma is prolonged.

- **Fight, Flight, or Freeze**: automatic reactions to perceived threat, not consciously thought out.

Health Care & Housing Are Human Rights
Dude...

Wait, what?
Trauma & Memory

Hippocampus: gives time and space context to an event, gives events a beginning, middle and end.

Amygdala: aids in the process of highly charged emotional memories and bodily sensations

Broca’s Area: the speech center of the brain
The Aftermath of Trauma

- The system has broken down

- Ability to orient to safety and danger is compromised

- Stories and narratives may be jumbled

- Body may have trouble up and down regulating
Hyperarousal

- Permanent alert

- Startles easily, react irritably to small provocations, sleeps poorly

- Physiological changes are both extensive and enduring (brain chemistry severely impacted)
Hyperarousal
Intrusion

- Not linear, not verbal

- Frozen wordless quality: vivid sensations, images, fragmentary sensation and images w/out context

- Overwhelms ordinary capacity to bear feelings

- Do anything to avoid!!
Intrusion
### Constriction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Time of Event</th>
<th>After Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception is numbed or distorted</td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of body</td>
<td>Alcohol and Drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of time altered</td>
<td>May become habitual coping mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels like slow motion</td>
<td>Constricting one’s life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health Care & Housing Are Human Rights
Dialectic of Trauma

• An individual alternates between hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction.

• At first, hyperarousal and intrusion dominate

• Over time, constriction dominates
“What’s wrong with you?”

versus

“What happened to you?”
Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Culture

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice:
- Collaboration:
- Empowerment:

Things to Remember

- The brain has an automatic response to trauma
- Trauma memory is not stored in linear form
- The impact of trauma can be long lasting and can vacillate between hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction
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We are here to help!

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