Resolving Trauma Without Drama

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Good News about PTS

We are finally recognizing it

Bad News about PTS

We have mainly one idea and approach to it and some prevalent myths

Myths and misconceptions about trauma and treatment

1
All people who suffer trauma develop PTSD
Trauma doesn’t necessarily lead to PTSD
- 60.7% of men; 51.2% of women in the U.S. have experienced at least one traumatic event meeting DSM criteria
- In Detroit, nearly 90% of residents have been exposed to traumatic events
- But the general lifetime prevalence of PTSD is about 7.8% and Detroit residents is 9.2%.


Myths and misconceptions about trauma and treatment

People who develop PTS only resolve it through therapy


PTS often resolves without treatment, but treatment can help resolve it faster
- There was a steep decline in the prevalence of PTSD over the first 12 months after it developed, followed by a gradual decline for 6 years.
- But treatment seekers had about half the duration as non-treatment seekers.


People are often more resilient than we therapists give them credit for
- Expected rates of PTSD following 9/11 didn’t materialize
  “Resilience is often the most commonly observed outcome trajectory following exposure to a potentially traumatic event.”

There is a whole literature on Post-traumatic Growth and Resilience
Example of natural resolution of PTS (post-Katrina)
911 operator in Katrina disaster

Myths and misconceptions about trauma and treatment

Long-term, abreactive therapy is the best (or only way) to resolve trauma

Resilience and recovery from trauma: A lesson from Cambodia

Four major approaches

1 Future pull
Four major approaches

2
Inclusion

3
Pattern Change

4
Re-Connection

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Future-oriented interventions for resolving trauma
Howard Lutnick, CEO Cantor Fitzgerald
Lost his brother, his best friend and 658 of his employees in the 9/11 attacks
We always thought we’d fall apart at some point. I’d tell people it was like surfing in front of a very large wave and as long as I kept going forward as fast as I possibly could, the wave would never get me. But if I ever stopped, and took a moment to look back . . . Whoosh, the wave would crash over me, and I’d get crushed. But if I kept moving forward, the wave would get smaller and smaller, and that’s what happened. (Fall 2006)
Problems into Preferences
✓ Rephrase from what is unwanted to what is desired
✓ Redirect from the past to the future
✓ Mention the presence of something rather than the absence of something
✓ Suggest small increments rather than big leaps

Expectancy Talk
✓ Yet, so far
✓ Before
✓ After
✓ When
✓ How quickly?

Letter From Your Future
✓ Write a letter from your future self to your current self
✓ From five years from now
✓ Describe where you are, what you are doing, what you have gone through to get there, and so on
✓ Tell yourself the crucial things you realized or did to get there
✓ Give yourself some sage and compassionate advice from the future

Future Pull
"You have to go fetch the future. It's not coming towards you, it's running away." –Zulu proverb
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Validating/inclusive interventions for resolving trauma

Undifferentiated/Unboundaried Self

Undifferentiated self

Undifferentiated self

Undifferentiated self

Undifferentiated self

Split Happens: Intrusion, Devaluation and Shame

Shaming/devaluing

Sexual/physical intrusion

Leads to 3-D effect

Attribution of experience
Unowned/"bad" feelings, thoughts, sensations, memories, fantasies, desires, aspects of self

Aspects of experience with which the person identifies

Devalued aspect is either inhibited, suppressed and numbed or becomes intrusive, dominant or compulsive

AKA “The Missing Roommate”

Inclusion Level 1
Permission #1
To
• You can
• It’s okay
• You’re okay if

Inclusion Level 1
Permission #2
Not to have to
• You don’t have to
• It’s okay if you don’t
• You’re okay if you don’t
Inclusion Level 2
Inclusion of seeming opposites
You can and not
- Opposite polarities
- Previously incompatible experiences/traits

Inclusion
“Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes.”
—Walt Whitman

Inclusion
“In logic, no two things can occupy the same point at the same time, and in poetry that happens all the time. This is almost what poetry is for, to be able to embody contrary feelings in the same motion.”
—Donald Hall

Inclusion Level 3
Exceptions
That’s the way it is, except when it’s not
- Moments of exception
- Including the opposite possibility
- Recognizing complexity
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Pattern changing/breaking interventions for resolving trauma

Patterns as problems

John Cage:
“I can’t understand why some people are frightened of new ideas. I’m frightened of the old ones.”

Patterns as problems

Emile Chartier:
“There’s nothing as dangerous as an idea when it’s the only one you have!”

Patterns as problems

12-step saying
Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.
Changing the Pattern

1. DE-PATTERNING
   ✓ Find and alter repetitive patterns of action and interaction that are involved with the problem

2. RE-PATTERNING
   ✓ Help clients establish a new pattern in place of the old one
   ✓ Find and use solution patterns of action and interaction
Breaking the post-traumatic pattern

- Find any regularity in the post-traumatic experience
  - Neurological/physiological
  - Perceptual
  - Behavioral
  - Interpersonal
  - Frame of reference
  - Focus of attention
- Find any place to make a small or dramatic change in the pattern that is under your or their influence
  - Find the exception/solution pattern
  - Find a substitute that wouldn’t be so harmful or upsetting

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Reconnecting interventions for resolving trauma

Trauma can disrupt connections

- Initial disconnection is normal
- But if it persists, then PTSD often ensues
- Discover natural places or ways of connection
- Help people reconnect or connect in places or ways they haven’t before

Connection can help reduce PTSD

- Being with someone else during an earthquake is protective against PTSD

- Post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers in group treatment recovered at a significantly higher rate (88.3%) than those in individual treatment (31.3%).
Pathways to Connection
✓ Soul/spirit/core self/intuition
✓ Body/sensory experience
✓ Another being
✓ Community/groups
✓ Nature
✓ Art
✓ God/universe/higher power/bigger picture, meaning and purpose

Assessing the 7 pathways
✓ Discover the natural connections people have
✓ Help them reconnect where they have disconnected
✓ Help them find and create new connections

Connective Rituals
✓ Regularly repeated activities
✓ Reconnect one to self, others or something beyond
✓ Give one a sense of continuity
✓ Restoring previous rituals
✓ Creating new rituals

Four major approaches to resolving trauma briefly and respectfully
1. Connect the traumatized person to a future with possibilities
2. Validate/value and include all aspects of the person
3. Change the pattern of the post-traumatic problem
4. Reconnect the person in places where he or she has been disconnected (from self, others or the world)
THANK YOU

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