

Building a Trauma Informed Practice: Safety and Self-Regulation Friendly Teaching Process



Presented by

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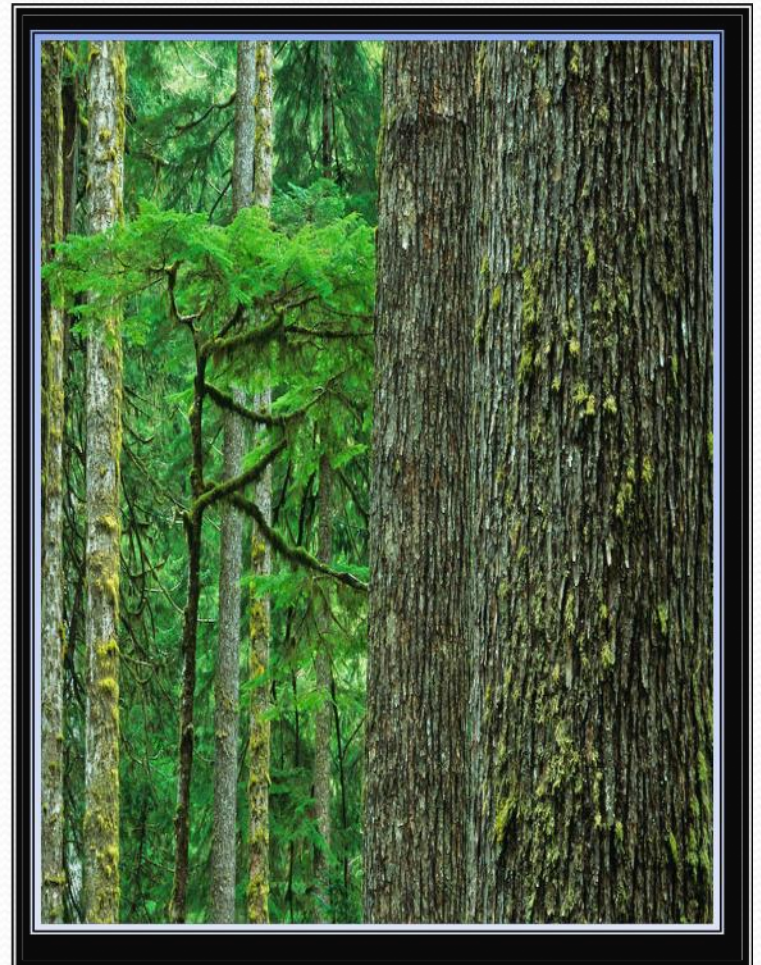
Agenda

Part I

- Opening and Introductions
- Overview of Trauma
- When Trauma Might Be In the Room

Part II

- How to Respond- 10 Key Point for Building a Safe Container
- Self-Regulation- Calming the Nervous System
- Questions/Closing



Awareness of Trauma



Group Discussion

How have you encountered trauma in your role as a teacher or presenter at the Ashram?

How did you recognize that trauma was in the room?

What did you notice about how trauma was carried in the person's body?

How was the experience of encountering trauma for you as someone teaching or leading a class?

Overview of Trauma

- Definition of trauma (Discussion)
- Universality of trauma
- Post-Traumatic Stress Response



What is Trauma?

- The word “trauma” is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless.
- Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experience. Unfortunately, this definition doesn’t always hold true. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience.
- Complex trauma refers to a type of trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively, usually over a period of time and within specific relationships and contexts. (Courtois, 2004)

Trauma Backlash

- Flashbacks
- Overwhelming emotion
- Paranoid fantasies
- Obsessive compulsive urges
- Self abusive behaviour
- Abuse of others
- Regression
- Physiological tissue memory
- Nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts
- Suicidal/homicidal feelings and urges
- Abreaction
- Time differentiation
- Dissociative Identity Disorder

Safety in Healing

Management of emotional and physiological symptoms

- Containers
- Clearing space
- Observation skills
- Understanding process
- Client centred



“The imprint of trauma doesn’t sit in the verbal, understanding, part of the brain, but in much deeper regions- amygdala, hippocampus, and brain stem- which are only marginally affected by thinking and cognition.”

-Bessel van der Kolk



Approaches to Trauma

- Symptoms can be seen as the body's attempt to heal (Briere & Levine)
- Posttraumatic Growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995)
- Addressing the lost time;
“the black hole of trauma”;
only one aspect of identity (Phillips, 2004)
- “Lymbic system therapy...
the only therapy that counts.”

(van der Kolk, 2011)



Approaches continued...

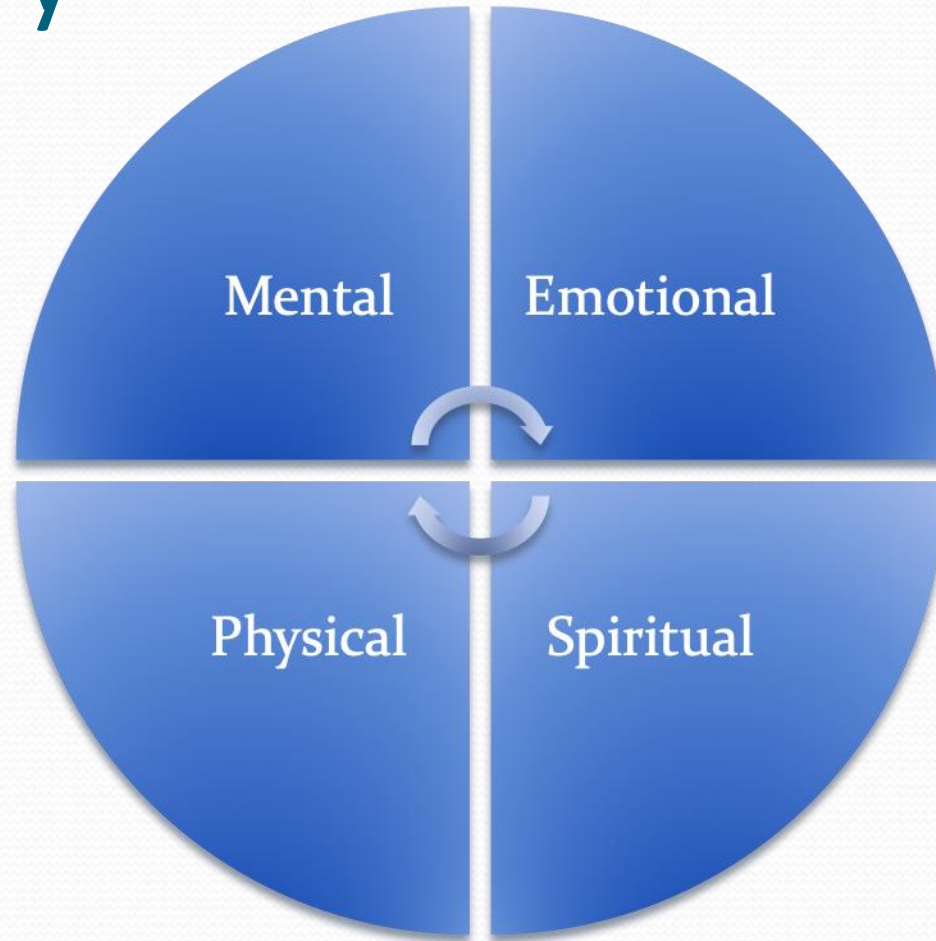
“Mainstream therapeutic approaches have failed because they don’t work in the implicit realm where much of the trauma memory is stored.” (van der Kolk)

- Focusing-Oriented Therapy
- Somatic Experiencing, Sensorimotor Therapy, Play Therapy, Gestalt, Hakomi, EMDR, IFS
- Yoga, Mindfulness, EFT

Creating Safety

- Knowing that it is likely that many of your students have experienced trauma and that the practices might bring this to the surface how do you build safety into the practice?

Wholistic Approach to Trauma Recovery



“Interdependence is at the centre of all things. The separation between us and nature is an illusion. The perception of separation is the result of ignorance that stems from the belief that a human being is unlike animal beings and rock beings and plants beings. Technology does not lift us above the web of life. We are not superior or independent of nature.”



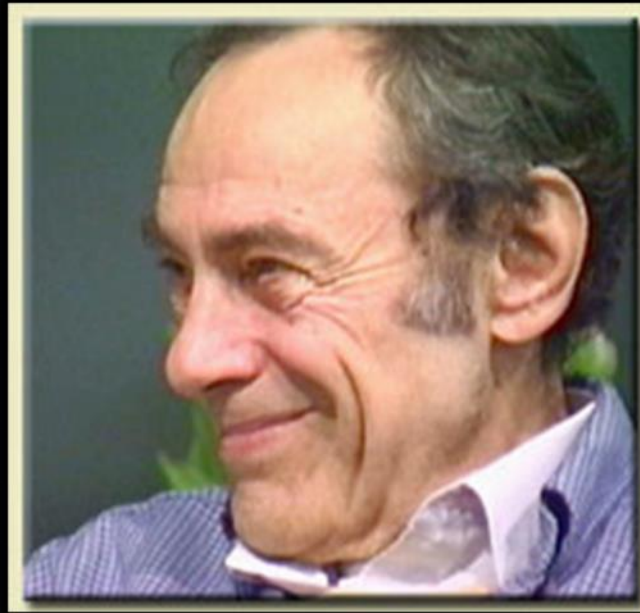
(McCormick 1997)

Community Healing

1. Core group that addresses healing needs, increasing healing activities.
2. Recognition of root causes of addictions or abuse.
3. Build capacity by providing training.
4. Shift from fixing problems to transforming systems.

(Vukic, Gregory, Martin-Misener & Etowa 2011)





“Your body knows the direction of healing and life...If you take time to listen to it through Focusing, it will give you the steps in the right direction.”

-Gendlin, 1981

Relationship with Process

1. Manage current life situations
2. Develop ability to feel feelings
3. Connect memory to affect
4. Restore self-esteem/ ego strength
5. Connect a whole life story
6. Develop important supports and relationships
7. Integrate life history into a meaningful and rich aspect of who one is

Group Discussion

How do you know when trauma is in the room?



When Trauma Might Be In The Room

1. Disconnected from body.
2. Coming into the body is a negative experience.
3. Difficulty pausing.
4. Over disclosing.
5. Being in a fog- falling asleep.
6. Overwhelming feelings.
7. Shame.
8. Body posture.
9. Voice tone.
10. Inner-critic...

Trauma Friendly Attitude

- The foundation of the work we are doing.
- A way of being.
- Conveys to the student that all feelings, thoughts, emotions, behaviours and experiences that are present are welcome.
- Friendly, curious, interested, and non-judgmental.
- All time zones, all people, all generations, all cultures, practices and traditions.
- Open and genuine.
- Creates the space which allows the relationship to develop.

How to Respond: 10 Key Points for Building a Safe Container

1. Trauma Friendly Attitude
2. Deliver material with the awareness of the possibility of triggering or re-traumatizing
3. Self-Awareness
4. Language
 - Beware of absolutes.
 - Slice it thin- small bits- keep it current.
5. Teach and Model Listening



6. Check Expectations
7. Cultural Sensitivity
8. Closing
9. All My Relations
10. Referrals
11. Be mindful of dual relationships



Contain and Distance

- What is containing trauma?
- How do we help our students contain?
- How can the practices you are teaching help your student to resource?
- What do you do when you're in a class or teaching a class and you recognize that someone is triggered?

Self-Regulation

- To deal with a stressor, the brain triggers a ‘gas pedal’ (sympathetic nervous system) to produce the energy needed; and then applies a ‘brake’ (parasympathetic system) in order to recover.
- The brain regulates the amount of energy that it expends on stress so that the resources are freed up for other bodily functions (i.e. digestion, cellular repair, maintaining a stable body temperature, and paying attention and learning).
- A person who is able to return to a baseline state of equilibrium is much more likely to learn, form healthy relationships and be self-motivated.

The Goal

- Create environments where our students can become self-aware and discover how they can achieve a state of calm, alert focus.
- The better a student is at staying calmly focused and alert, the better he/she integrates the diverse information coming in from the different senses, assimilates it, and sequences thoughts and actions.
- When motivation is internally generated, the brain produces neurochemicals that provide fuel for the brain and give it energy (Shanker, 2012).




Calming the Nervous System

Focusing Basics

- Clearing Space: distance- containment.
- Pacing: slowing down- speeding up- “and...and...”
- Client centered/therapist driven.

Grounding

- Progressive Relaxation.
- Diaphragmatic Breathing, “square breathing”, counting breath.
- Tapping.
- Resource Building.

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- 3 Things You See- 3 Things You Hear.
 - Personal Weather Report.
 - Mindfulness.
 - The Attention of Frog.

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