



Trauma-Informed Peer Support webinar series

Session 1: Trauma & Its Impact/ Cultural Considerations

September 9, 2014

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National Center for Trauma-Informed Care



The TIPS webinar series

Session 1: September 9, 2014

- Peer Support sound bite / Trauma & its Impact / Cultural Considerations

Session 2: September 16, 2014

- Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices

Session 3: September 23, 2014

- Applying Trauma-Informed Practices to Peer Support

PEER SUPPORT: A SOUND BITE

Peer Support

- Some organizations define it as a “helping relationship” like the top-down roles of professionals
- We define it as a flexible approach to building healing relationships among equals, based on a core set of values and principles.

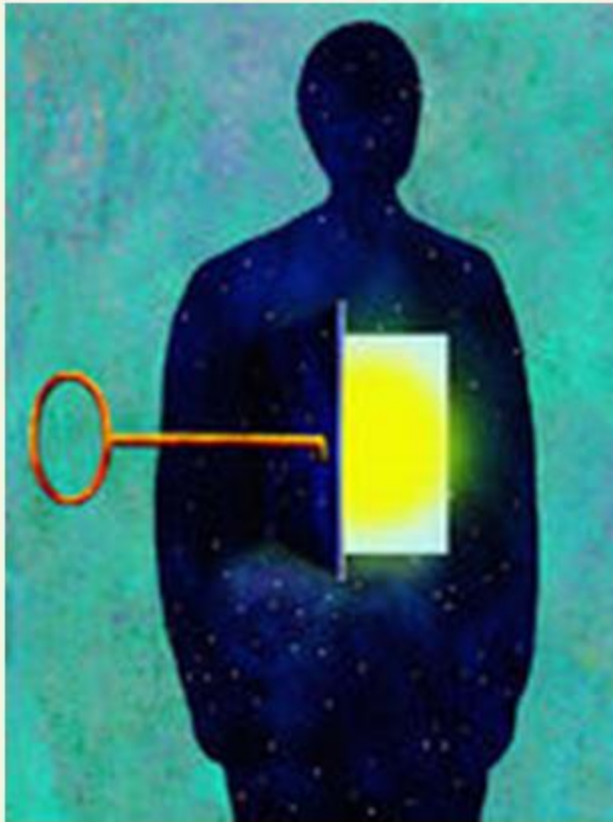
What is Peer Support?

A system of giving and receiving help in relationship with others with shared experience, based on values of:

- Respect
- Shared responsibility
- Mutual agreement of what is helpful

- Shery Mead, founder
Intentional Peer Support

Practices based on the proven idea that people who share common experiences:



- Are best able to understand and empathize with each other
- Can offer each other the benefit of what they've learned

Self-Awareness



“In the thick of this work, we often forget about our own needs until they are so big we can no longer meet them in simple ways.”

- Shery Mead

Self-care is essential!

Defining Trauma

Extreme stress brought on by shocking or unexpected circumstances or events **that overwhelm a person's ability to cope.**

- Results in feelings of helplessness, extreme fear and horror.
- Threats are perceived as psychological and/or bodily violation, threat of death, or serious injury to self or a loved one.
- The event may be witnessed or experienced directly

SAMHSA's Trauma-informed Approaches Framework

The Three Es:

- **Events** and circumstances cause trauma.
- The person's **Experience** of these events determines if the event is traumatic.
- The **Effects** of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional or spiritual consequences.

Some Potential Sources of Trauma

- Childhood sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment
- Rape, sexual assault, trafficking
- Domestic violence; experiencing/witnessing other violent crime
- Catastrophic injury or illness, death, loss, grief
- Institutional abuse and neglect
- Abuse using religion
- War/terrorism/ combat
- Community and school violence, bullying
- Hate crimes
- Cultural dislocation or sudden loss, historical/ generational targeted violence
- Chronic stressors like racism, poverty
- Natural disasters
- Invasive medical procedures
- Any misuse of power by one person over another

Talking About Trauma

- If, how, and when a person chooses to talk about experiences is personal
- Some may not label what happened as “trauma”
- Be aware of the words you use and be prepared that other’s words may be different

Trauma Affects Development

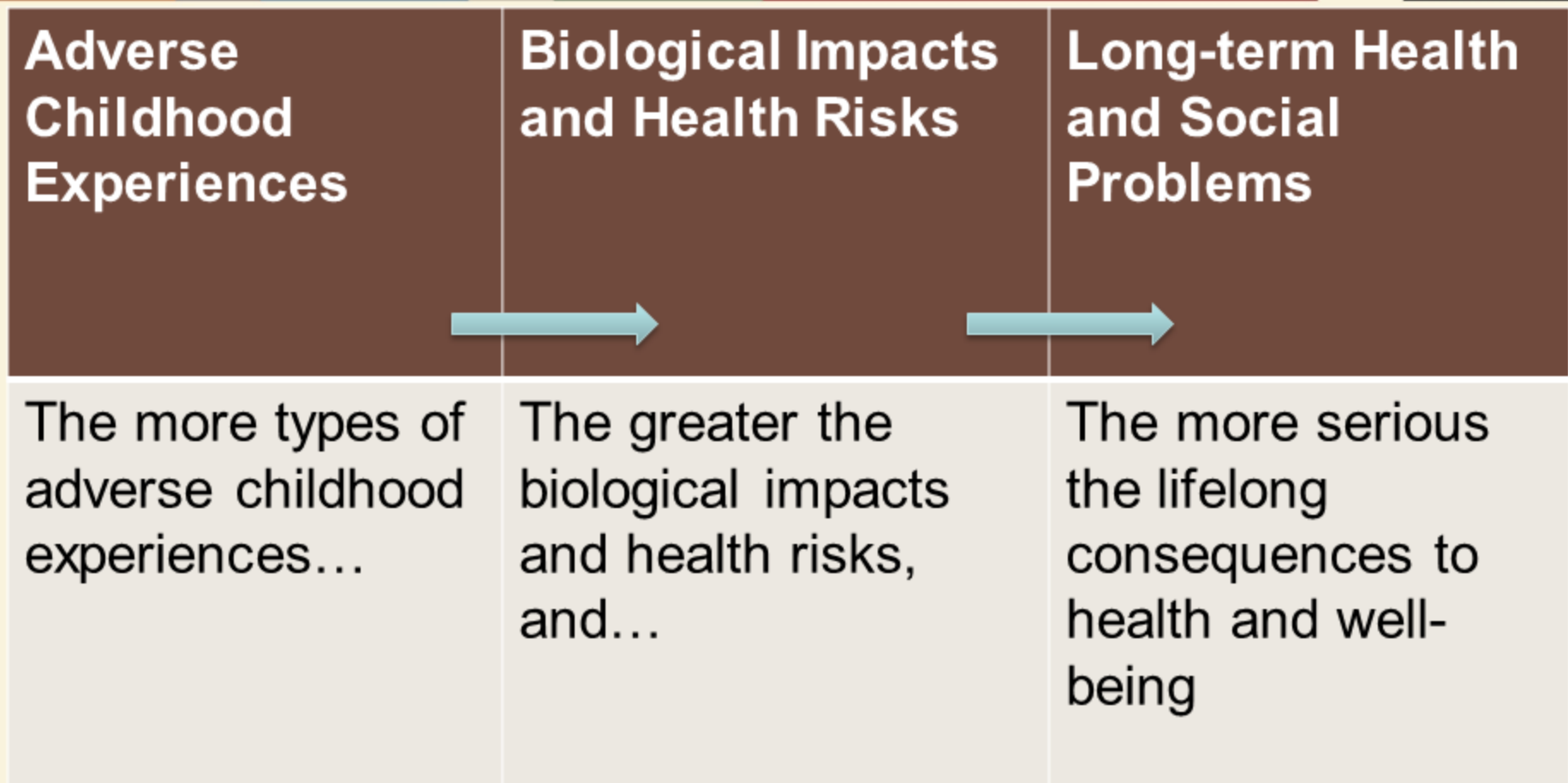
Early experiences, especially traumatic ones, shape human development.

We develop ways to cope, survive, and defend ourselves against deep and enduring wounds.

Flight, Fight, or Freeze

- The brain signals the body to respond to a perceived threat and the body prepares
- Ordinarily, when the threat is gone, the body returns to “baseline”
- If an ongoing threat is perceived, the body doesn't return to baseline, remains prepared for threat, resulting in a “trauma response”
- The switch is stuck in the “on” position

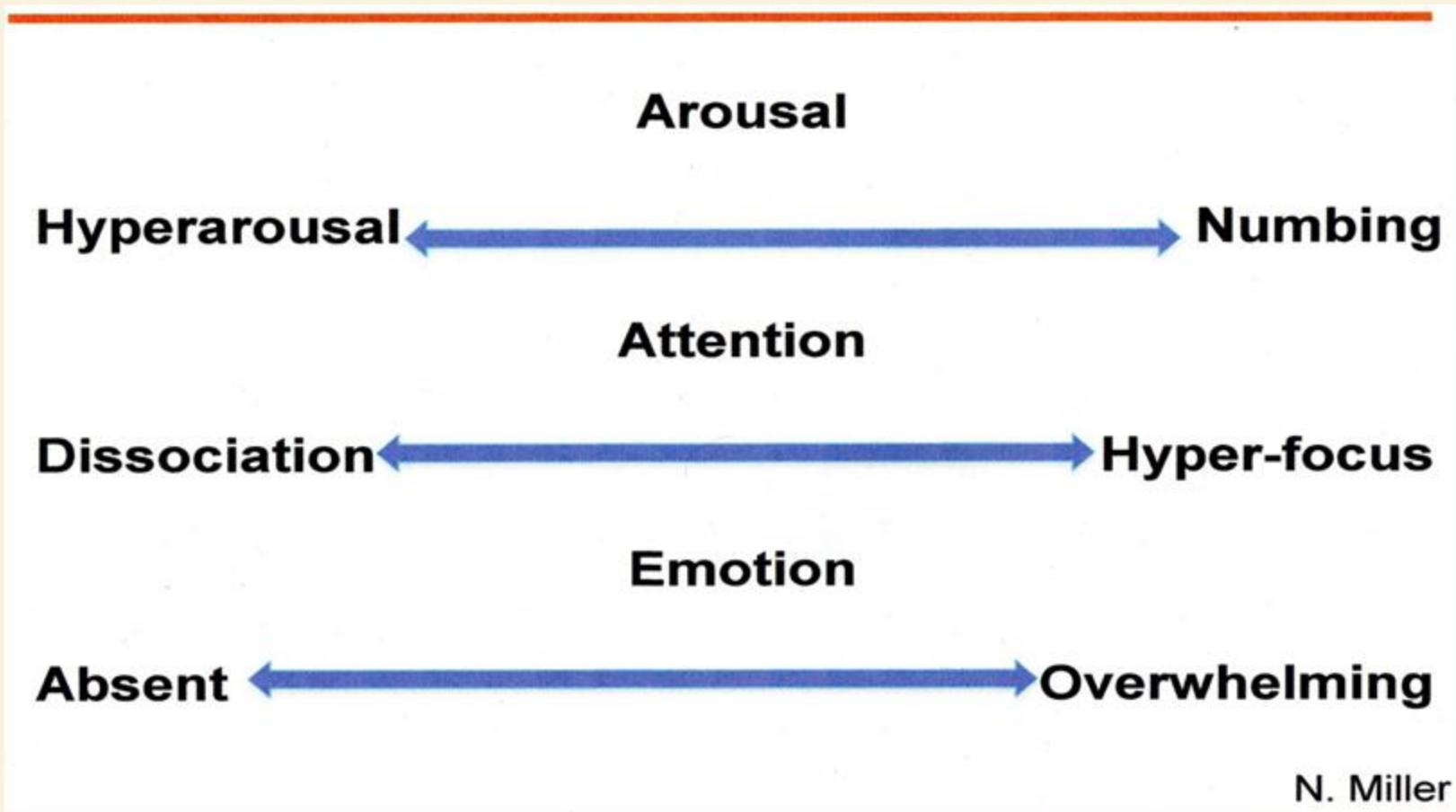
Trauma Linked to Health Challenges Over the Lifespan



Felitti, V.J., Anda, R. F., et. al., 1998

Trauma Can Lead to Changes

People may move between extremes



N. Miller

Factors That May Intensify Trauma

- The earlier in life trauma occurs, the more severe the likely long-term effects
- Deliberate violence is particularly damaging, especially when inflicted by trusted caregivers
- Violence - compounded by betrayal, silence, blame, or shame - impacts the ability to form intimate relationships

Impact of Trauma

- Survivors may be responding to the present through the lenses of their past
- Things survivors do to cope may be misinterpreted by staff as “non-compliance”
- Can lead to punitive reactions by staff to people who are struggling with trauma responses
- Often, people are unaware that their challenges are related to trauma

Trauma Disconnects. It can...

- Leave people feeling powerless
- Have lasting effects on the ability to trust others and form intimate relationships
- Impact relationships with self, others, communities, and environment
- Create distance between people

Trauma is Widespread

- Studies show that 90%+ of people with psychiatric diagnoses are trauma survivors ¹
- Similar rates among people with histories of substance abuse, foster care placement, homelessness, and incarceration ^{2,3,4,5}
- Nearly 100% of incarcerated women are trauma survivors ⁶
- Both staff and people using services may be trauma survivors

¹ Mueser et al, 2004; ² Goodman et al, 1997; ³ Buhrich et al, 2006; ⁴ Moncrieff et al, 1996; ⁵ Greeson et al, 2011; ⁶ Wu et al, 2011.

Healing is Possible

Healing from trauma, like healing from a physical injury, is a natural human process.

- Richard Mollica, 2006

Healing From Trauma Requires

- Gaining a sense of control over one's life and one's environment
- Finding/maintaining a sense of safety
- Developing the ability to trust self & others
- Reconnecting with others



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

*We don't see things as they are,
we see things as we are.*

– Anais Nin

What is Culture?

The shared values, traditions, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people that are *unified by* race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religious beliefs, spirituality, socioeconomic status, social class, sexual orientation, politics, gender, age, disability, or any *other cohesive group variable*.

- Singh, 1998

Cultural Considerations

Self Identity

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Language
- Family
- Beliefs about capabilities
- History
- Country where born

Belonging and Participation

- Spirituality
- Education
- literacy
- Incarceration
- Military
- Employment/Income
- Where you live
- Immigration status
- Illness/wellness
- Parenting

Cultural Considerations

Self Identity

Belonging and Participation

TRAUMA

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Culture Counts

- Culture influences:
 - the experience of trauma
 - the meaning people make of what has happened
 - how and if people express their pain
- One's cultural experience affects beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes toward others
- Assumptions made about others may become barriers to effective support

No Assumptions

- Every conversation can be a cross-cultural conversation
- We may not know the source of someone's joy, pride, or pain
- We do not know how oppression/trauma have impacted a person's life
- We do not know what self-protecting coping strategies people need to use



**BE CURIOUS,
BE EMPATHETIC,
BE FLEXIBLE**

Next webinar in the TIPS series

Session 2: September 16, 2014

Peer Support Basics /
Trauma-informed Practices



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Session 2: Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices

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Leah Harris & Darby Penney
National Center for Trauma-Informed Care



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Session 1: September 9, 2014 : Intro to Peer Support/
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PEER SUPPORT BASICS

What is Peer Support?

- Some organizations define it as a “helping relationship” like the top-down roles of professionals
- We define it as a flexible approach to building healing relationships among equals, based on a core set of values & principles.

Peer Support is NOT

- A “program model”
- Focused on diagnoses or deficits
- About “helping” in a top-down way
- Being a “counselor”
- Pressuring people to comply with treatment
- Monitoring people’s behavior

Peer support staff are NOT:

- Junior case managers
- Medication enforcers
- The “conscience” of an agency



So what IS Peer Support?



- A natural human response to shared difficulty
- People with shared experiences come together to learn and grow

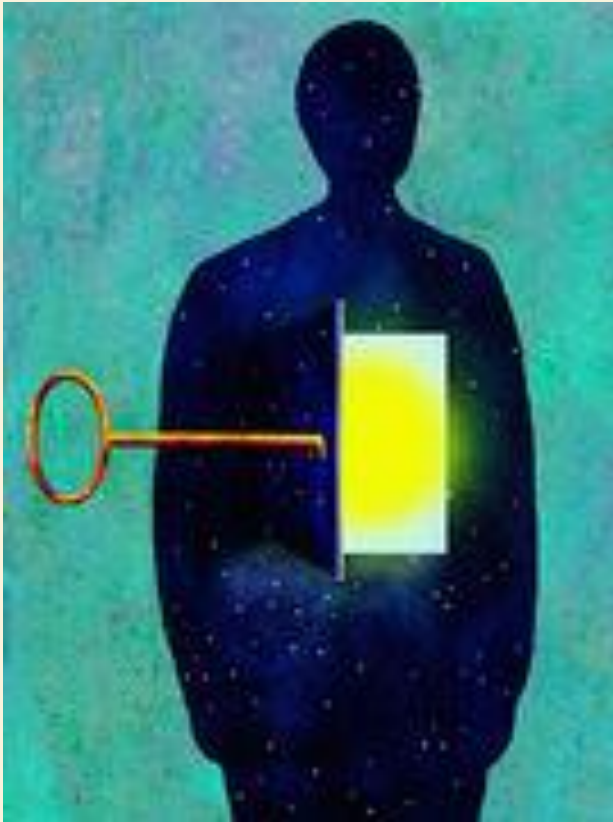
What is Peer Support?

A system of giving & receiving help in relationship with others with shared experience, based on values of:

- Respect
- Shared responsibility
- Mutual agreement of what is helpful

- Shery Mead, founder, Intentional Peer Support

Practices based on the proven idea that people who share common experiences:



- Are best able to understand and empathize with each other
- Can offer each other the benefit of what they've learned

Peer Support

is a unique discipline
with its own
values and
principles



Principles of Peer Support

Peer support is voluntary

- Cannot be mandated: people enter peer support relationships because they're interested in connection
- Peer support is for people who **want** it rather than people who “need” it.

Principles of Peer Support

Peer Support is Non-judgmental

- A non-assessing, non-professional relationship
- Awareness of own biases and privilege
- Honest, direct, but respectful communication; open to other views

Principles of Peer Support

Respecting one another

- Value differences & unique abilities
- Keep people’s confidences
- Respect people’s right to make their own decisions, even “wrong” ones

Principles of Peer Support

Reciprocity

- The importance of give and take
- Re-claiming “help” as a natural process between two or more people
- No one is more “recovered” than another

Principles of Peer Support

Mutual responsibility

- Each person takes responsibility for their actions
- Negotiation of “responsibility”
- Shared power
- It’s not your job to fix anyone!

Principles of Peer Support

Integrity

- Believing in one another
- Holding hope for each other
- Building relationships that focus on one another's well-being
- Confidentiality



TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

SAMHSA's Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, historical and gender issues

Non Trauma-informed Approaches


- Recreate the fear and helplessness of the original trauma
- Cause distrust, sadness, anger, frustration and confusion
- Survivor reactions are seen as “symptoms” which increases the rationale for “management” and potential for coercion

Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Based on the universal expectation that trauma has occurred
- Focused on understanding “What happened to you?” not “What’s wrong with you?”
- Seek to understand the meaning people make of their experiences.

Trauma-Informed Approaches


- All staff and people who use services are educated about trauma
- Incorporate knowledge about trauma in all aspects of service delivery
- Minimize revictimization – “do no more harm”
- Take particular care to create a welcoming environment



Trauma survivors often have sensitive “radar” for detecting dishonesty and good reasons to be sensitive to misuse of power and authority.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Strive to be culturally responsive
- Focus on resilience, self-healing, mutual support, and empowerment
- Ensure voice, safety, autonomy, choice, trustworthiness, and the elimination of coercion
- Trauma treatment is different: specific techniques to treat manifestations of trauma (works best in a trauma-informed setting)



Those working with survivors “have a tendency to deal with their frustration by retaliating in ways that often uncannily repeat the earlier trauma.”

- Basel van der Kolk, 2003

What Does Help Look Like?

Not Trauma-Informed

- Needs are defined by staff
- Safety is defined as risk management
- The helper decides what help looks like
- Relationships based on problem-solving and accessing resources
- Help is top-down and authoritarian

Trauma-Informed

- Needs are identified by survivor
- Safety defined by each survivor
- Survivors choose the help they want
- Relationships are based on autonomy and connection
- Help is collaborative and responsive

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Session 3: September 23, 2014

Applying Trauma-Informed Practices to Peer Support



Trauma-Informed Peer Support webinar series

Session 3: Applying Trauma-Informed Approaches to Peer Support

September 23, 2014

Darby Penney & Michael Skinner
National Center for Trauma-Informed Care



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TRAUMA-INFORMED PEER SUPPORT

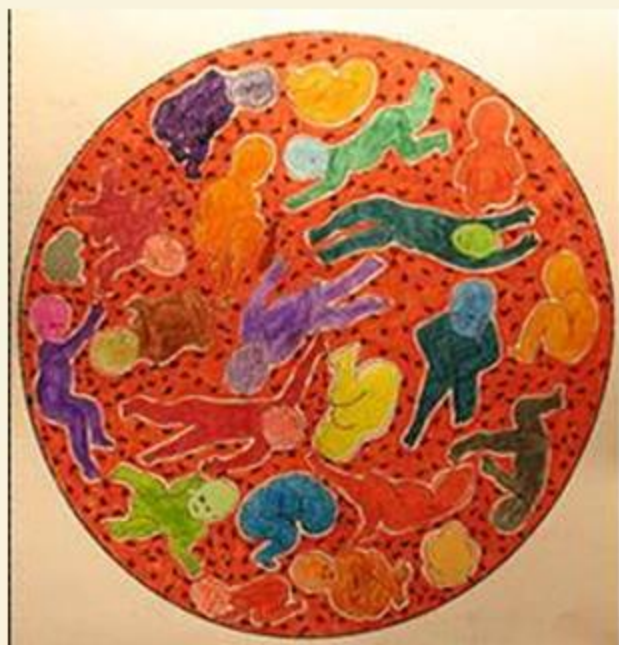
Effective Peer Support

Counters the impact of trauma:

- Invalidation of personal reality
- Mistrust/alienation
- Loss of power and control
- Helplessness/hopelessness
- Voicelessness
- Feeling dominated, controlled, manipulated
- Violation of personal boundaries and sense of safety

Trauma-Informed Peer Support

- Sees coping strategies, not “symptoms”
- Helps survivors make sense of how they are coping and surviving
- Creates a safe space to consider new coping strategies



Conflicting Definitions of “Safety”

- For people who use services, “safety” generally means maximizing control over their own lives
- For providers, “safety” generally means maximizing control over the service environment and minimizing risk

Mutuality

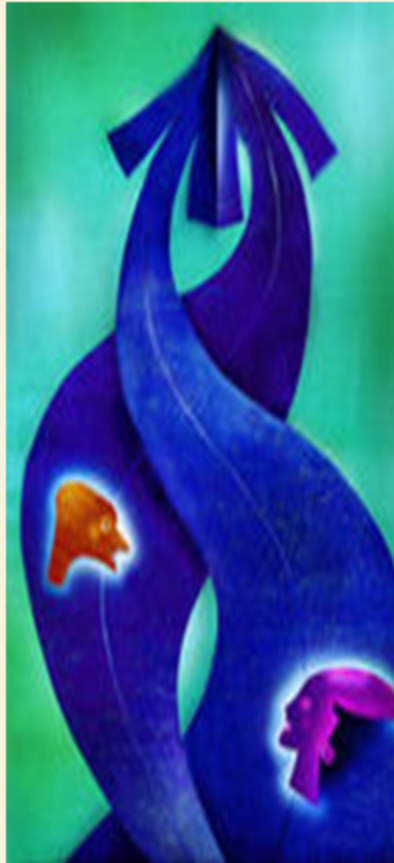
There are no static roles of “helper” and “helpee” ...reciprocity is the key to building natural connections.

- Shery Mead

Power Dynamics

- If we're not alert to the use of power, peer support relationships may unintentionally recreate the power dynamics of the original trauma
- This is an issue among staff and between managers and staff too
- Being mindful of peer support principles can help address this

What gets in the way of sharing power?



- Lack of role clarity
- Struggling to manage strong emotions
- Preconceived attitudes
- Fear, discomfort, misunderstanding

What gets in the way of sharing power?

- How “safety” is defined and used
- The desire to manage others’ behavior, particularly if viewed as harmful; i.e., self-injury



What is Self-Injury ?

- The intentional injuring of one's body as a means of coping with severe emotional and/or psychic stressors
- The primary purpose is to provide a way of coping with what feels intolerable.
- Ruta Mazelis

What are the dynamics?

- Evolves as a way to cope with trauma
- Is a response to distress, past and/or present
- Has meaning for each survivor, such as:
 - Regaining control
 - Asserting autonomy
 - Relief of emotional pain

A Shift in Thinking

FROM

Seeing the person as
engaging in
meaningless,
frustrating, and
dangerous behavior

TO

Understanding self-
harm as an expression
of profound pain which
has meaning for the
person

IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO FIX ANYONE

Maintaining Your Integrity

- Be transparent in your relationships
- Let people you support know up front the limits of your relationship
- Don't assume the people you work with know what peer support is: teach them, & they can offer each other peer support



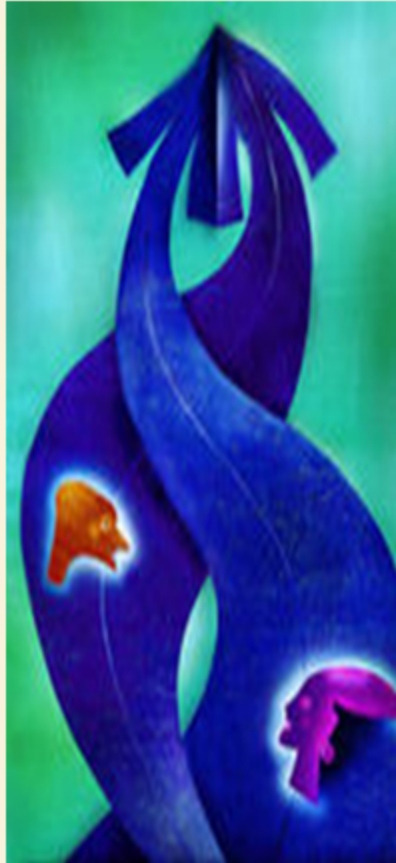
PERSONAL NARRATIVES

Personal Narratives Can:

- Help organize one's experience, help make sense of what has taken place
- Lay the groundwork for survivors to develop hope about the future
- Can also be told through talking, music, dance or movement, drumming, art, and writing



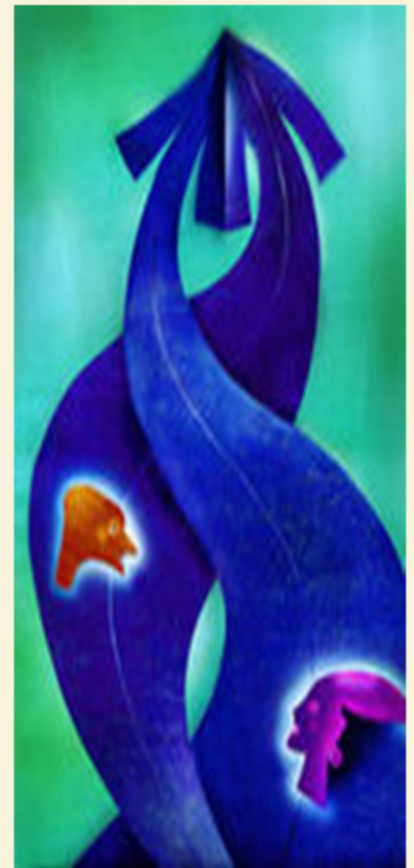
Trauma Narratives May Include...



- All or part of the traumatic events
- The impact on one's life
- The meaning one has made out of what happened
- Beliefs about who one is and who one is capable of becoming

What Creates Distance?

- Narratives that are difficult to listen to
- Competing trauma narratives
- Telling the same narrative over and over again
- Narratives told through the language of behavior (i.e., self-injury)
- Talking about the taboo



Is Telling Necessary for Healing?

People must be supported if they choose NOT to share their experience

- Not everyone can or wants to tell
- There may be cultural constraints on self-disclosure
- It may be too painful
- It may be currently unsafe

Support Narrative Sharing



- Ask if the person wants to share their experiences
- Offer opportunities and materials to support different ways of expressing the narrative
- Listen for meaning



RECLAIMING POWER THROUGH SOCIAL ACTION

The Personal is Political

All violence focuses on the unfair distribution of power and the abuse of this power by the powerful against the helpless. The solutions to these problems are not individual solutions; they require political solutions.

- *Sandra Bloom*

Reclaiming Power Through Social Action

- Trauma often leaves survivors feeling both powerless and full of rage
- Taking social action can be:
 - a positive act of healing
 - a productive way to channel anger
 - a way for survivors to reclaim a sense of purpose and personal power

Social action can include

- Organizing around a common goal
- Giving witness testimony
- Challenging injustice



Social action can include



- Working to change harmful policies & practices
- Creating supportive alternatives

Questions/ Discussion

