PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Survivors of Disaster
PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

• EARLY PERSPECTIVES
• ----COMBAT RELATED DISORDER
• ----WEAKNESS VS. PHYSICAL INJURY
SIGMUND FREUD and the NEO-FREUDIANS

- UNCONSCIOUS
- DEFENSE MECHANISMS
  - REPRESSSION
  - SUPRESSION
  - FUGUE
  - IDENTIFICATION
  - RATIONALIZATION
EARLY NEURO-BIOLOGICAL MODELS

- **Fight or Flight Model**
  - Walter Cannon 1914

- **Alarm and Resistance**
  - Hans Selye 1936
1940-1950’S PENFIELD

- BRAIN DYNAMICS
- STORAGE AND IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR
1960-1970'S
THEODORE BENSON

- AUTONOMIC RESPONSE TO STRESS
- REVERSAL OF STRESS RESPONSE
- RELAXATION RESPONSE
1990-2000’s
BRUCE PERRY

- BIOCHEMISTRY OF TRAUMA
- PARADIGM OF BRAIN INJURY
- FREEZE-WITHDRAW MECHANISM
- CHILD TRAUMA ACADEMY
TRAUMATIC STRESS
KEY INGREDIENTS

- INTENSITY
- POTENTIAL FOR HARM
- FEAR/TERROR
- CONTROL
- VISUAL IMAGES
- POTENTIAL
- FRAME
CLUSTERS OF PTSD SYMPTOMS
INTRUSIVE RECOLLECTIONS

• DREAMS
• FLASHBACKS
• THOUGHTS
PERSISTENT AVOIDANCE

- CUES
- SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES
- PROTECTION
EMOTIONAL NUMBING

• SPECIFIC AND GENERAL
PERSISTENT AROUSAL

- HYPER-VIGILANCE
- INCREASED STARTLE RESPONSE
- SLEEP DIFFICULTIES
- IRRITABILITY
- ANXIETY
- PHYSIOLOGICAL HYPERACTIVITY
- COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT
UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN RESPONSE TO TRAUMA
Understanding How the Brain Works

- Experience
- Emotion
- Memory
- Body Control
TWO DESCRIPTIONS....

- Amazing
- Wonderful
The Amazing Capacity

- **Personal Computer**
  - 100 Billion Bytes (100 GB)
- **Library of Congress (U.S.)**
  - 32 Trillion Bytes
- **Human Brain**
  - 1000 Trillion Synapses
Many Human Differences

- Culture
- History
- Size and Color
- Language and Expression
We all have the same brain function!

- Memory
- Emotion
- Thought
- Autonomic Response
A Brief Exploration of Brain Function (and Dysfunction)

• Memory
• Automatic Sequencing
The Planets in Our Solar System

- Jupiter
- Venus
- Uranus
- Earth
- Mars
- Neptune
- Mercury
- Pluto
- Saturn
RESPONDING TO ALARM- THE FIGHT/FLIGHT RESPONSE

- Reticular Activating System
  - Interactive Bio-Chemical Activities
  - Autonomic Nervous System
  - Prepares body for fight/flight
Hippocampus

- Interface between lower cephalic areas and cortex
- Major role in memory
- Major role in autonomic sequencing
Locus Coeruleus (LC) and Ventral Tegmental Nucleus (VTN)

- Initiating maintaining and mobilizing the total body response
- Sends chemical messages (instructions) to all major brain regions
- Plays a major role in determining VALUE of incoming sensory data
- Increases activity for novel or threatening information
Amygdala

- Processing, interpreting, and integrating emotional functioning
- Determines the emotional value of stimuli
- Orchestrates the response by sending messages to various brain regions
- Storage or imprint becomes an emotion and subsequently a memory
Cortex

- Subjective interpretation
- Cognitive sequencing
- Connected to the Amygdala
Persistence

- Memory includes sensory message and sequence
- Trauma “imprints” the sequence...especially with the developing brain
- Repetitive threat sensitizes the sequence
FREEZE/WITHDRAWAL RESPONSE

- DEFEAT
- DISSOCIATION
- DIFFERENT MECHANISM
- EMOTIONAL MEMORY
SPECIAL CASES

- CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS
KEY RESPONSES OF CHILDREN

- FEAR
  - Unknown
  - Future
  - Safety

- ALERT

- HYPER-VIGILANCE and ACTIVITY

- WITHDRAW/AVOIDANCE/DISSOCIATIVE STATE

- DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY
DEVELOPMENT DEPENDENT RESPONSES

• INFANTS
  – Linked to Mother
  – Excessive Crying, Eating, Sleeping
  – Apathy Failure to Thrive
DEVELOPMENT DEPENDENT RESPONSES

• Toddlers
  – Aggression
  – Avoidance
  – Regressive Behavior
  – Withdrawal and Dissociation
  – Repetition
DEVELOPMENT DEPENDENT RESPONSES

• School Age Children
  – Anxiety and Depression
  – Hyper-vigilance
  – Loss of Interest
  – Fear (Old and New)
  – Impaired Learning
DEVELOPMENT DEPENDENT RESPONSES

• Adolescents
  – Identity Disorders
  – Eating Disorders
  – Acting Out
  – Substance Abuse
  – Numbing and Hypo-responsiveness
  – Self-Mutilization
Symptom Clusters

- Re-Enactment of traumatic event in play, dreams, or behavior
- Avoidance of cues associated with the event or general withdrawal
- Physiological hyperactivity
  - Hyper vigilance
  - Sleep problems
  - Attention deficits
  - Cardiovascular reactivity
CRITICAL INCIDENT DE-BRIEFING
Community Intervention

- Safety
- Return To Normal
- Re-Building Community (Stronger)
- Memorials
CRITICAL INCIDENT DE-BRIEFING

- BRIEF (1-3 SESSIONS)
- NON-CLINICAL
CID PROCESS

• INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION
  – NO THERAPY OR DIAGNOSIS
  – NO RECORDS
  – NO BAGGAGE
  – REQUIRED ACROSS RESPONDER ORGANIZATIONS
  – PREVENTATIVE
ELICITING FACTS

• WHAT HAPPENED
• SEQUENCE
• INVOLVEMENT
• SMALL DETAILS
ELICITING THOUGHTS

- THOUGHTS DURING THE EVENT
- THOUGHTS NOW
- WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED
- NONSENSE THOUGHTS
ELICITING FEELINGS

- WORST THING
- FEELINGS AT SAFE ENVIRONMENT
- FEELINGS NOW
- VENTILATION
- SOMETHING OR NOTHING
APPLICATION

- PERSONAL IMPACT OF THE TRAUMA
- LEARNING
- MAKING SENSE OUT OF RANDOMNESS
- SPIRITUAL APPLICATION
TERMINATION

- LENGTH
- EDUCATION
- REFERRAL
- FOLLOW-UP
COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Disorganization
- Safety Issues
- Destruction of Norms and Customs
- Maslow’s Heirarchy
- Leaders and Heroes Emerge
- Corruption
- Anomie
Community Initiatives

- Restore Normality
- Reduce Anomie
- Re-establish Psychological Community
- Re-Establish Rituals and Norms
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