

# Integrated Counseling: Managing the Manifestation of Trauma in the Corporate Environment

June 10, 2025



# Agenda



Understanding Trauma and Its Effects



Trauma in the Corporate Environment



Trauma-Informed Approaches in Corporate Settings



Practical Tools for Corporate Counsel



Q&A Session



# TRIGGER WARNING

**Some of the topics discussed during this presentation may bring up intense feelings. Please do what you need to do to take care of yourself.**

# Understanding Trauma and Its Effects

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# Trauma



# What is trauma?

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An event or circumstance resulting in: physical harm, emotional harm, and/or life-threatening harm.

# Impact of Trauma on Mind and Body

Impacts brain functioning

Release of adrenaline and cortisol

Impact is:

- “Fight, flight, or freeze” part of the brain is activated
- Responsible for non-verbal emotion
- Sensory imprints
- Traumatic experiences are remembered and relived out of order and without context or meaning (flashbacks)



# Trauma in the Corporate Environment





## **Signs of trauma manifestation in employees are typically Behavioral or Performance-related**

When it is appropriate to ask employee for explanation of perceived trauma:

- Outbursts/aggressive response/strange behavior that doesn't make sense
- Performance that is uncharacteristic and progressively disruptive or negatively impacting the business

## Effects of trauma during crisis and workplace conflict

- Miscommunication and misunderstanding
  - Communication is key, especially in developing a trusting relationship where an employee feels valued and able to bring their full self to work.
- Workplace dynamics and relationships
  - Domestic violence or other indirect issues may impact other colleagues and could put others in harm's way. This is why it is important to engage others in assisting you (like HR, ER and/or Security)

# Trauma-Informed Approach

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## What is a Trauma- Informed Approach?

Individualized practice approach

Informed by client's trauma

Supportive

Flexible

Strives to avoid re-traumatization

# What Does That Mean?

- Struggle to maintain a linear timeline of events
- Not remember or be confused about names, dates, places, but MAY remember what things looked like (ask things like: Was it dark or light? Warm or cold?)



## Personal Reflections

Personal trauma  
triggers

Unconscious bias

Cultural differences

Power differential

# Manifestations of Trauma

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Difficulty trusting others	Anger	Lack of trust in one's own judgement
Anxiety attacks	Shame and embarrassment	Traumatic Brain Injury
Depression	Self-blaming	Low self-esteem
Nightmares/lack of sleep	Trauma-bonding	Drug and alcohol use

## Manifestations of Trauma

**Physical, Relational, Psychological**



# Manifestations of Trauma

## Flooding

- Because trauma memories are not processed in the thinking part of the brain, they can become conflated.
- One traumatic memory may bring up all related traumatic memories at once.

## Result

- Survivor moves back and forth between different traumatic experiences
- Survivor construct a chronological narrative
- Unable to stop themselves from talking
- Possible flashbacks

# Manifestations of Trauma

## Dissociation

- Survival mechanism
- Process of disconnecting from the present (the thoughts and feelings coming up in the interview) to diminish pain

## Result

- Survivor may not be able to access traumatic material for several interview sessions
- Survivor may dissociate during interview and not remember content of discussion in later interviews

# Manifestations of Trauma

## Minimization

- Survival mechanism
- Diminish or deny the intensity of traumatic events
- Disconnects emotional response from content

## Result

- Minimize harm ("not as bad as it could be") or omit important traumatic events
- Flat affect; no emotion, no tears

# Setting the Stage: Creating a Safe Space





## Trauma-Informed Interviewing

- Non-judgmental and non-victim blaming questions
- Use context to build a timeline
- Do not force details
- Use open-ended questions
- Ask only what you need to know
- Be careful with labeling

# Discussing Sensitive Topics

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# Discussing Sensitive Topics



Provide warning before  
discussing a difficult topic



Actively Listen



Monitor reactions of those  
in the room



Become comfortable with  
silence



# Strategies for addressing employee performance issues



Creating a supportive environment



Communication techniques during sensitive discussions



Guidance on handling specific situations involving trauma



# Practical Tools for Corporate Counsel



# Practical Tools for Corporate Counsel



## **Techniques to minimize risk and liability**

Security briefings, Do Not Admit orders, exposure assessments, access to security vendors and liaise with local law enforcement where necessary



## **Resources for further education and support**

EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for free counseling/therapy sessions, online resources, etc. and/or guidance on how to get assistance navigating their medical insurance, if they have insurance through the company



## **Ensuring the Safety of the employee and for other employees**

# Questions?

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