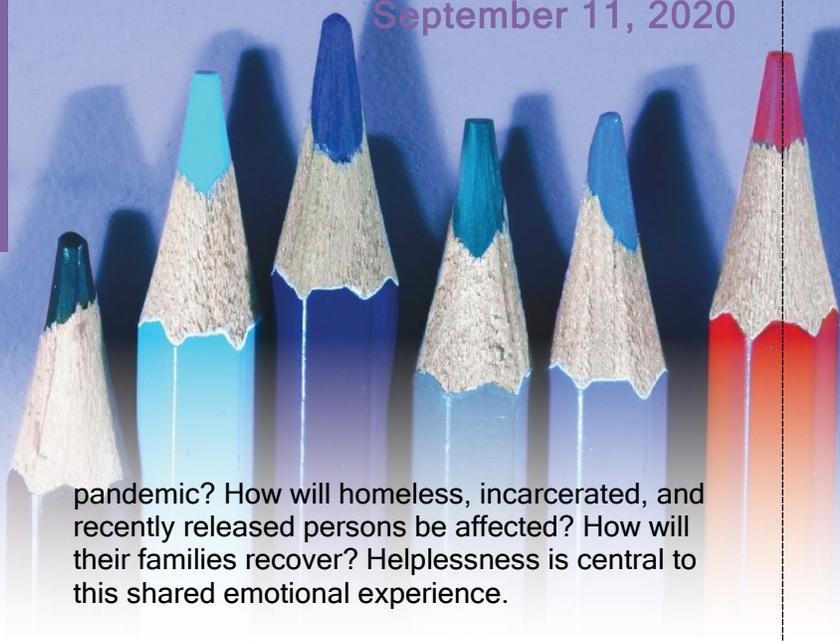


RELENTLESS TRAUMA: HOW TO SERVE (AND BE SERVED) IN A CLIMATE OF ELEVATED PERSONAL, VICARIOUS, AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA.

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OVERVIEW

This presentation is for staff who acknowledge that health and wellness is a social justice issue. Unlike any other time in our lives, we've been forced to collectively experience a pandemic and the exposure of systemic racial injustices; the dual pandemic, at the same time. Relentless stressful events can cause emotional and psychological trauma. The stressful impact on the body also impacts the brain. What may have been our normal avenues of relief, or self-care, were unattainable and many of us were put in tight positions. Many of us were expected to work after seeing people look like us be violated, hurt, or die by violence or complications related to Covid-19. What internal and external tools can we access during times like this? 2020, has not been kind to many of us, but today we choose to own what we can control and what we cannot control.

pandemic? How will homeless, incarcerated, and recently released persons be affected? How will their families recover? Helplessness is central to this shared emotional experience.

We often get asked the question, "how are you doing?" Without hesitating many of us reply, "good," but are we good? Are we managing everything well? Or, have we added stress to our bodies that will do us a disservice in the long run? If you've taken the *Trauma Informed Customer Service Training*, you understand that the traumas we experience impact the brain, our relationships with others, and our views of ourselves and the world. Not, only does trauma impact the brain, it impacts our limbic system, organs and our brain-gut axis, particularly if untreated. It impacts how our body communicates. Our limbic system not only is the part of the brain that deals with emotions and memory, it regulates the functioning of the autonomic nervous system. An unbalanced nervous system blocks our capacity for flexible, adaptive, stable functioning. I may be surviving, because the brain is self-protective, but I may not be thriving.

"I Imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain." - James Baldwin

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

A *collective trauma* refers to the psychological upheaval that is shared by a group of people who all experience an event. So, I ask us to consider: What's the long-term collective trauma of the

"In order to empathize with someone's experience you must be willing to believe the as they see it and not how you imagine their experience to be." - Brene Brown

SYSTEMS IMPACTING SYSTEMS

In D.C. we know that systems impact systems and the collective trauma staff and consumers, alike, are experiencing exposes the flaws in our systems, and how those flaws impact the mind, body, and relationships of how we practice and who we serve. Keep in mind the body is a system too and relies on different parts to communicate effectively in order for the individual to be well. For ourselves, and the people we serve, we can't expect to treat one part of the body and expect the other parts to follow suit. Each bodily system impacts the other. In an effort to treat the whole person, we must look at the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being in an effort to get them to thrive.

TIC AND THE NEED FOR MORE INTEGRATED APPROACHES

The Trauma Informed Care (TIC) approach recognizes the unique opportunity each site has in creating trauma-informed approaches to meet the needs of their consumers. When a system, program, or organization is truly trauma informed it realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths to recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in consumers, families and staff; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into its development of policies, procedures and practices. It also seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. Barriers to health equity are often systemic in nature and rooted in trauma caused by intersecting systems of oppression.

Traditional modalities of treatment may not be working as well as they could on the communities we serve. Integrated methods, that promote brain integration, understanding epigenetics, community supports, and the development of internal assets may be more impactful. For example, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), is a very popular modality used in agencies across the city and the nation. CBT works best when an individual is able to set clear goals, and "buys in" to the benefits of the process. Yet, distorted thinking and dissociation have presented with some of the consumers we serve, which make CBT challenging for an individual to identify problems in thinking and their ability to reframe their thoughts. Even CBT experts, acknowledge that community and social

supports are a very powerful ingredient in wellness, and without it rates of morbidity and mortality are increased. More integrated approaches look at additional tools like skill building, mindfulness, movement, and nutrition literacy as tools to treat the whole person.

STEPS TO ACTION

The world is painful, how do I create tolerance to handle this discomfort? How do I model that and teach that to my consumers? This training explores alternatives to what you may be familiar with, but something you can certainly add to your arsenal. Each individual person we serve is different and should be treated as such. Historically we have all worked with survivors, but our goal is to get consumers and ourselves to shift from surviving to thriving. As a result of this training we will ignite conversations to help provide real tools that can create real change in all of us. Humility is a clinical school and we want to understand the concepts of cultural competency and apply them with cultural humility. As instruments of racial reconciliation in your daily work, you're improving health and achieving health care justice. Let's start with you first and evolve our practice to include and empower our consumers.

*"A SYSTEM CANNOT BE TRULY TRAUMA-INFORMED UNLESS THE SYSTEM CAN CREATE AND SUSTAIN A PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING ITSELF. A PROGRAM CANNOT BE SAFE FOR CLIENTS UNLESS IT IS SIMULTANEOUSLY SAFE FOR STAFF AND SAFE FOR ADMINISTRATORS. LACKING SUCH A PROCESS AND DESPITE WELL-INTENTIONED TRAINING EFFORTS, THERE WILL BE NO TRUE SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION."
- SANDRA BLOOM*

