

An Introduction to Rape and Trauma

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Faculty

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Language matters

- Gender neutral
- Get names right
- Semantics
- Victim vs. Survivor
- Person first language
- Get an interpreter, don't try to fake it
- Don't infantilize elders or people with disabilities

Trauma-informed, victim-centered care

Shifts our approach from
- What's wrong with you?
to
- What happened to you?



Looking at reactions through a trauma-informed lens

- Trauma is something that overwhelms our coping capacity
- Poor concentration
- Lethargy
- Short-term memory loss
- Self-medication
- Shutting down emotionally

Tonic and collapsed immobility

○ Tonic Immobility - In freezing, brain and body are primed for action. But in tonic immobility, the body is literally paralyzed by fear – unable to move, speak, or cry out. The body goes rigid. Hands may go numb.

Tonic and collapsed immobility

○ Collapsed Immobility - Some people describe feeling “like a rag doll” as the perpetrator did whatever he wanted. And thanks to rapid drops in heart rate and blood pressure, some become faint and may even pass out. Some describe feeling “sleepy.”

What do you need to know to be “trauma informed”?

- When trauma occurs, the brain is affected and acts in a number of ways
- Know that inconsistent statements don't equal a lie
- Some decisions made after a trauma occurs will not make sense to you
- That tonic immobility, collapsed immobility, and disassociation can take place during and after a trauma

What do you need to know to be “trauma informed”?

- That people experience and react to trauma very individually
- Reactions of victims that can take place because of trauma
- Appreciate many problem behaviors began as understandable attempts to cope

How memory works after trauma



How memory works after trauma

- Neurobiological changes from trauma can make memory consolidation and recall difficult
- Story may come out as fragmented or “sketchy”
- Misinterpreted as lying or “making it up as you go along”
- The content of the memory is accurate, it just may take some time and patience for it to come together

Long-term effects of trauma

- Hyperarousal: nervousness, jumpiness, quickness to startle.
- Re-experiencing: intrusive images, sensations, dreams, memories
- Avoidance and Withdrawal: feeling numb, shutdown or separated from normal life
- Isolation -pulling away from relationships and/or activities and avoiding things that trigger memories of trauma/s
- Self-medication