Behavioral Health is Essential To Health

Prevention Works

Treatment is Effective

People Recover
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues: Understanding the Impact of Historical Trauma on Communities

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Sam Simmons, AA, LADC, Behavioral Consultant
Samuel Simmons Consulting, LLC
Disclaimer

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Agenda

- Participants will gain a better understanding of the link between historical trauma and current challenges in some communities.

- Participants will gain a better understanding of the importance of being aware of possible obstacles to healing.

- Discuss trauma-informed best and/or promising culturally sensitive practices and trainings to be considered to improve outcomes.
P.T.S.D. may develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event like physical or sexual assault, exposure to disaster or accidents, combat or witnessing a traumatic event, can last years. The three main symptoms:

- **Repeatedly thinking about the trauma:** include flashbacks, hallucinations, and nightmares.
- **Being constantly alert or on guard:** easily startled, difficulty sleeping, concentrating and/or having angry outbursts.
- **Avoiding reminders of the trauma:** people, places, thoughts, that remind one of the event; may feel emotionally numb.

(Mental Health America -Formerly known as the National Mental Health Association)
Intergenerational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next.

Intergenerational trauma was first observed in 1966 by clinicians alarmed by the number of children of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust seeking treatment in clinics in Canada. (Fossion, P., Rejas, M., Servais, L., Pelc, I. & Hirsch, S. (2003)
Historical trauma is cumulative and collective. The impact of this type of trauma manifests itself, emotionally and psychologically, in members of different cultural groups (Brave Heart, 2011). As a collective phenomenon, those who never even experienced the traumatic stressor, such as children and descendants, can still exhibit signs and symptoms of trauma. Historical trauma may manifest itself as:

- **Historical Unresolved Grief:** Grief as the result of historical trauma that has not been adequately expressed, acknowledged, or otherwise resolved.
Historical Trauma

- **Disenfranchised Grief:** Grief as the result of historical trauma when loss cannot be voiced publicly or that loss is not openly acknowledged by the public.

- **Internalized Oppression:** As the result of historical trauma, traumatized people may begin to internalize the views of the oppressor and perpetuate a cycle of self-hatred that manifests itself in negative behaviors. Emotions such as anger, hatred, and aggression are self-inflicted, as well as inflicted on members of one’s own group. (Johnson, n.d.)
P.T.S.S. is a theory that explains the etiology of many of the adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities throughout the United States and the Diaspora. It is a condition that exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery. A form of slavery which was predicated on the belief that African Americans were inherently/genetically inferior to whites. This was then followed by institutionalized racism which continues to perpetuate injury. (DeGruy, Joy, 2005)
Native American Trauma Experience
Six Phases of Unresolved Grief

- **1st Contact**: life shock, genocide, no time for grief.
  - Colonization Period: introduction of disease and alcohol, traumatic events such as Wounded Knee Massacre.

- **Economic competition**: sustenance loss (physical/spiritual).

- **Invasion/War Period**: extermination, refugee symptoms.

- **Subjugation/Reservation Period**: confined/translocated, forced dependency on oppressor, lack of security. *(Brave Heart, 2011)*
Six Phases of Unresolved Grief

- **Boarding School Period:** destroyed family system, beatings, rape, prohibition of Native language and religion;
  - **Lasting Effect:** ill-prepared for parenting, identity confusion.

- **Forced Relocation and Termination Period:**
  - transfer to urban areas,
  - prohibition of religious freedom,
  - racism and being viewed as second class;
  - loss of governmental system and community. *(Brave Heart, 2011).*
African American Trauma Experience
Chattel Slavery (1619-1865)

Chattel Slavery (personal property, bought and sold as commodities or like cattle)

- **1619**: First Africans (20) in English Colonies

- Typical slave family was matriarchal in form.

- 1808 importing Africans as slaves was banned.

- Breeding farms
Jim Crow to Great Migration

- **Jim Crow South, 1865-1965**
  - 13th Amendment Abolished Slavery, except as a punishment for crime…
  - **Sharecropping**: re-impose a form of slavery
  - 1866 - **Convict Leasing** - 374 prisoners go for $5
  - **Lynchings**: at least 4961 (4,742, south & 219 north)

- **Great Migration and Ghetto 1915-68**
  - Leaving share cropping and abuse.
  - Manufacturing jobs and segregated housing
  - 1919 “**Red Summer**” end of World War 1 in 1918.
  - **Destruction of Black cities** - Tulsa, OK (1921)
Ghetto to Hyperghetto

- **Ghetto and welfare 1968-1975**
  - Welfare rules “no adult men in the home”
  - Exodus of manufacturing jobs and middle class
  - Drugs, crime, poverty and family disintegration
  - Urban renewal (1949-1975)

- **Hyperghetto and Prison (1975-1995)**
  - Extreme concentration of poverty
  - Mass incarceration
  - Drugs had major impact on the women and children.
  - Gang violence and concentrated police presence
Institutionalized Generation (1985-)

- Individuals born in middle 1980's or drug “Crack” Era until now.
- A generation in the care of institutions or service providers external to family members.
  - Child Protection
  - Foster Care
  - Welfare Social Work
  - Corrections, Etc.
- Furthering elements of internalized oppression and extreme level of learned helplessness. (B. Jones 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Span</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Proportion of time in US</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1619-1865</td>
<td>246 years</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Chattel slavery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-1965</td>
<td>100 years</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Jim Crow virtually no (south) or limited citizenship rights honored (north)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-2017</td>
<td>52 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Citizenship Rights: USA struggles to transition from segregation to inclusion of African Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>398 years</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Struggle for full inclusion</td>
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"People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them."

James Baldwin
Effects of Historical Trauma

- **First Generation**
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- **Subsequent Generations** – Historical Unresolved Trauma Survivor
  - Guilt, Depression, Anger
  - Psychic numbing
  - Victim identity/death identity
  - Thoughts of suicide
  - Nightmares
  - Preoccupation with trauma
  - Relational problems
  - Physical symptoms including diabetes and other disease associated with high stress hormones
Increase sensitivity to threat – Defensive postures, avoiding new situations, heightened sensitivity to being disrespected (connecting the dots that do not belong together) (W. H. Smith, Jr. 2010)

- Difficulty relaxing, resting or sleeping, nightmares
- Difficulty with staying engaged in relationships/jobs/projects.

Children/Youth: Hyperactivity, difficulty sitting still/concentrating, compulsive talking, truancy, runaway, bullying (T. M. Lee, 2010)
Struck in Freeze & Dissociation
(“avoidance” PTSD)

- Depression, feelings of emptiness, and detachment - difficulty defending self or facing conflicts.

- Increase alcohol and drug usage – used to manage the pain and unresolved traumas

- Narrowing sense of time – poor sense of the future and frequently view dying as an expected outcome. (W. H. Smith, Jr. 2010)

- Children/Youth: Difficulty processing information, “loner,” excessive shyness/fearfulness, clinging (Thea M. Lee, 2010)
Survival Stress Management

- A process of adapting to stressful situations by reacting without thinking of the consequences of our choices. Resulting in increased stress and/or depression:
  - Judgmental and distorted thoughts and feelings, impatience, exploitation, aggression, abuse and violence directed against one’s self or others.
  - Addictive substances and behavior (i.e., drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping, fast money, gambling, food, video games, etc.) produces a limited sense of relief requires repetitions.
“History is not about the past. It’s about the present!”

— Dr. El-Kati
African-American Women

- Feel need to be strong – this leads to a denial of vulnerability

- Women feel responsible for others before themselves – self-blame, self-sacrifice, and shame (T. Thompkins 2004)

- Feel responsible for keeping family together – this leads to remaining in a violent situation to avoid “destroying the family.”

- Consistently portrayed in media as aggressive, emasculating, rude, and loud or sexually insatiable. (National Humanities Center 1500-1865)
Hyper-masculine identity:
- poor emotional regulation/Numbness
- hyper objectification of females and themselves.
- misogyny (dislike of women)
- sexual prowess

Consistently portrayed in media as a sexualized, primitivism manner or super-masculine that appeal to white audiences, but simultaneously fear them.

(National Humanities Center 1500-1865)
Adolescents

- Between the ages of 13 to 25
- Generational attachment issues
- Experienced trauma both as perpetrator and victim.
- Sex for Significance, Security, Belonging & Power
- Glorification of death i.e. Biggie and Tupac
- Rite of passage involves an trauma
and the Trauma Continues….

- Young black males die from gun violence at a rate 2.5 times higher than Latino males, and eight times higher than white males.

- Intimate partner homicide is the leading cause of death for African-American women ages 15 to 45.

- Blacks make up 15% of the general US population, yet 42% of children in foster care in the United States are Black.
Obstacles to Healing

- Continued institutional racism, oppression and distrust
  Middle-class African-Americans with insurance were less likely to get a call back from therapists than whites with similar characteristics.

- Misunderstanding and distrust attached to mental illness and trauma (“considered a weakness” “faith is enough”)

- Lack of culturally competent services and research (historical trauma and racism dismissed as irrelevant)

- Belief that suffering is a part of Black Life
Parallel Trauma

- The process of when staff own unresolved issues or trauma (historical) or oppression parallels that of client.

- Powerlessness of the client parallels that of staff and staff feels a great need to “fix it” or client’s use it against them.

- The staff acts out against uncomfortable feelings in a negative way, including being overly critical, and punishing or rejecting the client.

- Believing self-care is less important than the care they provide others.
Meeting The Challenge

“Human compassion is equal to human cruelty and .... It is up to each of us to tip the balance.”

Alice Walker
Using Culture for Positive Changes

- **Begin** Gather knowledge about the culture
- **Family:** not just nuclear, the whole clan or tribe
  - Group activities/education tend to be more successful
  - Talking Circles
  - Community programs
- **Respect:** survival merits, cultural forces, spiritual beliefs, and traditional holistic healing methods
  - Medicine wheel model
  - Tie changes into traditional practices
  - Encourage balancing of mind, body, spirit and nature
The Community

- Begin the healing by embracing our story/our history and reflect on the pain and/or the current conditioning as away to empower.

- **African American institutions, leaders, and clergy to promote:**
  - Need to role-model the willingness to start their own healing journey.
  - Reduce the misunderstanding and distrust associated with mental health treatment.
  - Help the community link trauma informed strategies to address jobs, housing, schools, violence and crime.
Provider/Leadership

- Develop ways of addressing historical trauma and its legacy by augmenting the medical model, evidence-based, individual approaches to therapy and research.

- Providers be aware not to add to the trauma with your beliefs
  - work through racial issues and/or biases
  - refrain from over-empathizing (based on what you can't handle)
  - Be aware of their trauma

- “Change does not come without people in power being willing to be uncomfortable.”
Ways to Reverse Damage

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Mindful/Mediation
- Mental Health Interventions
- Healthy relationships
Some people we relate to and others we don’t or even repulse us. Doing what is easy can have consequences like…

- **Compassion without accountability** can encourage chaos.
- **Accountability without compassion**, complacent, self-satisfying
- **Swing back and forth**, we are not consistent, fair or clear.

**Compassion Accountability**: help us seek truth, understanding, forgiveness, justice, humility and leave others empowered without blame and excuses.
The Work

- In 2009 Black Men Healing Conference community building “from the inside out” not just “the outside in”

- **The Healing Generations Curriculum (TFP)** allowing African American Men to explore their trauma and work toward healing.

- **The BeMore Campaign (TFP)** conversations about nonviolent interpersonal relationships and ending violence against women and girls.

- ACEs and Historical Trauma Training
“Is there a child that you can believe in unconditionally? Teach them to value themselves and they'll be able to take on the world.”

Maya Angelou
Factors that Make a Difference

- Feeling social/emotional support and hope

- A strong parent-child relationship, or, when such a relationship is not available, a surrogate caregiving figure who serves a mentoring role.

- Community reciprocity in watching out for children, intervening when they are in trouble, doing favors for one another.

- Social Bridging – People reach outside their social circle to get help for their family and friends.

(ACES interface 2014)
“True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

QUESTIONS