

Traumatic Stress Response

Practical tools to engage with clients experiencing trauma



Jason's Story

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Maintain N.A.P.

Connected to people, but detached from their swirling emotions



W.A.I.T

Why Am I Talking? "De-escalation" and questions to ask yourself before you open your mouth and "hurt more than you help."

Introduction to Trauma Response

Have you encountered situations with clients where you had no idea how to comfort them during a time of intense loss?

Life is filled with gifts and opportunities...and intense trauma. Most people run away from crisis—something powerful happens when we journey with our clients through the crisis. How can we create space for them to share their concerns in a safe place? **What are the "Three Stages of Crisis?"**

1

PRE-CRISIS

Person in general state of equilibrium.

2

THE EVENT

Reactions: Physical, Cognitive, Emotional, Behavioral

3

THE "NEW NORMAL"

How will they cope? Well-Adjustment, or Withdrawal?

Everything is “fine.”

Life is hard and humans are incredibly complex. How can we best serve our clients during seasons of grief?

Bereavement:

“the state of having experienced loss”

Examples of “grief inducing scenarios” include moving, bankruptcy, retirement, aging, illness, divorce or separation, physical handicap, infertility, and death.

Journeying with them...

- Normalize feelings - everyone is different
- Accept their unique expressions of grief
- Provide opportunities to regain control
- Offer to help with practical matters
- Don't deliver formulas
- Be observant, flexible, patient, gracious
- Be honest, but gentle: “Speak truth in love”
- Have courage to stay out of the way
- Have courage to ‘companion’ with them
- Prepare to be surprised



“Answering before listening is both stupid and rude”

- Proverbs 18:13

The power of presence: People will remember you were there. They **will not** remember what you said.....unless it was something stupid.

What you *can* say:

- “I'm sad for you.”
- “How are you doing with all of this?”
- “This must be really hard to go through.”
- “What can I do for you?”

TRAUMA AS A POISON

Poison:

- Anxiety
- Chaos
- Dysfunctional emotions
- Tension and frustration
- Loss of control
- Alienation
- Helplessness

HELPFUL INTERVENTION CONCEPTS

Antidote:

- A calm, reassuring approach
- Structure
- Thinking
- Helpful processing
- Information
- Acceptance/social support
- Action



How can we foster authentic connection with our clients and our team?

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up...A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12



Do's:

- ▶ Do listen more than you talk
- ▶ Do allow for silence
- ▶ Do follow up when you say you will
- ▶ Do be genuine and caring
- ▶ Do allow them to express their feelings and tell their story
- ▶ Do ask if they have any special requests of you
- ▶ Do remember them on special occasions - a meaningful note or call

Don'ts:

- ▶ Don't dominate conversation
- ▶ Don't ask one question after another without a break
- ▶ Don't use clichés such as:
 - ▶ "I know just how you feel."
 - ▶ "At least..."
 - ▶ "This will bring the family closer."
- ▶ Don't change the subject
- ▶ Don't give advice you aren't an expert in
- ▶ Don't pass judgment ("You should be feeling better by now")

The power of creating authentic connections.

7x

Employees who have a best friend at work are 7x more likely to be engaged.¹

\$100,000

Colleagues have the potential to increase happiness as much as earning \$100,000 more per year.²

202%

Companies with engaged employees outperform those without them by 202%.³

Source: 1. [Gallup](#). 2. [Fast Company](#). 3. [Forbes](#)

W.A.I.T – Why am I talking?

How to say the right thing in the moment.



1. Is what I'm about to say necessary for the situation?
2. Is what I'm about to say kind?
3. Is what I'm about to say helpful for the person I'm speaking to?
4. Am I saying it in a way that allows my listeners to easily understand what I mean?

Case Studies:

How would you respond to your client in this scenario?

Case Study #1: "Nothing for you, and different percentages for everyone else."

Case Study #2: "Journeying through the 'Valley of Death'"



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