Creating a Trauma Informed Workforce

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Types of trauma

– Victim of a crime
– Experiencing domestic violence
– Experiencing sexual assault
– Being abused as a child
– Surviving a natural disaster
– Traumatic event resulting in a disability

These events are beyond a person’s control and can happen to anyone.
What happens to the brain when trauma occurs?

3 Part Brain (Dr. Paul McLean)

- **Reptilian (brain stem):** This innermost part of the brain is responsible for survival instincts and autonomic body processes.

- **Mammalian (limbic, midbrain):** The midlevel of the brain, this part processes emotions and conveys sensory relays.

- **Neomammalian (cortex, forebrain):** The most highly evolved part of the brain, this area outer controls cognitive processing, decision-making, learning, memory and inhibitory functions.

During a traumatic experience, the reptilian brain takes control, shifting the body into reactive mode. Shutting down all non-essential body and mind processes, the brain stem orchestrates survival mode. During this time the sympathetic nervous system increases stress hormones and prepares the body to fight, flee or freeze.
What happens to the brain when trauma occurs?

– In a normal situation, when immediate threat ceases, the parasympathetic nervous system shifts the body into restorative mode. This process reduces stress hormones and allows the brain to shift back to the normal top-down structure of control.

– However, for those 20 percent of trauma survivors who go on to develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) — an unmitigated experience of anxiety related to the past trauma — the shift from reactive to responsive mode never occurs. Instead, the reptilian brain, primed to threat and supported by dysregulated activity in significant brain structures, holds the survivor in a constant reactive state.
What does this mean for the patients you see?

- Victim of trauma often don’t come in pretty packages.
- This may not be the first time they have sought services.
- You may be the bajillionth (yes I made that up) person they have had to tell their story to.
- The most important thing to remember is they are scared.
What is trauma informed?

– According to SAMHSA, Trauma-informed care is an evidence-based practice that teaches service providers and their organizations about the triggers and vulnerabilities of trauma survivors, and effective interventions. It involves understanding, anticipating, and responding to people’s expectations and needs, and minimizing the chances of re-traumatizing someone who is trying to heal.
How can you be trauma informed in the hospital setting?

- Safety: ensure the physical and emotional safety of patients and employees
- Trust: provide clear and sufficiently detailed information about what patients and employees can expect and need to know; maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Choice: prioritize patient experiences of choice and control. Give patients options including evidence-based options so that they can make an informed decision; respond respectfully to their questions as they clarify needed information to make an informed decision.
How can you be trauma informed in the hospital setting?

- **Collaboration:** maximize collaboration and the sharing of power with patients; it is the patient’s body so the final decision is theirs; work together with them in partnership.
- **Empowerment:** recognize patient and employee strengths and skills. Patients are empowered when they are given enough information to make informed decisions.
So how do we create a trauma informed workforce?
Obstacles in Mississippi (Nationally)

- Unprepared workforce
- On-the-job training
- Mandated Reporters are Not Reporting
- Jurors that don’t believe abuse occurs
- Reactive/Responsive approach versus systemic change
Child Advocacy Studies (CAST)

• CAST is designed to assist undergraduate and graduate programs to prepare students to address child maltreatment with a trauma informed focus.

• Program involves a multidisciplinary approach while students are in higher education classes that allows the various disciplines to learn to work together to prevent, identify and work with situations involving child abuse and neglect.

• CAST is a unique program that can be catered to the needs of each university and it brings academia into application by teaching students the skills necessary to work effectively as part of the team that reflects the real world experience.
Implementing child abuse courses at universities, Medical Schools, Law Schools, Seminaries
CAST Courses

– Schools can offer both a minor and/or a certificate in CAST. Community colleges are offering the first CAST course (some have adapted it to fit in PSY/SOC courses). This has been approved to transfer for credit to major universities.

– The conceptual framework for CAST components include standards for teaching participants to think critically about how to respect diversity

– CAST courses include: 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses, TIERS: Trauma Informed Experiential and Reasoning Skills,
How do we utilize CAST to prepare our workforce to respond to child maltreatment in a trauma informed manner?

– Trauma focused learning: both in classroom and simulations
– What are simulations? Students walk through a scenario where they are presented with child maltreatment.
– Simulations increase critical thinking and practical skills.
– Bottom line: Students walk out of the classroom and into the workforce with the equivalent of 3 years of on the job training.
Questions