

Lessons In Survival and Healing: Understanding the Difference and Why It Matters

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Trauma Healing Project
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Today's Agenda

- A little about me...
- Impacts & Survival
- Coping, Resilience & Healing
 - Closing



My Childhood – The Good

Early Attachment

Intelligence/Education Valued

Socially/Politically Progressive

Devoted (Survivor) Mother

Extrovert

Extremely Strong-Willed



How We Get/I Got Hurt

- **Accident:** “things happen”
- **Abuse:** intentional/patterned re-enactment & domination
- **Handed Down:** impacted by others’ hurts
- **Oppression:** institutional, systematic mistreatment of one group by another



My Childhood – The Bad

Constant Moving

Father Abusive to Mother

Sexual Abuse

Chaos and Neglect

Custody Battle – We lost



Our Working Definition of Trauma

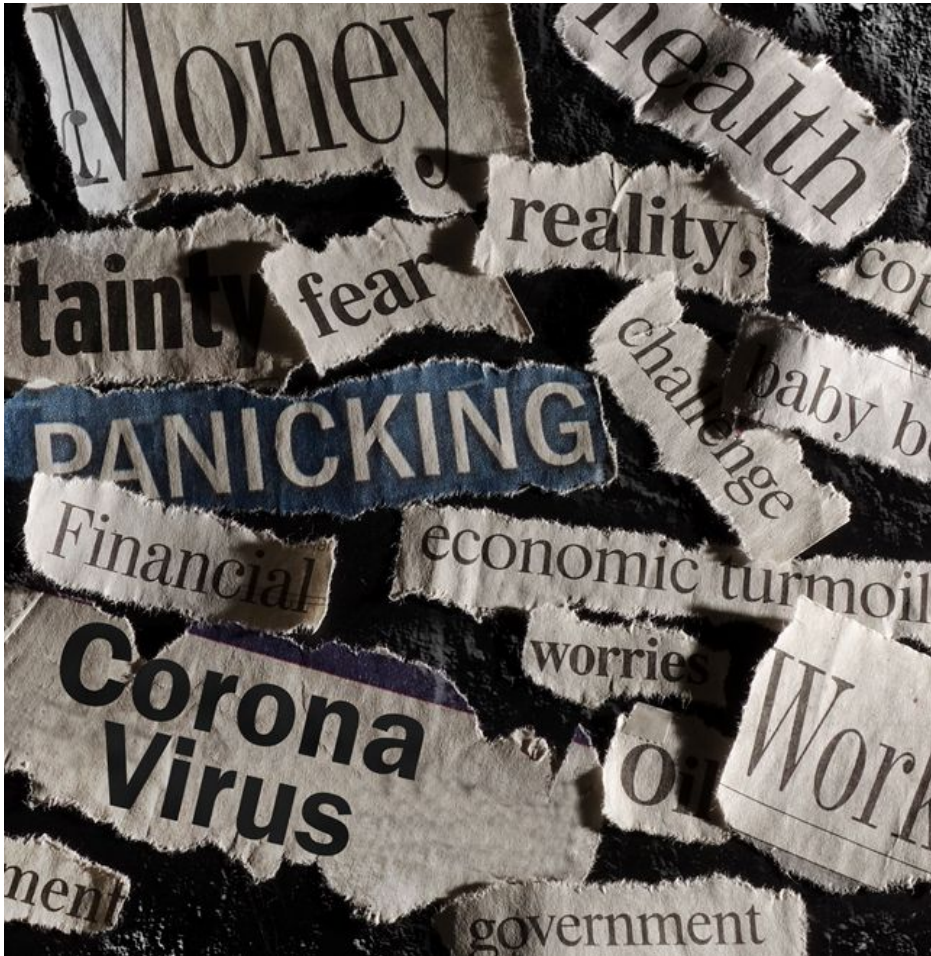


“Trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound. It is a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed, to a world in which people are routinely wounded.

“Trauma is a concrete physical, cognitive, affective, and spiritual response by individuals and communities to events and situations that are objectively traumatizing. On a simple level, for the most part, people feel traumatized or wounded because they have been wounded.”

~ Bonnie Burstow

A Few Conclusions



- We are all impacted by trauma – individually and collectively – there is no “us and them”
- Unresolved trauma negatively impacts individual and community health and mental health, our quality of life, our ability to be effective in our work, and our capacity to create just societies.
- **Managing the consequences of trauma ≠ healing or resolution**

Coping and Healing – Not the Same

- Self-Control
- Behavior Management
- Suppression of Feelings
 - Suppression of “Symptoms”
 - Avoidance of Triggers
 - Desensitization
- Denial & Disconnection



- Expression with attention
- Emotive Processing/Release
- Physical Release
- Re-membering
- Spiritual Healing
- Intentional Realignment
- Reconnection & Engagement

- Human to Human – not a solo project

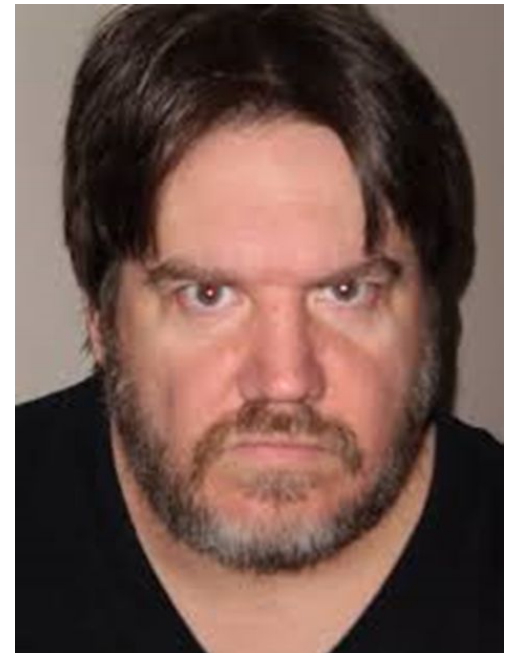
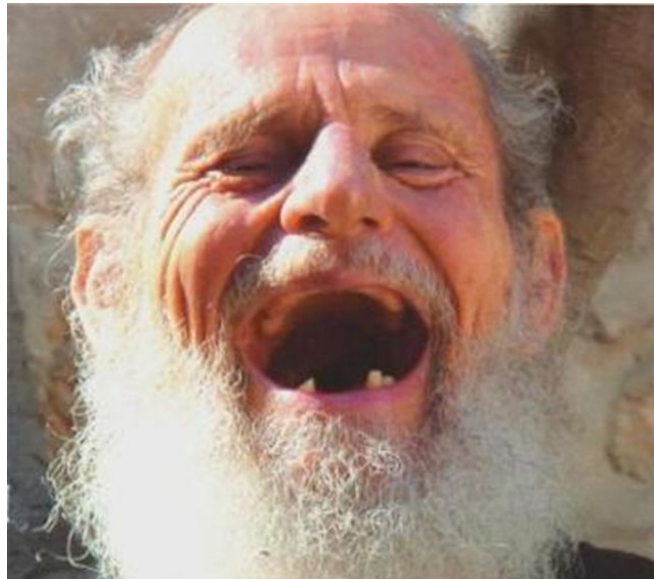
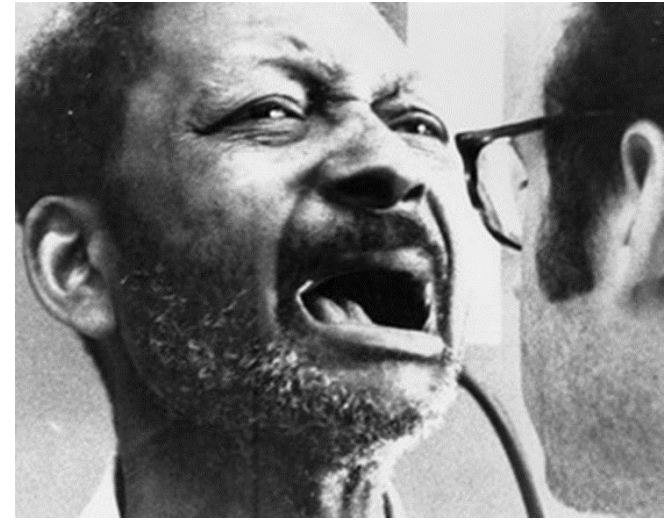
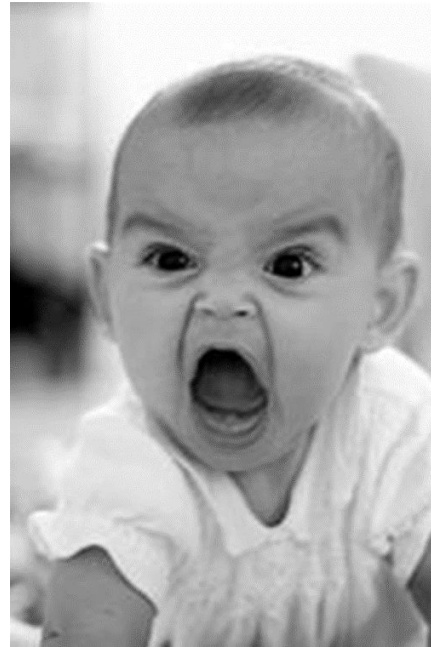
The Avoidance of Feelings



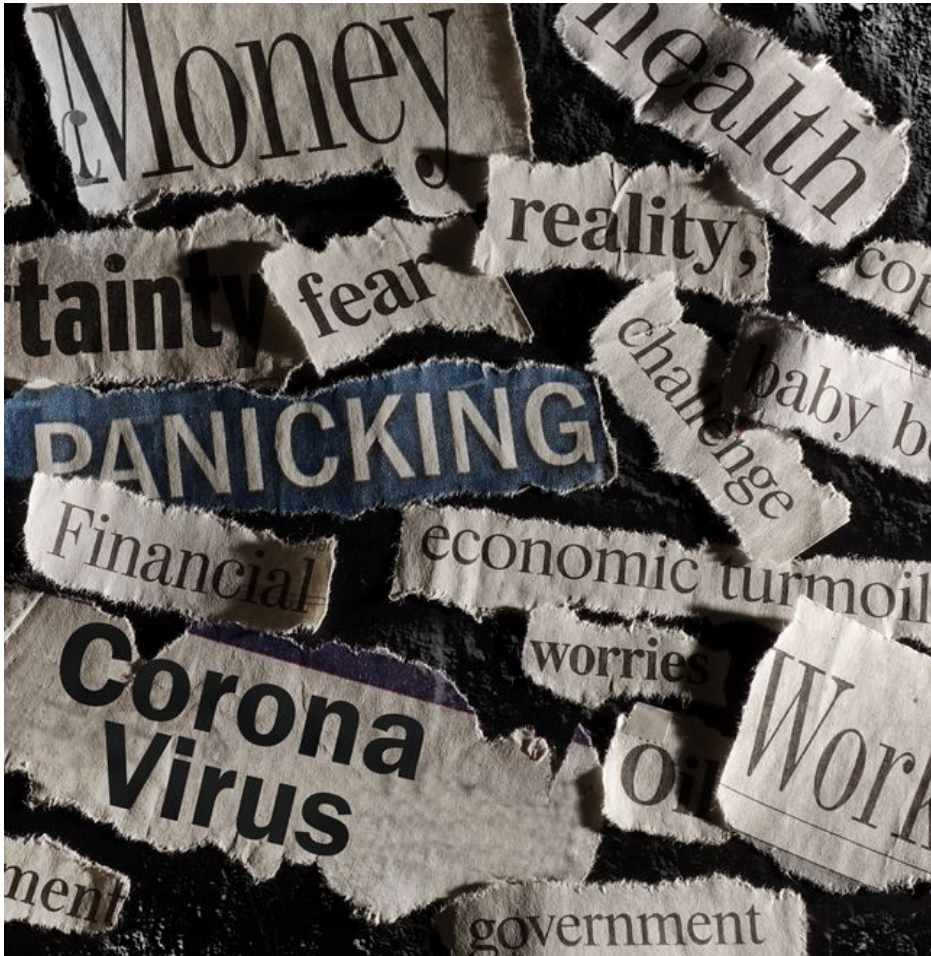
“The continual disparagement and repression of youngsters' expressions of feelings have their effects. Most adults are uncomfortable about honestly revealing their own feelings and unable to give attention to others when they convey strong emotion. Adults stop others' attempts to express feelings by looking away, interrupting with a personal story, changing the subject, communicating discomfort through body language or facial expressions, admonishing each other to stop feeling that way, or offering a drink or a tranquilizer.”

- Julian Weissglass

Working with Strong Feelings & Emotional



A Few Conclusions



- We are all impacted by trauma – individually and collectively – there is no “us and them”
- Unresolved trauma negatively impacts individual and community health and mental health, our quality of life, our ability to be effective in our work, and our capacity to create just societies.
- Managing the consequences of trauma ≠ healing or resolution
- **We are hardwired for and driven towards healing – we can (and must) harness this process for everyone’s benefit *including ours.***

- People can and do completely heal...

In a longitudinal cross-sectional study that included 2171 adults, 5 variables for social support were assessed. They included:

- Advice
- Love-affection
- Emotional support
- Sufficient contact
- Supportive listening

In this study, high (vs low) availability of **supportive listening** was associated with cognitive resilience, which indicated better global cognitive function than expected for lower cerebral volume. This association was absent for the other forms of social support.

- Salinas J, O'Donnell A, Kojis DJ, et al. Association of Social Support With Brain Volume and Cognition. JAMA (2021)

Listening Exchanges = Powerful Practice**

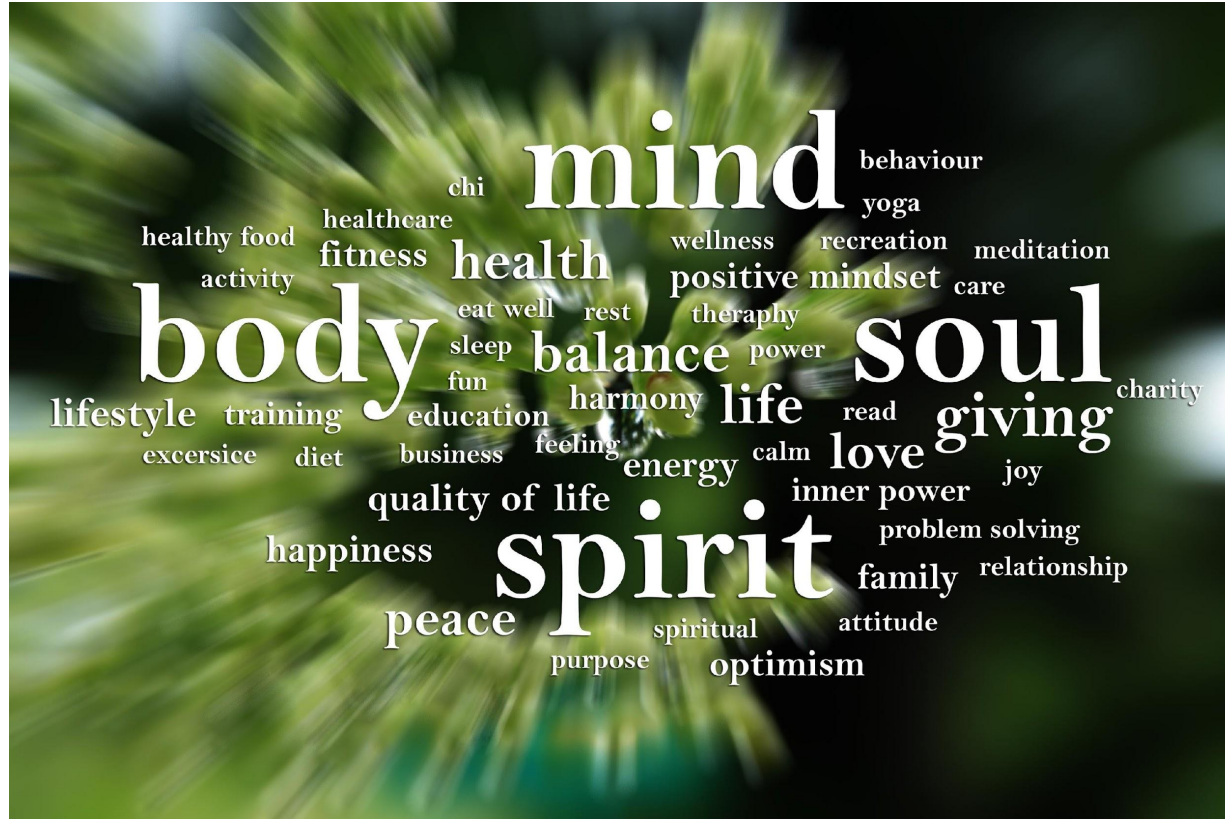
Support us to think, heal, stay connected and act



- Equal time
- Confidential – nothing said shared or brought up again
- Listen with respect and full attention
- Withhold judgement
- Refrain from asking questions or giving advice
- If feelings come up, welcome and make space for them

- <https://sustainingalllife.org/resources/>

The consequences of trauma are:



- Emotional
- Physical
- Developmental
- Social
- Individual
- Intergenerational
- Collective

Individual Healing



Processing

EMDR, CBT
Attachment-based Play
Emotive Processing
Expressive Movement
Writing, Art, Music Storytelling
Somatic Experiencing
Massage, Reiki, Craniosacral
Therapy
Psychodrama

Stabilization

Physical Safety & Basic Needs
Acknowledgement & Validation
Meditation/Mindfulness
Acupuncture
Medicine
Hypnotherapy
DBT, CBT
Music, Nature, Animals



Integration

Routines & Plans
Recreation
Remembering Rituals
Reconnection/New Connections
Sharing lessons with others
Leadership & Action
Termination of Medicines,
Therapy









Community Healing



Processing

Funerals, Protests, Vigils
Wailing Walls
Communal Emotive Processing
Communal Dances, Art, Performances
Sweat Lodge
Support Groups

Stabilization

Communal Acknowledgement
Food, material support
Gatherings
Shelter
Education & Information



Integration

Rebuilding, Memorials
Social Change & Collective Action
Equity & Inclusion – New Ways of (Re) Connecting
New Knowledge, Lessons
Increased Consciousness



My Healing Process

Parenting Strong-Willed Children
(growing up together)

Community Connection

Education, Practice & Healing Attention
(Self, Family & Others)

Healthy Relationships

Activism The Trauma Healing Project



The Key Components of a Healing Environment



- An understanding and acceptance of the wide range of human emotion and the emotive healing process
- Relationship based
- Social milieu – working agreements, democratic participation
- Valuing of each life/Respect based
- Normalizing of experience
- Consciousness of relations of power
- Expectations of self-care
- Conflicts expected, acknowledged and addressed (nothing off limits)
- Change and learning is facilitated and accepted

“History, despite its wrenching pain cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

– Dr. Maya Angelou



I do not allow myself to be overcome by hopelessness, no matter how tough the situation. I believe that if you just do your little bit without thinking of the bigness of what you stand against, if you turn to the enlargement of your own capacities, just that itself creates new potential.

— *Vandana Shiva* —

Affective Reflective Practice – For You



Incorporates feelings into reflection and assumes unprocessed or unexpressed feelings can impair learning and knowledge creation. Avoids interpreting or qualifying feelings, or assuming feelings are accurate evidence of current reality.

Affective (Feelings First) then Reflective Questions



- How did it (or does it still) impact you?
- Why do you think it impacted you so much?
- Did/does it remind you of anything in your own life experience?
- Is there any support you need to resolve or release this experience going forward?

Where to Use Affective Reflective Support



- Routine Debriefing
- Critical Incident Debriefing
- Case Review & Planning
- Peer Learning and Support
- In Supervision
- When Struggling or Feeling Great
- Anytime, Anywhere

The Hope!

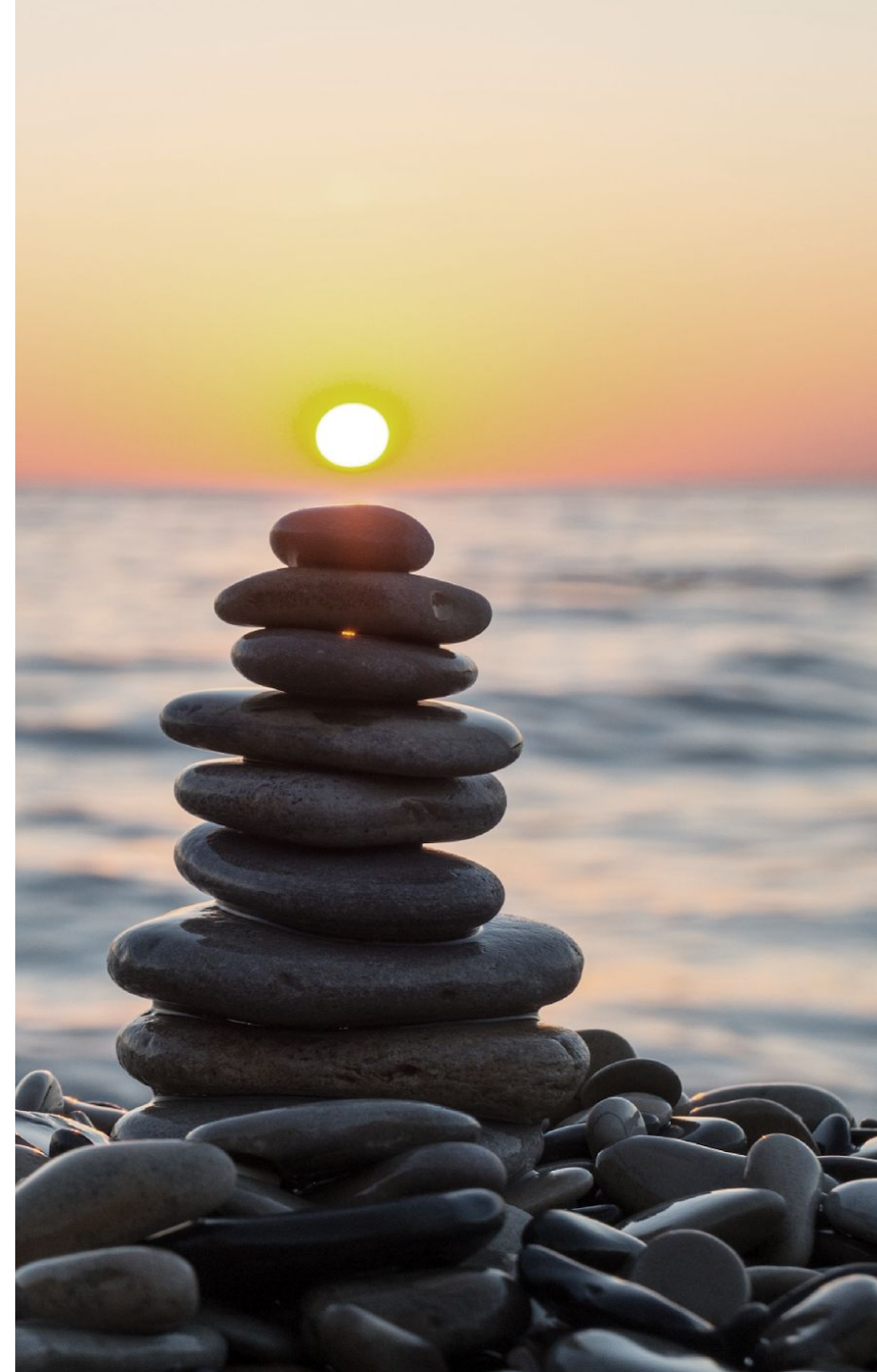


- When survivors said they had been listened to with compassion they were 2.9 times more likely to report being mostly or completely healed.
- When survivors believed that people understood the impact of trauma on their lives they were 2.2 times more likely to report being mostly or completely healed.
- When survivors believed that people knew how to help them heal they were 2.3 times more likely to report being mostly or completely healed.

Thank you!

For taking care of yourselves and each other,
and for all you do for our community.

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Immediate and On-going Actions for Healing – It's Relational!



- Being allowed and encouraged to tell the story – multiple times to multiple listeners (quality of listening is critical)
- Being believed and not judged
- Being allowed to name the experience(s)
- Movement & discharge (physical and emotional) with human company
- Being supported to participate in public rituals for taking action and expressing grief and outrage
- Being supported to become or stay connected
- Being supported to reclaim personal, community, or national space – clean, repair, smudge

Trauma & The Body

“All emotions, even those that are suppressed and unexpressed, have physical effects. Unexpressed emotions tend to stay in the body like small ticking time bombs—they are illnesses in incubation.”

- Marilyn Van Derbur, *Miss America By Day: Lessons Learned From Ultimate Betrayals And Unconditional Love*

“People who reported having a terrible traumatic experience and who kept the experience a secret had far more health problems than people who openly talked about their traumas.”

- James W. Pennebaker, *The Secret Life of Pronouns: What Our Words Say About Us*

Safety & Connection

“To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins the victim and witness in a common alliance. For the individual victim, this social context is created by relationships with friends, lovers, and family. For the larger society, the social context is created by political movements that give voice to the disempowered.”

-Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*

Believing & Validating

“In order to believe clients' accounts of trauma, you need to suspend any pre-conceived notions that you have about what is possible and impossible in human experience. As simple as they may sound, it may be difficult to do so.”

- Aphrodite Matsakis, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Complete Treatment Guide*

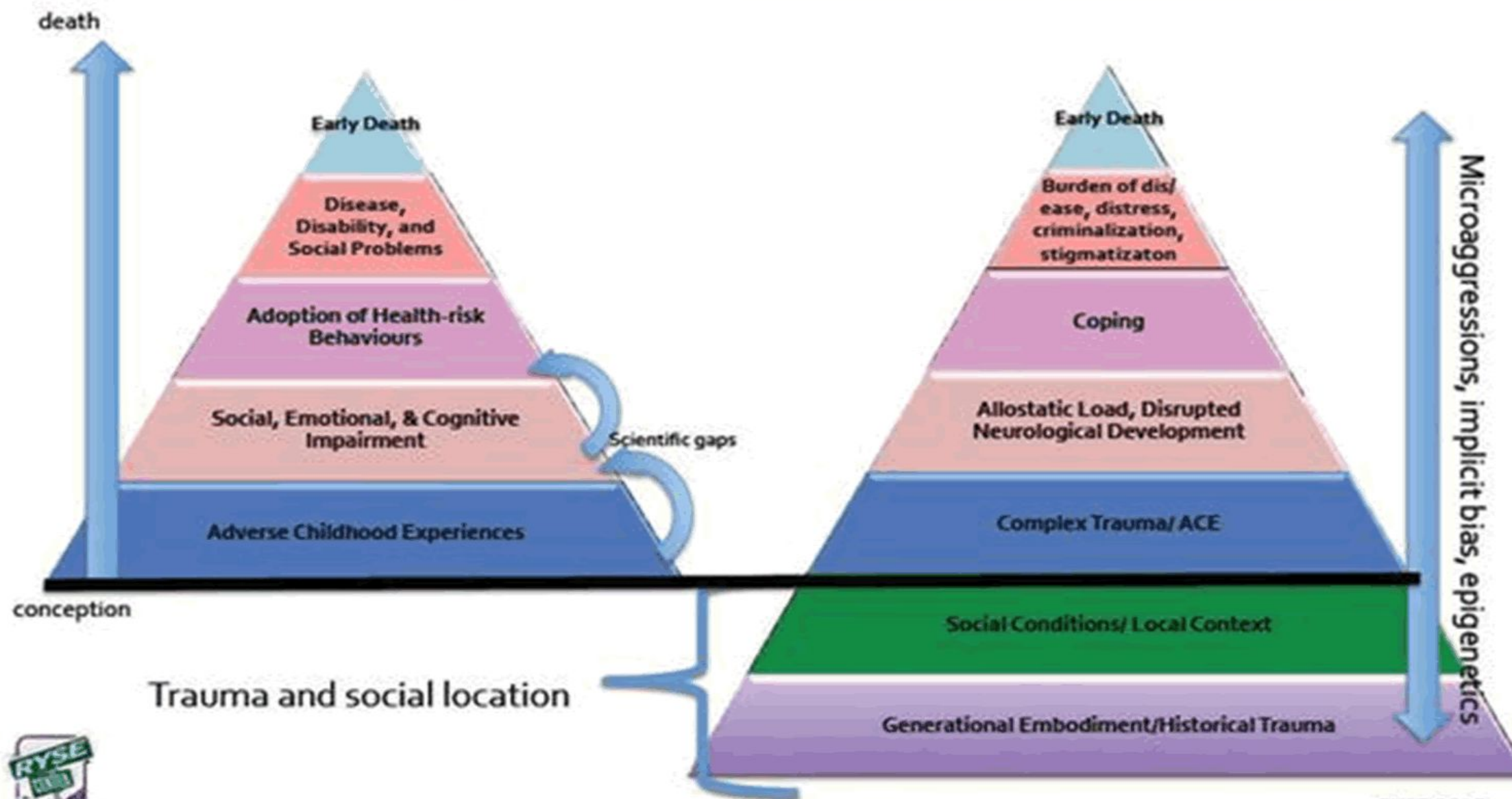
“Trauma is personal. It does not disappear if it is not validated. When it is ignored or invalidated the silent screams continue internally heard only by the one held captive. When someone enters the pain and hears the screams healing can begin.”

- Danielle Bernock, *Emerging with Wings: A True Story of Lies, Pain, and the Love That Heals*

Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Historical Trauma/Embodiment



Trauma is a Compounding Disparity



- More likely to get hurt
- Less likely to get help
- Coping & survival options are limited and often cause further harm
- Coping strategies are criminalized, labeled and/or stigmatized
- Interventions are limited and often cause further harm

Co-Listening



Equal time – timed

Confidential – nothing said is shared with anyone else, or brought up again to your partner

Listen with respect, confidence in the person being listened to, interest, positive regard – shown via body language, voice tone and facial expressions

Listen without (internal or external) judgement, opinion, agenda, worry or ‘relating’ – there is nothing to fix and listening is more than sufficient

When Trauma Happens – And Sometimes Long After

- Freeze, Flight, Fight, Fright
- Chronic Trauma, Complex Trauma
- Traumatic Stress – Toxic stress

Dissociation  Hypervigilance

If We Don't Get to Recover or Heal



- Less access to our minds (less intelligent)
- Vulnerable to reaction and/or reenactment
- Patterns emerge (negative effects of stored hurts & coping strategies)
 - Intermittent
 - Chronic
 - Individual
 - Collective

What is Restimulation or Activation?

A conditioned response that happens automatically when faced with a stimuli associated with past experiences.

Trauma Restimulation or Activation?

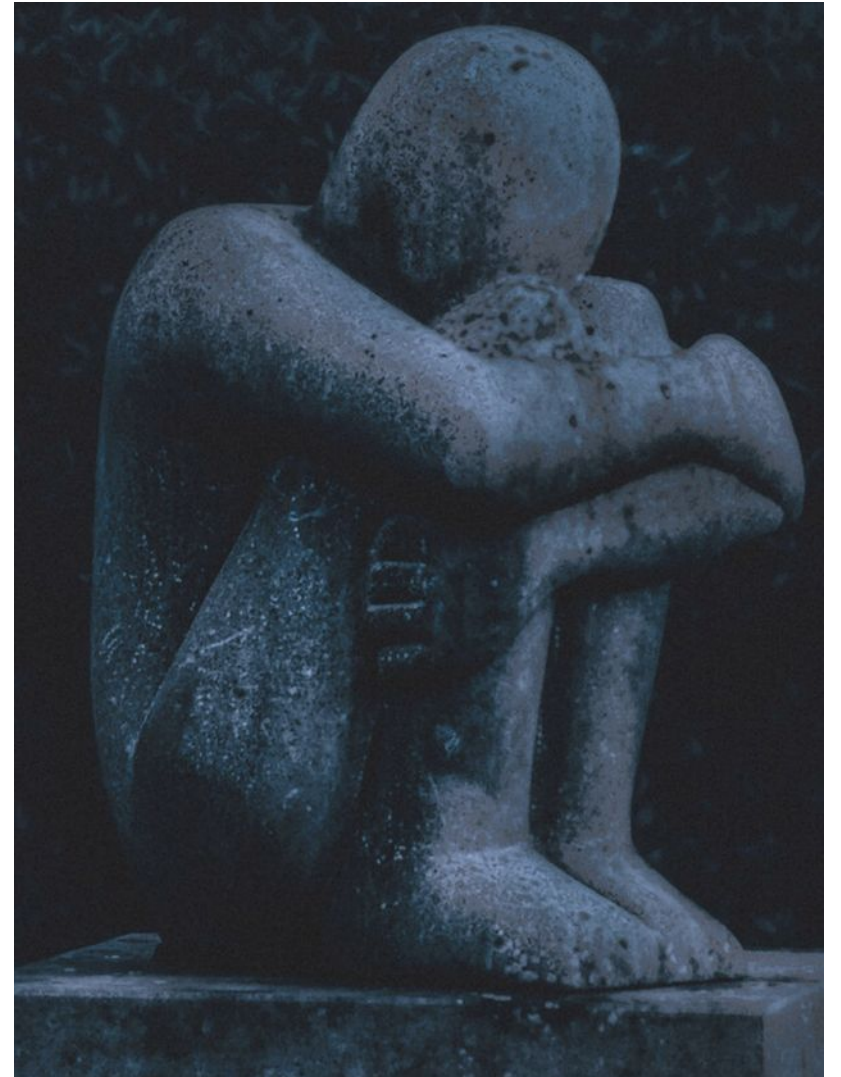
In this case, the stimuli are associated with difficult or traumatic experiences.

Can be acute and situational or chronic and not related to current circumstances.

Challenging Discouragement

- Why it Matters
 - How We Got This Way
 - Direct hurts & conditioning
- No help to recover earlier in our lives

... most feelings of discouragement come from earlier times....





Healing

- A Process
- Reduction/Absence of Symptoms
- Increase in Health and Wellness
- Return to Health
- Emotional
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Social
- Forgiveness
- Acceptance
- Wholeness

Strategies for Healing

Humanistic - Language of Feelings

Kinesthetic - Tactile Integration

Re-evaluative - Emotive Integration

Behavioral - Conditioning & Containment

Expressive - Holistic/Multidimensional

Relational - Healing Through Connection

Activism

- Anti-DV/Anti-Sexual Assault Work (Adults & Children)
- Re-evaluation Counseling
- Commission on Children and Families
- The Sexual Assault Task Force
- The Trauma Healing Project

The Hope of the THP

- People can completely recover and heal from trauma
- We have more information and skills than ever before
- Good resources and services exist
- Survivors are speaking up and taking action
- Community of leaders and learners

Our/My Work

... promoting liberation and justice through healing

- My own healing
- Finding voice – Community Engagement & Education – building capacity for healing in the community – *studying healing*.
- Creating spaces and support for healing after trauma

From the Outside In





From the Inside Out

Coping vs Healing

- Self-Control
- Behavior Management
- Suppression of Feelings
- Suppression of “Symptoms”
- Avoidance of Triggers
- Desensitization
- Denial & Disconnection
- Expression with attention
- Emotive Processing/Release
- Physical Release
- Re-remembering
- Spiritual Healing
- Intentional Realignment
- Reconnection & Engagement



Cognitive
Behavioral



Emotional
Regulation



Emotive Release





Cognitive Behavioral

- TF-CBT
- CBT
- Psycho-Education
- EPICS
- Seeking Safety
- Many forms of talk therapy



Emotional Regulation

- DBT
- Mindfulness
- Group Play
- Music
- Peacock feathers
- Breath
- Yoga
- Martial Arts
- Massage
- Energy Medicine
- Acupuncture



Emotional & Physical Release

- EMDR
- EFT
- Somatic Experiencing
- Physical & Emotional Discharge
- Art Therapy
- Drumming
- Psychodrama

My Childhood – Coping & Costs

Smart Kid, No Discipline

Developmental Gaps

Dissociation

Vulnerability to Abuse

Substance Use/Abuse

Early Pregnancy/Parenting

Our model for a Better Way





OUR VISION

A community where any person or group impacted by violence, abuse or other trauma is supported to fully recover and heal.

OUR MISSION & WORK

Working to increase capacity within the wider community to promote and support healing and wellness through education, action research, and direct support.

Healing

A Process – Absence of ‘Symptoms’ – Increase in Health & Wellness – Return to Health
Emotional, Physical & Spiritual – Forgiveness – Acceptance – Wholeness – Individual &
Collective*



The Trauma Framework

- Explains the intersections and connects us to each other
- Requires a shift in perspective from “what’s wrong” to “what happened”
- Allows us to move away from an illness/deficit model towards an understanding and (potentially) a better way of tending to the injuries caused by violence, abuse and other trauma
- ***Demands healing if we want change***

