



A Framework for Whole-Person Care in Behavioral Health *Highlights & Key Concepts*

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Summary Ideas:

Whole-person care is a multi-disciplinary approach to healthcare.

- This “person-in-context” approach looks at more than just the physical aspects of health. It accounts for the bio-, psycho-, social-, spiritual, and communal aspects of health as well.
- Whole-person care recognizes that a person’s health and mental health is impacted, even exacerbated, by social causes and conditions such as cultural attitudes and beliefs.

There are four elements of whole-person care.

- **Partnership:** A collaboration; demonstrating profound respect for the person.
- **Acceptance:** Prizing the patient’s inherent worth and potential; providing accurate empathy.
- **Compassion:** Coming alongside someone in their suffering; actively promoting patients’ welfare.
- **Evocation:** Eliciting the patient’s own knowledge, wisdom, strengths, and motivation.

Questions & Responses:

Q1	<i>What are key lessons learned from working with people healing from trauma?</i>
A1	<p>One lesson learned from working with clients healing from trauma is that empowering a client’s sense of authenticity, helping them feel safe in vulnerability, and developing compassion for themselves is essential to the healing process in trauma work. And to do this, we [the provider] must be vulnerable, we must be real, and we have to be human, to show them that it is okay to be vulnerable and to make mistakes, and you can still love yourself and stay true to yourself even when you do mess up.</p> <p>Another lesson learned is that while compassion and empathy are critical components to trauma therapy, they need to be coupled with healthy detachment. That is, you need to walk alongside people in solidarity, but still maintain your necessary boundaries.</p>
Q2	<i>How does the whole-person care framework address health disparities?</i>
A2	<p>The whole-person care framework addresses health disparities by recognizing that health outcomes are determined by more than just medical care. It is well understood that an individual’s health is greatly influenced by the social and economic conditions in which they live, work, and play. The whole-person care framework takes this into account and acknowledges that due to systemic racism, BIPOC people are more likely to live in unhealthy environments and are therefore more likely to have worse health outcomes. With this knowledge, we can reduce health disparities by actively counteracting discriminatory practices and promote better access and outcomes for BIPOC people and marginalized people in general.</p>

Q3	<i>How does trauma affect a person’s engagement with services?</i>
A3	The person who has experienced trauma may want to avoid services due to prior experience of fear, mistreatment, and disappointment. A person who has experienced trauma may have a hard time trusting providers of services. This person may also struggle with managing appointments, following up on referrals, and following through with plans of treatment.
Q4	<i>What are ways to “befriend the emotional brain” when using a trauma-informed approach?</i>
A4	To “befriend the emotional brain” means to use self-awareness and mindfulness to deal with hyperarousal and other lingering results of results of trauma. This healing occurs in the context of trusted relationships and communal rhythms.
Q5	<i>What is stigma, and why is fighting stigma important for the whole-person approach?</i>
A5	Stigmas are persistent labels, myths, and conceptions about a person's behavioral health condition. These labels can be a challenge to people who are trying to provide services to vulnerable populations. It is important to practice awareness, compassion, and use non-judgmental, appropriate language when working with vulnerable populations.
Q6	<i>What can providers do to be effective in the long haul and avoid burnout?</i>
A6	To be effective in the long haul requires the ability to adapt and seek different sources of inspiration, renewal, and resiliency. It is also very important to be serious and consistent about self-compassion and caring for yourself. It may also be effective to continually change the ways in which you are caring for yourself, so that your self-compassion work does not become monotonous.
Q7	<i>What is bringing joy and light into your work life these days?</i>
A7	While these are unequivocally dark and stressful times, there are some cracks of light that can be found to foster joy in our work life. I [Ken Kraybill] find some light and joy in my work by working alongside people with lived experience. I feel inspired and enlivened by their recovery stories and their post-traumatic growth. It is also meaningful to work on issues related to equity and anti-racism.

Resources:

- [Whole-Person Care for People Experiencing Homelessness and Opioid Use Disorder Toolkit, SAMHSA](#)
- [Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#)
- [9 Ways to Fight Mental Health Stigma](#) from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- [Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination Against People with Mental Illness](#) from the American Psychiatric Association (APA), with links to further resources

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