



# TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IN A TIME OF COVID-19: DIRECT CARE PROMOTING HEALING

---

Sheri Gibson, Ph.D.

[sherigibson2@gmail.com](mailto:sherigibson2@gmail.com)

[www.DrSheriGibson.com](http://www.DrSheriGibson.com)

# A Shattered World



“One size *does not* fit all”



# Individual Responses are Multifaceted

- Pre-pandemic circumstances and resources
  - Prior exposure to adversity
  - Physical and mental health vulnerabilities
  - Economic and social supports
- Exposures encountered since the pandemic:
  - Illness of a family member
  - Loss of job or health insurance
  - Job status – essential health care workers
  - Time immersed in social media, news, over-exposure to information
  - Community-level stressors – e.g., “Hot spots”

# Trauma-Informed Care

- ▣ SAMHSA's Trauma-Informed Approach:
  - ▣ Behavioral Health is essential to health
  - ▣ Prevention works
  - ▣ Treatment is effective

# Trauma Informed Care Elements

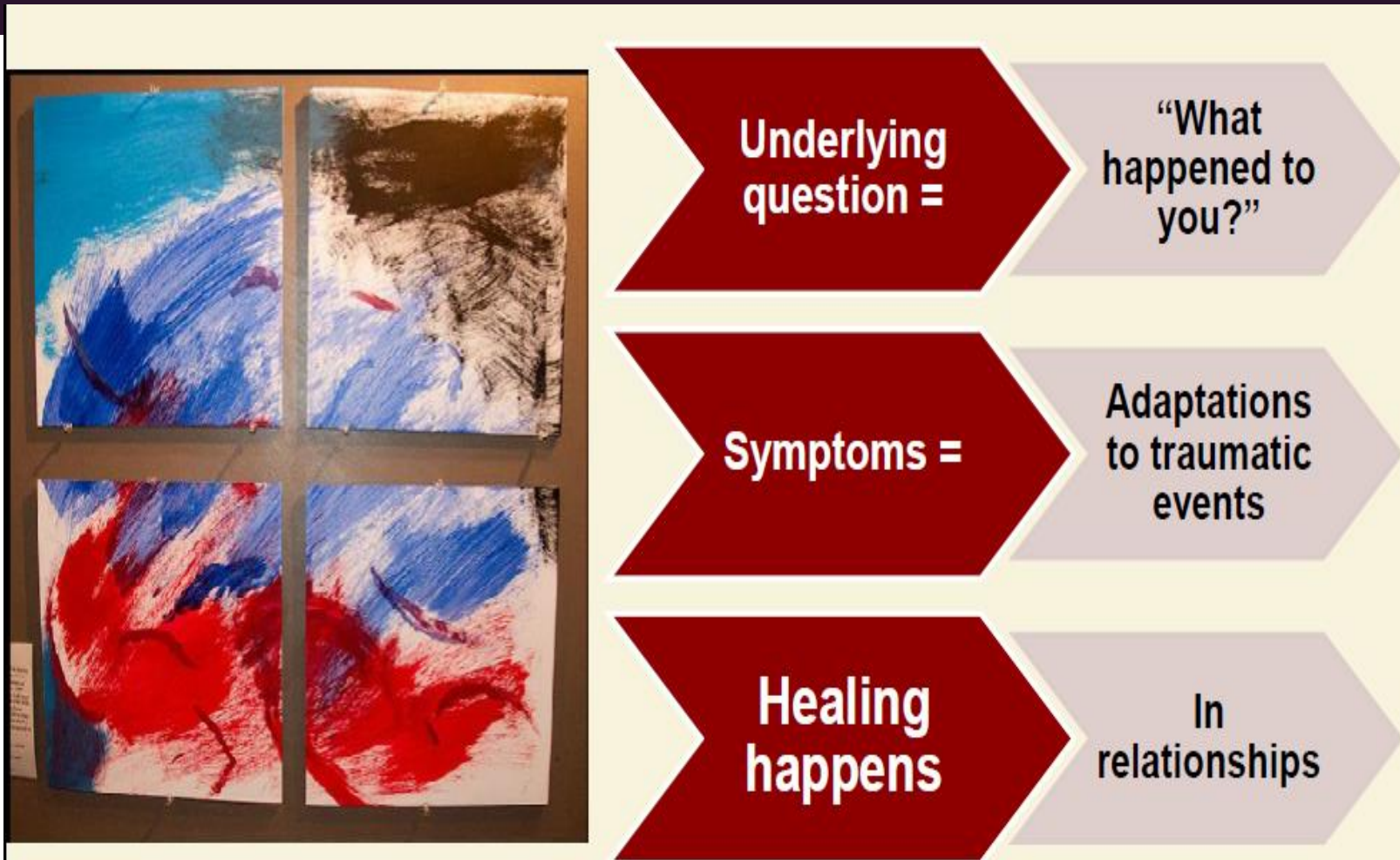
Understanding the **prevalence** of trauma

Recognizing how trauma **impacts** individuals

Putting this knowledge into **practice**

to **actively resist re-traumatization**

# Prevalence of Trauma: Approach





# Prevalence of Trauma: Approach



Video: Power of Empathy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>



# What is Trauma?

Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being

# Potential Traumatic Events

## **Abuse**

- *Emotional*
- *Sexual*
- *Physical*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Witnessing violence*
- *Bullying*
- *Cyberbullying*
- *Institutional*

## **Loss**

- *Death*
- *Abandonment*
- *Neglect*
- *Separation*
- *Natural disaster*
- *Accidents*
- *Terrorism*
- *War*

## **Chronic Stressors**

- *Poverty*
- *Racism*
- *Invasive medical procedure*
- *Community trauma*
- *Historical trauma*
- *Family member with substance use disorder*

# Prevalence of Trauma

Exposure to trauma is ubiquitous: seven out of ten respondents worldwide and nine out of ten adults in the USA report experiencing one or more lifetime traumas.

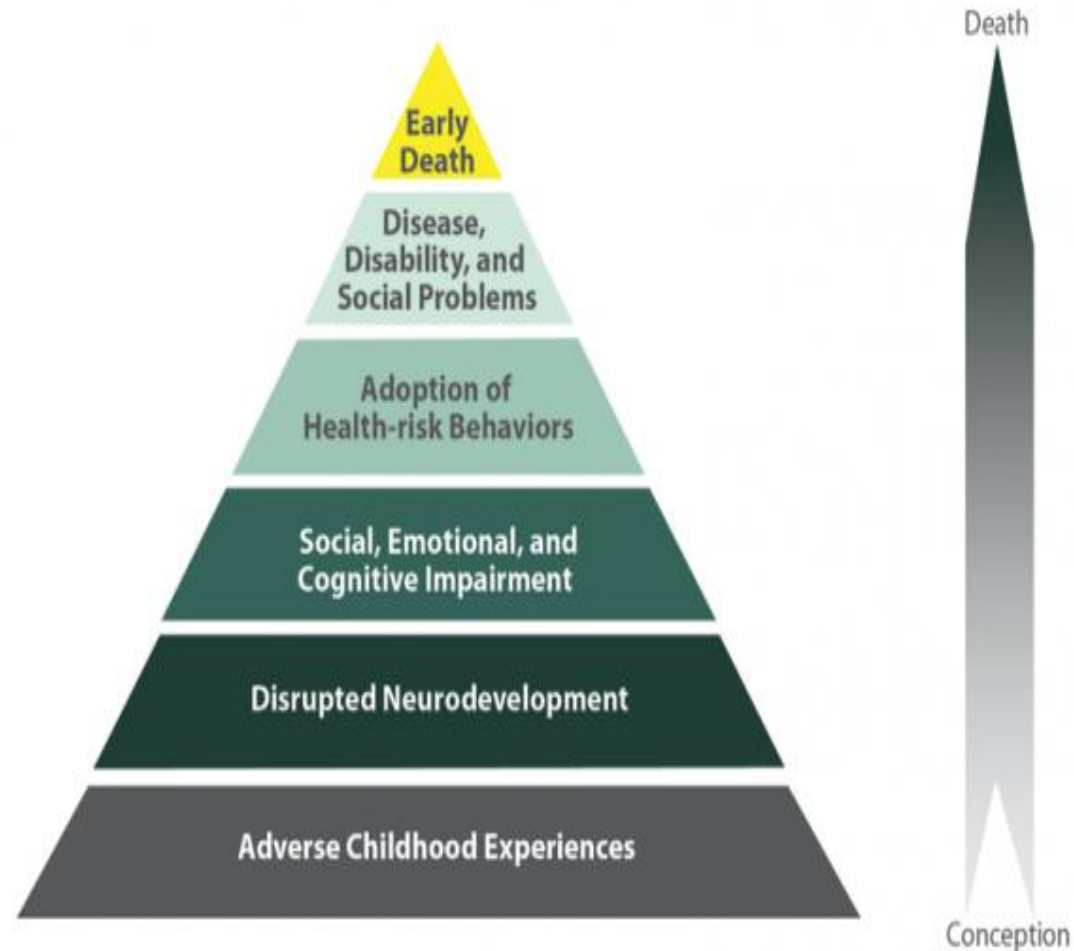
# Impact of Trauma



# Impact of Trauma on the Brain

- The brain has a bottom-up organization
- Experiences build brain architecture
- Fear activates the amygdala and shuts down the frontal lobes of the cortex.
- Toxic stress derails healthy development, and interferes with normal functioning

# Impact of Trauma: Adverse Childhood Experiences



Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences  
Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan



# Impact of Trauma

**The effect of trauma  
on an individual can  
be conceptualized as  
a normal response to  
an abnormal  
situation**

# Impact of Trauma: Problems OR Adaptations?

**Fight**

**“Non-compliant, combative”  
OR  
Struggling to regain or hold onto  
personal power**

**Flight**

**“Treatment resistant, uncooperative”  
OR  
Disengaging, withdrawing**

**Freeze**

**“Passive, unmotivated”  
OR  
Giving in to those in power**

# Impact of Trauma: Signs of Trauma Responses

## **Additional Signs**

- Flashbacks or frequent nightmares
- Sensitivity to noise or to being touched
- Always expecting something bad to happen
- Not remembering periods of one's life
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability
- Excessive watchfulness, anxiety, anger, shame or sadness

# Practice of Trauma Informed Care during COVID-19

# Trauma Brain = Dysregulated Behavior

- ▣ As residents' anxiety increases, their “thinking” brains become less engaged and behavior becomes more dysregulated.
- ▣ YOU can develop skills to help residents regulate and related by becoming calmer and more connected.
- ▣ This is achieved by:
  - ▣ Warmth
  - ▣ Validation
  - ▣ Flexibility
  - ▣ Structure
  - ▣ Hope for the future
  - ▣ Humor
  - ▣ Being part of a connected community

Who best to do that?





# Skill Development



# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Identifying and Validating Feelings

People who have experienced traumatic events, particularly at the hands of a significant caregiver, were given contradictory messages, dismissed, ignored, silenced, abandoned, blamed, shamed, told they had no rights to feel, etc.

*You have repeated opportunities to offer corrective experiences.*

# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Identifying and Validating Feelings

I know when I am feeling tired, angry, sad, frightened, etc.

I can read non-verbal emotional cues, e.g., eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, body posture, movement and gestures, rhythm and rate of voice.

I am able to verbally reflect other's emotional state. "It sounds like you feel very angry about this."

After reflecting feelings, I am able to validate the emotion. "You had to wait three days for me to return your call, and your question was really important to you. I understand why you're mad about this."

## Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Regulating Feelings

A significant outcome of having an overwhelmed nervous system is emotional dysregulation. This can make it harder to use skills learned in the past.

*Dementia can also undermine accessing skills to regulate emotions.*

# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Regulating Feelings

When I start to feel overwhelmed, I know how to bring myself back to emotional balance.

I am equipped to engage with others who are experiencing overwhelming feelings and am able to help them manage these feelings.

I am aware of **GROUNDING** strategies (e.g., focus on breathing, sensory strategies, redirecting attention).

# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Understanding the Stress Response

The nervous system's most important function is to keep us alive by alerting us to danger.

Many people are under and/or over responsive to even the slightest perception of danger. Behaviors may include violence, running away, self- abuse or shutting down.



# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Open and Respectful Communication

Many trauma experiences are dehumanizing, leaving people feeling shame and internalized judgment.

Judgmental or 'clinical' language may reinforce these beliefs. This language also allows staff to put clients in an 'other' category, ex: 'this person is very different from me.'

This type of distance may prohibit the formation of a therapeutic/healing relationship.

# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Appreciation

The survival brain becomes preoccupied with pain & danger but can be distracted when redirected and reminded of pleasure, fun, security, belonging, joy, beauty, humor, etc.

# Trauma Informed Care Skill Development: Reason for Being

I have a deep connection to things that are important to me.

Most of the time, I believe my life has purpose and meaning.

I am able to talk to other people about what makes them unique and to help them connect with activities that promote a sense of hope and value.



Thank you



# Trauma Informed Care: Further Reading

Judith Herman (2015) Trauma and Recovery

Linda Sanford (1991) Strong at the Broken Places

Robert Sapolsky (2004) Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers

Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014). The Body Keeps the Score

# Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services. Trauma Informed Care.  
[alamedacountytraumainformedcare.org](http://alamedacountytraumainformedcare.org)

Brown, D. W., Anda, R. F., Tiemeier, H., Felitti, V. J., Edwards, V. J., Croft, J. B., & Giles, W. H. (2009). Adverse childhood experiences and the risk of premature mortality. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, **37**, 389–396.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>

# Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Felitti, Vincent J.; Anda, Robert F.; Nordenberg, Dale; Williamson, David; Spitz, Alison; Edwards, Valerie; Koss, Mary; and Marks, James. (1998) Relationship of Child Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14:4, 245-258.

Fink, David S., and Galea, Sandro. (2015). Life Course Epidemiology of Trauma and Related Psychopathology in Civilian Populations. *Curr Psychiatry Rep*, 17:31.

Lieberman, Leslie. "Walking the Walk: Modeling Trauma Informed Practice in the Training Environment." *Multiplying Connections*.



# Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Mueser, K.T., Salyers, M.P., Rosenberg, S.D., Goodman, L.A., Essock, S.M., et al. (2004). Interpersonal Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Patients With Severe Mental Illness: Demographic, Clinical, and Health Correlates. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 30 (1), 45-57  
Read et al, 2008

National Center for PTSD.

[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsd\\_substance\\_abuse\\_veterans.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsd_substance_abuse_veterans.asp)

Perry, B. D. (2006). Applying principles of neurodevelopment to clinical work with maltreated and traumatized children: The neurosequential model of therapeutics. In Boyd- Webb, N, ed. *Working with traumatized youth in child welfare*. New York: Guilford Press.

# Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, National Center for Trauma Informed Care. *SAMHSA's Trauma Informed Approach: Key Assumptions and Principles Curriculum*.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma Informed Approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

SAMHSA (2011). Current Statistics on the Prevalence and Characteristics of People Experiencing Homelessness in the United States.  
[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)

SAMHSA (2009) Substance Abuse Treatment: Addressing the Specific Needs of Women. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 51. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

# Trauma Informed Care: Bibliography

Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Trauma Informed Care Skill Development. Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic/skilldev.pdf>

# RESOURCES

---

# Trauma-Informed, Person-Centered Care Resources

- **NORC**

- Trauma-informed care – <https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/trauma-informed-care>
- Person-centered care - <https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/person-centered-care>

- **Consumer Voice**

- Resident-Directed Care/Culture Change <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/for-advocates/resident-directed-care>
- My Personal Directions for Quality Living - [Blank Form](#) & [Sample](#)
  - A tool from Consumer Voice, with edits by SAGE, for individuals to share what matters to them for person-centered care.
- Information for LTC consumers - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/recipients>
- Information for Family Members - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/family>

# Resources

## National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC)

[www.ltombudsman.org](http://www.ltombudsman.org)

- Coronavirus Prevention in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Ombudsman Programs  
[https://ltombudsman.org/omb\\_support/COVID-19](https://ltombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19)

## National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice)

[www.theconsumervoice.org](http://www.theconsumervoice.org)

- Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Advocates  
<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>
- Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Residents and Families  
<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19/residents-families>



# The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center

***Connect with us:***

[www.ltcombudsman.org](http://www.ltcombudsman.org)  
[ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org](mailto:ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org)



**The National LTC Ombudsman Resource Center**



**@LTCombudcenter**



**Get our app! Search for "LTC Ombudsman Resource Center" in the Apple Store or Google Play**

*This project was supported, in part, by grant number 90OMRC0001-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.*