Window of Tolerance

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What is your stress level?
How will understanding trauma help clients...and us??

All behavior is communication

Normal reactions

Not an excuse for bad behavior
But a way to learn to be present, to understand emotional responses, and to aide in understanding relationship dynamics.

Can block goals and dreams
Disclaimer:

Explaining trauma informed care/education/community engagement to self and others.

A quick search to define “Trauma Informed”

“Recognizing that many people have trauma.”

“Excellent...but what do we do with that? How do we recognize and support?”

This is NOT a presentation that will help you pass your next exam. It’s about looking at concepts differently in order to make them more approachable and applicable.
Window of Tolerance

- A concept created by Dr. Dan Siegel (1999) to describe the ‘optimal arousal zone’ of human beings.
- The capacity to manage emotions when under stress, at any given moment.
• “Humans are designed for connection. After trauma, the brain and body can prioritize protection over connection.”
  - Bessel Van der Kolk

• Now *add a pandemic that further breaks connection*..
The brain response

**Amygdala** - The brain's emotional computer and alarm system

**Hippocampus** - Brains storage for our most recent conscious memories

**Thalamus** - Translates sights, sounds, smells into the language of the brain

**Prefrontal Cortex** - Processes information by cross-referencing and making various associations between experiences
Event

Voluntary Memory
- story
- timestamp
- updateable
- verbal

Autobiographical Memory

Involuntary Memory
- no structure
- in the present
- fixed
- sensory

Fear Response
What we may notice after trauma:

- Anger
- Guilt/Survivors guilt
- Withdrawal/ isolation
- Increased substance use or abuse
- Hypervigilance
- Lack of trust
- Overall sense of numbing of emotions
- Increased desire to control everyday experiences
Physical symptoms we may experience after stress/trauma:

• Insomnia or nightmares
• Fatigue
• Being startled easily
• Difficulty concentrating
• Racing heartbeat
• Edginess and agitation
• Aches and pains
• Muscle tension
Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Edu
Abstract thought
Concrete Thought
Affiliation
"Attachment"
Sexual Behavior
Emotional Reactivity
Motor Regulation
"Arousal"
Appetite/Satiety
Sleep
Blood Pressure
Heart Rate
Body Temperature
Trauma memory is held in the body

• “The purpose of trauma treatment is to help a person feel safe in his or her own body.” Bessel Van De Kolk
Brain-Based Approaches to Help Clients After Trauma

How to help clients cope with their raw emotions and defense reactions.

Top-Down Approaches

Bottom-Up Approaches

CBT

EMDR

Yoga

Trauma

MBCT

Sensorimotor Psychotherapy

Comprehensive Resource Model

How to help clients think differently.
“Don’t tell me to go meditate/take a bath/go jogging!”
Treating the problem or the symptom?
“If you can’t measure it, does it exist?”

Brene’ Brown

- Subjective Units of Distress
- 0-10
- 0 no distress, 10 the worst distress
Window of Tolerance

Somatic Signs
- Regulation
- Repair and clean up
- Ease
- Grounded/settled
- Pain symptoms lower

Mental-Emotional Signs
- Calm
- Curious
- Playful
- Relaxed
- Relational

Behavioral Signs
- Cooperation
- Completion of tasks
- Spontaneity
- Empathy is available
- Creativity emerges

Bandwidth can be very narrow – our goal is to expand it, but first we have to be in it!
This represents a healthy nervous system:
Hyperarousal

- Hyperaware or vigilant
- Overly quick or intense reactions
- Feeling a lack of emotional safety
- Overwhelming emotions

Hypoarousal

- Shut down, flat or numb
- Hard to think, disconnected
- Feeling shame, can’t say ‘no’

Window of tolerance

- Able to think and feel at the same time
Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress

- Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity
- Exaggerated Startle
- Inability to relax, Restlessness
- Hyper-vigilance, Digestive problems
- Emotional flooding
- Chronic pain, Sleeplessness
- Hostility/rage

- Depression, Flat effect
- Lethargy, Deadness
- Exhaustion, Chronic Fatigue
- Disorientation
- Disconnection, Dissociation
- Complex syndromes, Pain
- Low Blood Pressure
- Poor digestion

Levine, Ogden, Siegel
Protocol for trauma recovery....

• Stabilize
• Stabilize
• Stabilize
• Skill building/ resource development for self regulation
• Cognitive restructuring for self regulation
  • Change the automatic negative thoughts
• Understand your behaviors as they relate to past experiences
  • Perspective taking
• Recognizing blocking
  • Intellectualizing, anger, etc (Defenses)
• Reprocessing
• Reintegration
Coping skills and self care

1. Where are you in your window of tolerance?
2. Mindfulness. Stay in the here and now. ...
3. Butterfly Hugs
4. Tapping
5. Breathing.
   1. Square breathing
   2. Deep breathing from your belly can help ground you and bring you back to yourself if you feel you're being triggered. ...
6. Physical activity. ... Get moving...
7. Soothe your senses. ...
8. Challenge your thoughts. ...
9. Write things down.
• **Staying grounded.** To feel in the present and more grounded, sit in your chair. Feel your feet on the ground and your back against the chair. Look around you and pick six objects that have red or blue in them. Notice how your breathing gets deeper and calmer.
What is your stress level?

• Where are you in your Window of Tolerance?
Questions?