Trauma-Informed Care with Older Adults

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Alison Mitchell, MA, MSW
Len Kaye, PhD, DSW
UMaine Center on Aging
Overview: Trauma-Informed Care

- Context, research background
- Defining terms
- T-I-C with individuals
- T-I-C with organizations/agencies
Background: The concept of “trauma-informed” derives from ACEs Research

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research conducted in 1990s, collaboration between CDC and Kaiser Permanente in CA, conducted by Vincent Felitti and Robert Anda

17,000+ participants volunteered, responded to ACE questionnaire surveying traumatic experiences

Findings:
- Almost 2/3 of participants reported at least 1 ACE
- Higher ACE score correlates to higher risks for long-term health problems later in life
Prior to your 18th birthday:

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Was your mother or stepmother:  
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Did a household member go to prison?  
No___ If Yes, enter 1 __

Now add up your “Yes” answers:  
This is your ACE Score

Taken from the Aces Too High website: http://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/
This is a conference focused on aging issues, why do we care about Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Image taken from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy.pyramid.html
An individual who records 4 or more ACEs is more at risk for the following long-term health complications:

- Severe obesity (1.6x)
- Depression (4.6x)
- Alcoholism (7.4x)
- Heart disease (2.2x)
- Any cancer (1.9x)
- Stroke (2.4x)
- COPD (3.9x)
- Diabetes (1.6x)

(Felitti, et. al., 1998)
Regardless of childhood trauma history, though, older adults often face new traumas or stressors:

- Transitions
- Loss
- Emotional adjustments
- Potential elder abuse

ACEs research shows us the long-term impact of exposure to chronic stresses and trauma.

We can apply knowledge and concepts derived from the ACEs research to the aging population.
What is it, exactly?

How do we define “trauma?”

Is trauma different from stress?
Stress

Is a normal human response to stimuli that can include:

- Muscle tension
- Anxiety & irritability
- Disjointed thinking
- Loss of words
- Action (vs. thinking)
- Hypervigilance
- Fight-Flight-Freeze response

Image taken from: http://www.chi-ki-holistichealth.co.uk/userfiles/Stress.jpg
Trauma is

When our internal and external coping mechanisms are overwhelmed by outside event(s)

Image taken from: http://mashable.com/2011/03/30/summify/
Trauma-informed is

- Understanding the cumulative impacts of trauma on individuals and organizations
- Creating an environment of safety
- Promoting resilience and healing
- Promoting effective, open communication
- Asking “what happened?”

Image taken from:
http://johnziraldo.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/safety_net.gif
Trauma-informed care with individuals…

- Recognizes that everyone experiences difficulties
- Understands that adversity shapes how we react and behave
- Believes everyone possesses resilience and the ability to heal
- Asks the question “what happened to you?”
“What’s wrong with you?” versus “What’s happened to you?”

- "He isn’t fitting in well here, he has limited social skills and isn’t making friends."
- "She doesn’t remember anything, she’s like a sieve."
- "I don’t understand why he’s suddenly making things up. He’s lying or he doesn’t make sense."
- Has he experienced a significant loss or transition recently?
- Consider: is there a medical condition? Is there a trauma history?
- Is there a medical condition or a trauma history?
Post trauma responses

- Memory problems
- Hyperarousal
- Maladaptive coping
- Reenactment
- Attitude change
- Shattered meaning
- Developmental interference
- Secondary injuries
- Loss of social support
- Intrusions
- Avoidance
- Impaired affect regulation
- Survivor Guilt
- Deficits information processing

Slide courtesy of Sanctuary Institute, a division of ANDRUS, and used here with permission.

http://www.thesanctuaryinstitute.org/
The “what’s wrong” approach:

“He’s having trouble making friends.”

BECAUSE…?

• difficulty with relationships
• limited social skills
• difficulty adjusting to new living situation
The trauma-informed approach:

“What happened that is affecting his ability to make friends?”

UNDERSTANDS…

Adversity can negatively impact a person’s ability to form relationships (no trust)
The “what’s wrong” approach:

“She forgets everything lately, it’s like she’s not listening.”

BECAUSE…?

- not paying attention
- forgetful (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Sick or not listening
The trauma-informed approach:

“What happened to affect her memory or her attention?”

UNDERSTANDS…

Under stress, we attend to the perceived “threats.” Information important for survival is marked.

There may be an underlying medical condition causing the memory loss or inattention.
The “what’s wrong” approach:

“He’s making things up
Either he’s lying or he doesn’t make sense.”

BECAUSE…?
• not a very good liar,
gets caught in his own inconsistencies
• “losing it”
• sick
• must be a bad person
The trauma-informed approach:

“What happened that explains the gaps or lapses?”

UNDERSTANDS...

Traumatic dissociation is a coping skill during the period of stress.

There may be an underlying medical condition.
Trauma-informed is

- Understanding the cumulative impacts of trauma on individuals and organizations
- Creating an environment of safety
- Promoting resilience and healing
- Promoting effective, open communication
- Asking “what happened?”

Image taken from: http://johnziraldo.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/safety_net.gif
Trauma-informed care with/for organizations…

- Recognizes that organizations, and individuals within organizations, experience adversity & stress
- Understands that adversity shapes how we react and behave
- Believes everyone possesses resilience and the ability to heal, including organizations
- Asks the question “what happened?”
Organizational stresses:
- Financial pressures
- Policy compliance
- Social pressures
- Political environment
- Staff turnover

Staff Stresses:
- Caseloads
- Billing requirements
- Compassion fatigue
- Burnout
- Secondary traumatic stress

Client stresses:
- Transitions & loss
- Illness
- Abuse & neglect
- Financial
- Substance abuse
What is a “trauma-informed agency?” What does that look like?

- Understanding the cumulative impacts of trauma on individuals and organizations:
  - Promotes staff self-care
  - Supports professional development
  - Vacation and sick leave are used (regularly)
  - Lunch is eaten… and not at the desk
  - Regular supervision
What is a “trauma-informed agency?” What does that look like?

- Creating an environment of safety:
  - Asking permission (empowering & respecting)
  - The “meeting after the meeting”
  - Open, transparent communication & decision-making
  - Non-judgmental
Provider Resilience (app)

Relax and Rest Guided Mediation (app)

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL)survey
http://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html


The Sanctuary Institute: Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Care
http://www.thesanctuaryinstitute.org/

THRIVE Initiative
http://thriveinitiative.org/

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
http://www.nctsn.org/

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study information
http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/
http://acestoohigh.com/
References

Aces Too High News (2010). acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. cdc.gov/ace


The Sanctuary Institute, a division of ANDRUS, http://www.thesesanctuaryinstitute.org/
Questions and Closing Thoughts?

Thank you!
Alison Mitchell, MA, MSW
alison.mitchell@umit.maine.edu

Lenard W. Kaye, PhD, DSW
len.kaye@umit.maine.edu

University of Maine Center on Aging
25 Texas Avenue
Camden Hall
Bangor, ME 04401