BEING AS WHOLE AS WE CAN BE: STRATEGIES TO MANAGE VICARIOUS TRAUMA

RURAL CHW CONFERENCE, BEMIDJI, MN

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OCTOBER 21, 2019

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY

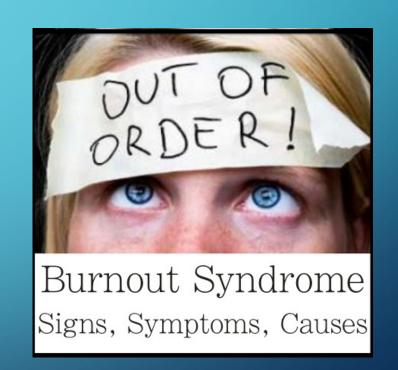
- Participants will learn how the human stress response system can impact work and personal lives.
- Participants will develop strategies and basic tools to help ameliorate the impact of vicarious trauma and toxic stress.

DEMANDS OF THE WORK

- Multi-tasking
- Lack of external service/referral network coordination or availability
- Unstable landscape (funder priorities shift, legislative changes, etc)
- Competing priorities
- Personnel issues
- Work/life balance
- An expectation to do more with less

VICARIOUS OR SECONDARY TRAUMA

- Vicarious or secondary trauma (also known as burnout) "is a process by which a professional's inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with client's trauma material" (Killian, K. 2008).
- It shows up as anxiety, trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating, anger, unprofessional behavior. It can accumulate over time.



REPEAT EXPOSURE

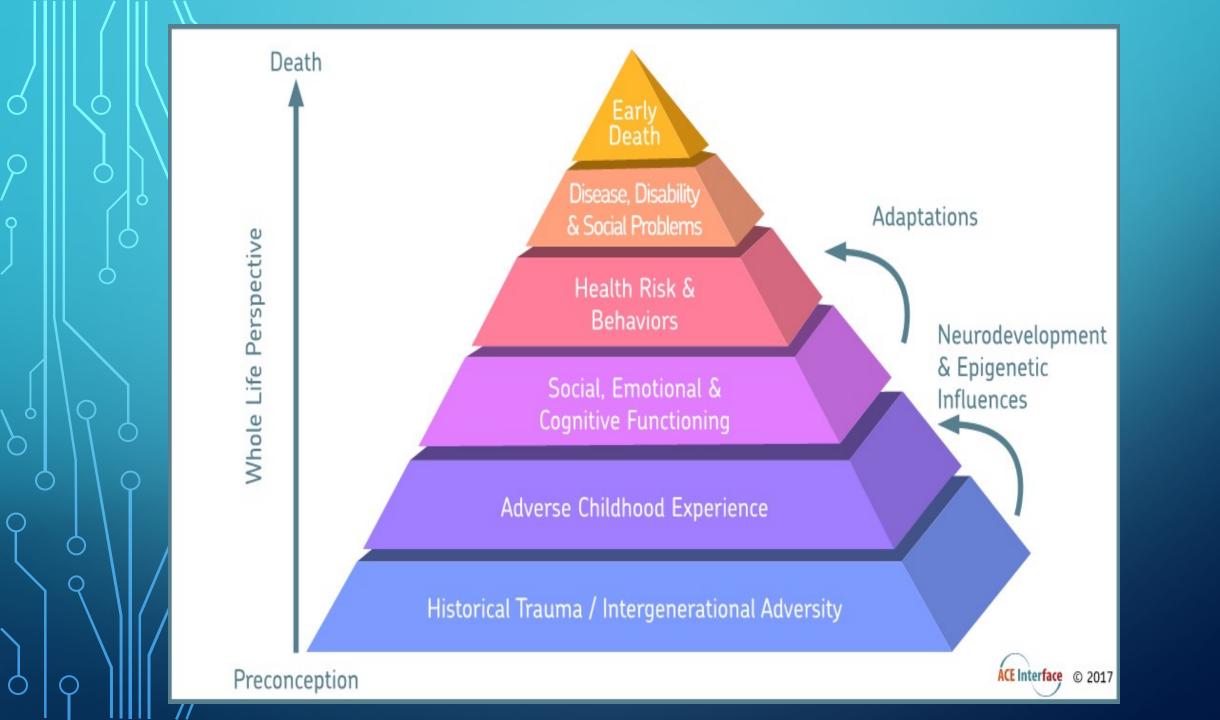
- Those who are repeatedly exposed to persons suffering from posttraumatic stress disorders symptoms can experience an increase in PTSD symptoms in the caregiver.
- How do caregivers model self-care for clients/program participants?
- The importance of self-awareness.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Cause changes in the architecture of the brain that affect everything from physical growth to emotional development to the <u>capacity to make healthy decisions as an adult</u>.

It also increases the risk of alcoholism, depression, liver disease, intimate partner violence, STIs, smoking and suicide.

(MDH Health Disparities Report, 2013)



STRESS –
RELEASES
CORTISOL, AN
IMMUNE SYSTEM
SUPPRESSANT &
INFLAMMATORY
AGENT.

Immune-Stress Vicious Cycle



*Everyday stress you experience due to a hectic, modern-day lifestyle.

The Role of Cortisol

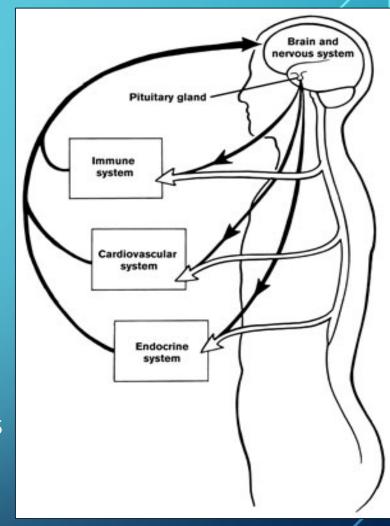
- Balanced levels of cortisol are essential for the body to function properly.
- Levels that rise and stay high can cause significant damage.
- When stressed for a long periods of time, the brain's internal thermostat resets and tells the adrenal glands to maintain this higher level of cortisol as though it were normal.
- Chronically elevated levels can impair: immune function, reduce muscle mass, increase fat, impair memory and learning, destroy brain cells, cause anxiety and sleep problems, and damage stomach, kidneys, and heart.

AW I LUNCH



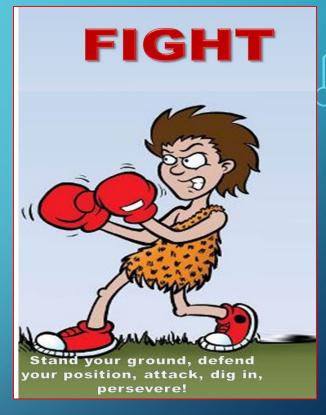
OUR RESPONSE TO DANGER

- Danger signals the body's response hormones released for ACTION.
- Fight/flight/freeze response natural and normal, except when it isn't.
- Fear or anxiety triggers the body to maintain levels of cortisol and adrenaline, resulting in inflammation and reduced immune functions.



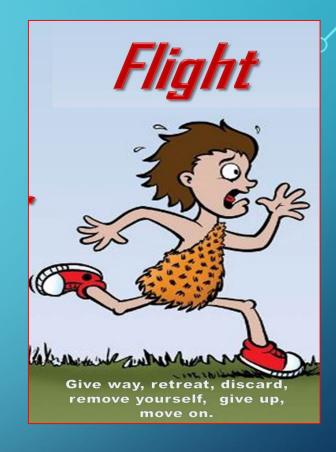
THOSE IN FIGHT (REACT EXTERNALLY) RESPONSE

- The inner psychological need is to stay in control and feel in charge no matter what.
- Anger.
- Feel the need for resolution RIGHT NOW.
- Justify behavior —survival need.
- Lashing out verbally.
- Blaming-shaming language, put downs.
- Threatening behavior.



THOSE IN FLIGHT (FLEE) RESPONSE

- The inner psychological need to find a way to flee to avoid feeling more overwhelmed.
- Distracting behaviors-procrastination.
- Avoidance.
- Shut out people—isolate.
- Emotional distancing-"Don't let anyone get too close."
- Silence. "You can't make me talk to you."
- Playing dumb, dropping out of the conversation-"Whatever."
- Appease.



FREEZE RESPONSE

A BIOLOGICALLY DRIVEN REACTION IN THE FACE OF THREAT-USUALLY SEEN WHEN THERE HAS BEEN TRAUMA AND NO WAY TO ESCAPE.

DURING FREEZING- DISSOCIATION, THE BRAIN PREPARES THE BODY FOR INJURY. BLOOD IS SHUNTED AWAY FROM THE LIMBS AND THE HEART RATE SLOWS TO REDUCE BLOOD LOSS FROM WOUNDS.

A FLOOD OF ENDOGENOUS OPIOIDS-THE BRAIN'S NATURAL HEROIN-LIKE SUBSTANCES —IS RELEASED, KILLING PAIN, PRODUCING CALM AND A SENSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE FROM WHAT IS HAPPENING.



Fight or Flight Response



skin

blood vessels constrict; chills & sweating

heart

beats faster & harder

stomach

output of digestive enzymes decreases

muscles

become more tense; trembling can occur eyes pupils dilate

> lungs quick, deep breating occurs

bowel food movement slows down

> blood vessels blood pressure increases as major vessels ciles

BODY SCAN EXPERIENCE

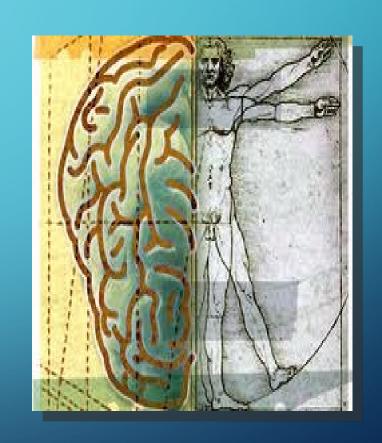
"Direct your eye inward, and you will find a thousand regions in your mind yet undiscovered"

Henry D. Thoreau



MIND-BODY MEDICINE

"It regards as fundamental an approach that respects and enhances each person's capacity for self-knowledge and self care."

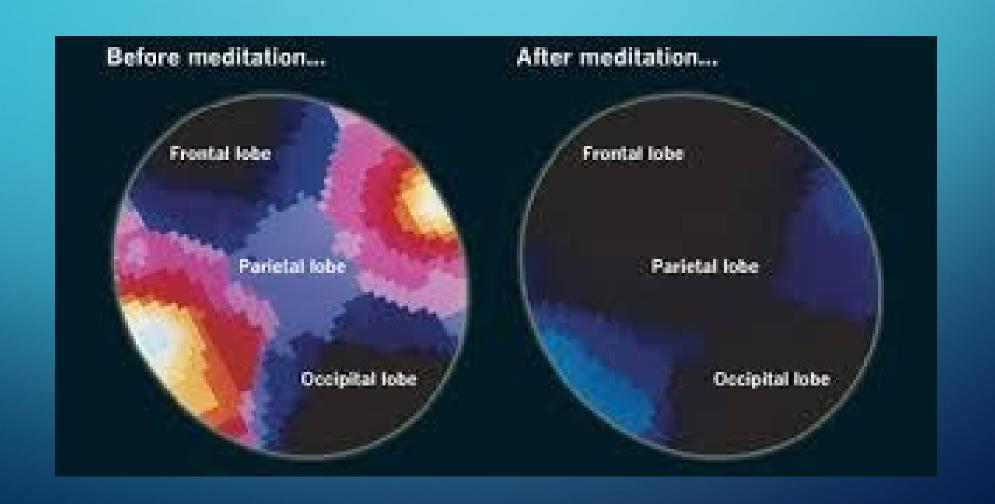


DEEP BREATHING - MEDITATION

- Studies show meditation changes brain activity, enhances functioning in conflict monitoring and attention.
- •Positive impact on depression & anxiety, pain management, substance abuse, ADHD.
- •Results in decreased stress, lower blood pressure and blood sugar, improved mood.

Center for Mind Body Medicine at www.cmbm.org.

MEDITATION CHANGES THE BRAIN



MINDFULNESS

BEGIN WITH 90 SECONDS EACH DAY

Monday: Gratitude

Tuesday: Compassion

Wednesday: Acceptance

Thursday: Meaning

Friday: Forgiveness

Saturday: Celebration

Sunday: Reflection

NUTRITION

 Links between trans fats and depression established (Ratey and Manning,)

• Cortisol triggers cravings for sugar, fat, & carbs, which are then effectively stored at the waistline and can lead to an imbalance in blood sugars.

 Imbalanced blood sugars can result in feeling tired, moody, or having poor concentration. And Type 2 diabetes.



Movement is an essential form of Self-Care

Physical activity feeds the brain

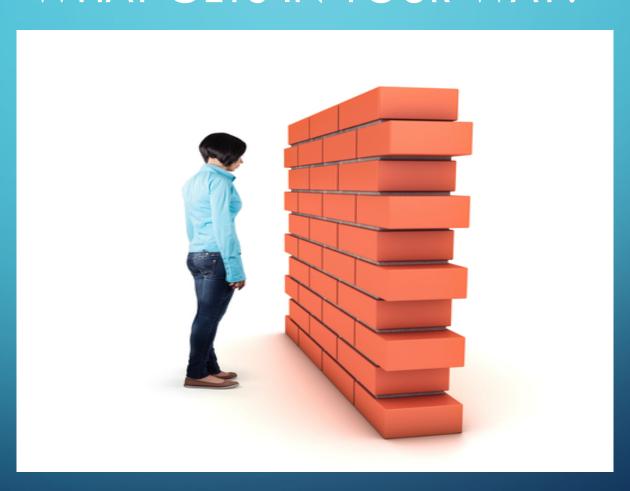
- Movement increases the capacity of blood vessels, allowing for the delivery of oxygen, water, and glucose to the brain.
- Optimizes the brain's focus & performance,
- Provides greater sense of mastery and confidence in the body,
- Serotonin is released with movement—leading to a greater sense of well-being.

RESTORATIVE SLEEP

- Turn off electronics 1 hour before sleep.
- Prepare for sleep as you prepare for your day.
- Benefits include reduced blood pressure & heart rate, increased blood flow to major muscles.
- Some studies link inadequate sleep to short term memory loss and weight gain.



WHAT GETS IN YOUR WAY?



TRIGGERS

- Events or situations that instantly create highly emotional response.
- Limbic system highjacks us, we are no longer in control.
- Triggers are personal, often the result of past wounds.
- Automatic response, but we have choices around how we react.
- Develop discipline around not reacting and shift to more resourceful, strategic state before taking action.

HABITS

Habits are unconscious, repetitive actions.

Individuals, organizations, movements all have habits.

ORGANIZATIONAL HABITS

HELPFUL

OR NOT

- Clear lines of communication,
- Manageable case/work loads,
- Debriefing,
- Actively modeling self care,
- Flexible work time/space,
- Professional and personal development.

- Lack of clarity in strategic vision,
- Overwhelming work loads,
- Lack of teamwork,
- Unhealthy environment,
- No flexibility in hours,
- Few growth opportunities,
- Gossip.

PERSONAL HABITS

- Trauma histories pull people toward the past, it is familiar.
- We carry our family with us.
- •I got this thing!
- Defensiveness.
- Survivor Habits.

PRACTICAL SELF CARE

Organizational	Individual
Leadership counts — modeling self-care shifts social norms	10 - 15 minutes a day of spaciousness to start
Establish self-care as core competency — which does not reduce accountability to show up!	Music, movement, ceremony, nature, nutrition, sleep, gratitude, body work, social supports, breath work.
Actively address poor organizational habits	Commit to identifying and shaving away negative personal habits. Practice noticing triggers and using new tools to self-regulate.
Invest in personal and professional skill building.	Read, experiment with new practices, find what resonates. Apps!

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