

# Using a Trauma-Informed Lens



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What is trauma and its impact?

What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

How might survivors you know complete these stems?

- The world is...*
- They always think I...*
- I will never be...*
- Because of me...*
- I am...*
- If they really cared...*



Kintsukuroi (keen-tsoo-koo-roy)



The Japanese art of mending pottery using gold or silver lacquer. The broken and mended pot becomes even more beautiful than the original. A compelling metaphor for how pain, grief, and trauma in our lives can transform us in positive, even beautiful ways.

## Entering the Shadows

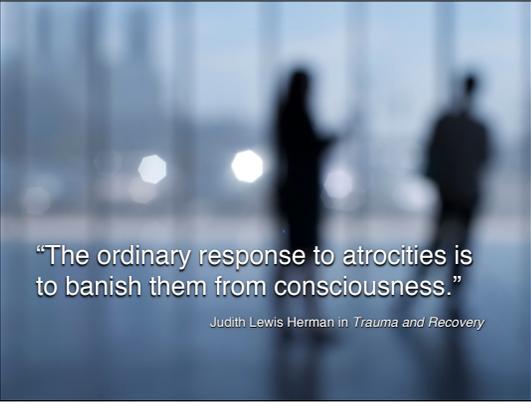
“The unspeakable”

“Trauma is the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering.”

Peter A. Levine in *Healing Trauma*

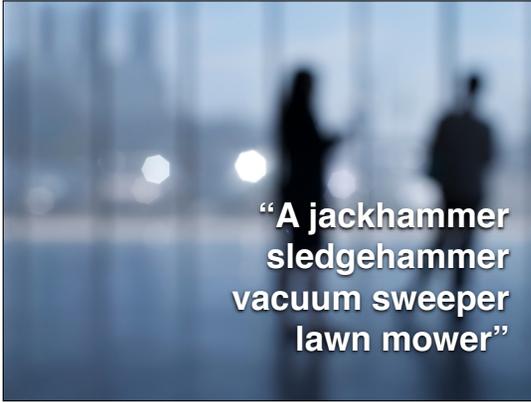
“No one any longer denies the fact that wars can ruin the lives of soldiers and their families. But when it comes to physical and emotional violence within the family...society continues to avoid the grim evidence.”

Mary Sykes Wylie in *The Long Shadow of Trauma*



“The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness.”

*Judith Lewis Herman in *Trauma and Recovery**

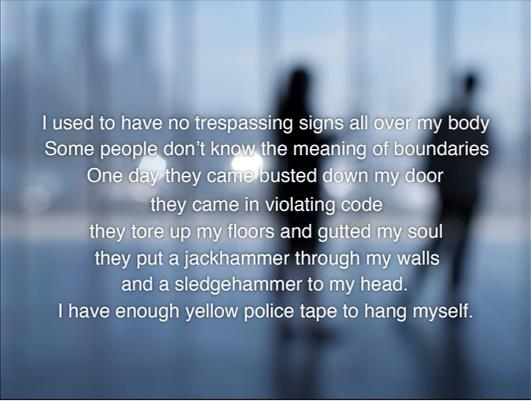


“A jackhammer  
sledgehammer  
vacuum sweeper  
lawn mower”



Under Construction

*Heidi H.*

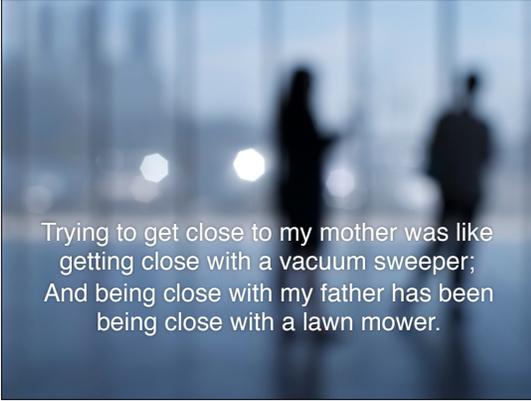


I used to have no trespassing signs all over my body  
Some people don't know the meaning of boundaries  
One day they came busted down my door  
they came in violating code  
they tore up my floors and gutted my soul  
they put a jackhammer through my walls  
and a sledgehammer to my head.  
I have enough yellow police tape to hang myself.

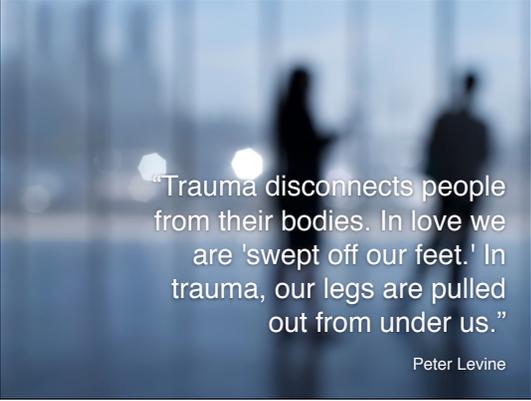


Untitled

*Catherine H.*



Trying to get close to my mother was like  
getting close with a vacuum sweeper;  
And being close with my father has been  
being close with a lawn mower.

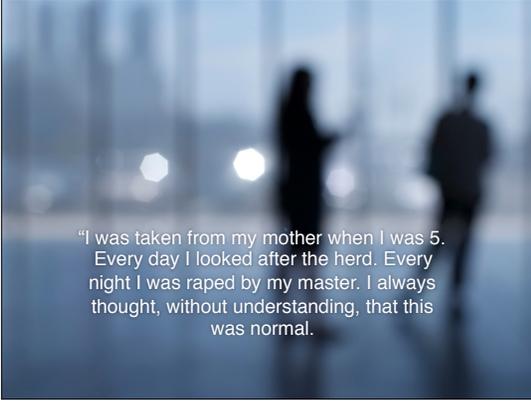


“Trauma disconnects people  
from their bodies. In love we  
are 'swept off our feet.' In  
trauma, our legs are pulled  
out from under us.”

*Peter Levine*



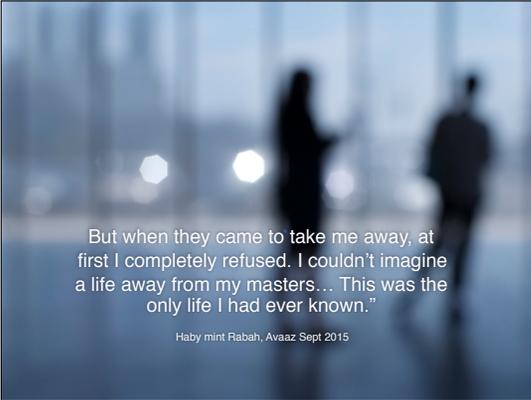
“Normal”



“I was taken from my mother when I was 5.  
Every day I looked after the herd. Every  
night I was raped by my master. I always  
thought, without understanding, that this  
was normal.”



In Mauritania, where I'm from, hundreds of thousands of people are still held this way today. But I was lucky. My brother escaped his masters and found an organization working to stop slavery. He asked them to help free me."



But when they came to take me away, at first I completely refused. I couldn't imagine a life away from my masters... This was the only life I had ever known."

Haby mint Rabah, *Avaaz* Sept 2015



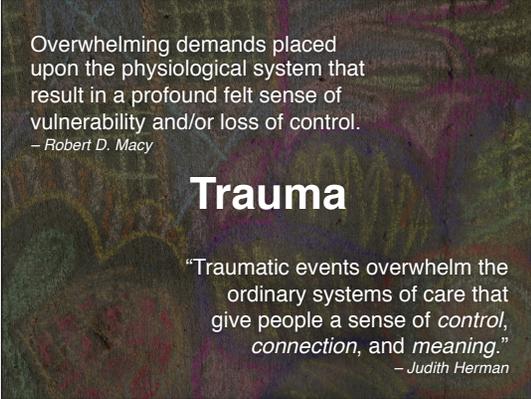
**"A thief"**



What gets stolen?



sense of safety; trust; belief in goodness of self, other people and world; self-regulation, inner calm, feeling of centeredness; ability to problem-solve; ability to respond vs. react; control, autonomy, empowerment; confidence; health/protective factors; self-esteem, connection to own body...



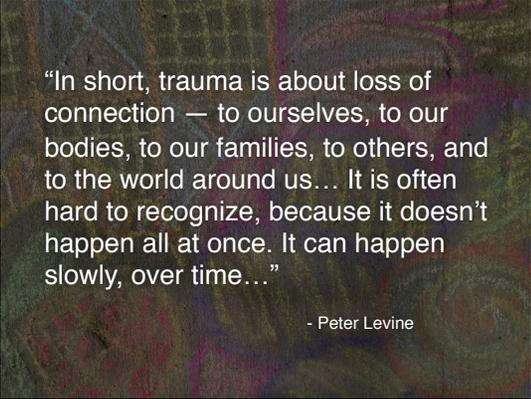
Overwhelming demands placed upon the physiological system that result in a profound felt sense of vulnerability and/or loss of control.

— Robert D. Macy

## Trauma

"Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of *control, connection, and meaning.*"

— Judith Herman



"In short, trauma is about loss of connection — to ourselves, to our bodies, to our families, to others, and to the world around us... It is often hard to recognize, because it doesn't happen all at once. It can happen slowly, over time..."

— Peter Levine



## Prevalence of trauma



### Prevalence of Trauma: Mothers Experiencing Homelessness in U.S.

- 92% have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime
- 2/3 have histories of domestic violence
- Compared to low-income housed women, mothers experiencing homelessness have:
  - 3 x the rate of PTSD (36%)
  - 2 x the rate of drug/alcohol dependence (41%)
- About 50% have experienced a major episode of depression since becoming homeless.

Source: SAMHSA

**ACE Study**  
Adverse Childhood Experiences

**Finding Your ACE Score**

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often:
  - Swear at you, yell at you, or hit you (or threaten you)?
  - Use or threaten you with a dangerous weapon?
  - Use or threaten you with physical force?
 Yes/No If you enter 1
- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often:
  - Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
  - Ever hit you with a belt, whip, or other object?
  - Ever hit you with a fist?
  - Ever hit you with a knife or other sharp object?
 Yes/No If you enter 1
- Did an adult or older child in the household often or very often:
  - Scold or lecture you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
  - Attempt or actually force oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
 Yes/No If you enter 1
- Did you often or very often feel that:
  - You were in your family based on or through you were important or special?
  - Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
 Yes/No If you 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?
  - Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
 Yes/No If you enter 1
- Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
  - Yes/No If you enter 1
- Was your mother or stepmother:
  - Often or very often sad, drunk, depressed, or had something thrown at her?
  - Sometimes, often, or very often hit, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
  - Ever reportedly hit or beat a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
 Yes/No If you enter 1
- Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
  - Yes/No If you enter 1
- Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
  - Yes/No If you enter 1
- Did a household member go to prison?
  - Yes/No If you enter 1

Now add up your "Yes" answers. This is your ACE Score.

# Impact of trauma

## Impact of Trauma: Ability to Function

High levels of distress, anxiety, and sometimes panic

Confusion, disorientation, loss of control

Dissociation

Intrusive thoughts, hyper-arousal, and avoidance

Re-experiencing the traumatic event (triggers)

## Impact of Trauma: Shattered Belief Systems

The world is unsafe.

Other people are unsafe and cannot be trusted.

God has abandoned me.

My own thoughts and feelings are unsafe.

I'm unworthy.

I'm not capable.



## Impact of Trauma: Physical Health

Chronic pain

Gynecological difficulties

Gastrointestinal (GI) problems

Asthma

Heart palpitations

Headaches

Musculoskeletal difficulties



## Impact of Trauma: Mental Health

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Depression

Anxiety/Panic disorder

Attachment disorders

Substance use issues

Dissociative disorders

Somatization

Eating disorders

Bipolar disorder

Borderline personality disorder

Schizoaffective



## What does it mean to be trauma-informed?



"A strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma.

It emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for providers and survivors, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment"

Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010



## Post-traumatic growth

New opportunities emerge

Change in relationships

Increased sense of inner strength

Greater appreciation of life

Deepened sense of spirituality/meaning



Trauma-informed care is based on an understanding that **recovery is possible and achievable for everyone**, regardless of how vulnerable they may appear.



Trauma-informed organizations must provide services through the lens of trauma. This may involve modifying their values, principles, culture, and practices.

Various policies and procedures must be put in place—with input, feedback, and involvement of program participants.



## Principles

Understanding trauma and its impact

Promoting safety

Supporting client control, choice, and autonomy

Sharing power and governance

Promoting healing through relationships



## Principles

Practicing cultural humility

Integrating care

Recognizing that recovery can and does happen

Addressing secondary traumatization and promoting self-care

Adapted from Guarino, Soares, Konnath, Clervil, & Bassuk, 2009

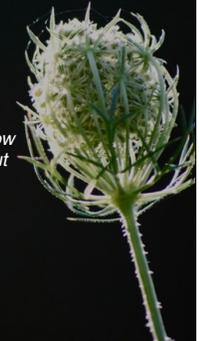


A trauma-informed perspective differs from traditional views of service provision.



Traditional: Hierarchical

*"In our program, we need to set certain rules, and clients have to follow them. It may not always seem fair, but my boss tells me what I have to do, and I need to make sure clients do what they have to do."*



Trauma-Informed:  
**Decrease hierarchy. Find ways to share power.**

*"In our agency we try to listen to what people perceive to be their strengths and encourage them to make their own life choices while also asking people to follow certain rules for the good of the group."*



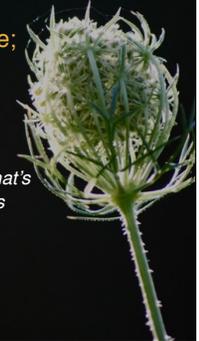
Traditional: Behaviors viewed negatively

*"I have a client who is manipulative and is always splitting staff. She goes to one person and asks for something and then goes to someone else and asks for the same thing when she has already heard "no." She keeps a lot of secrets about her past and lies about where she has been or what she has been doing when she misses appointments."*



Trauma-Informed:  
**Behaviors viewed as adaptive; ways to get needs met.**

*"Amy has experienced very hurtful relationships in the past. She has difficulty trusting people and is understandably reluctant to reveal what's really going on with her. Hopefully, as our relationship develops, she will become more trusting over time."*



## A word about words...

*Manipulative*

*Non-compliant*

*Putting self at risk*

*Unmotivated*

*Attention-seeking*

*Entitled*



Traditional: Service providers are the experts

*"This mother has a lot of problems that she just can't seem to see. She clearly needs to prioritize her time and efforts to succeed. We are going to have to get her to understand what she is needs to do and how she needs to change."*



Trauma-Informed:

**The helping relationship is a partnership; expertise is shared**

*"We elicit people's own hopes and needs and acknowledge their autonomy to make their own choices. We offer specific services such as counseling, parenting groups, and household management classes, and invite people to participate in the ones they choose."*



Traditional: Goals defined by the provider; focused on reducing negative behaviors

*"My client needs to stop blaming others for his problems, deal with his anger, and take his meds the way he's supposed to. I need to help him see the importance of these goals."*



Trauma-Informed:

**Goals defined by the person; focus is on recovery, gaining confidence, and healing.**

*"I am talking with Jen about what goals she would like to set for herself in addition to finding housing, which is an expectation of our program. I'm interested in what's most important to her and how to assist her in achieving her goals."*



Traditional: Reactive, crisis-driven

*"There are frequently clients who are in crisis in our office. It feels like we are always putting out fires with the families. We are never sure when something is going to set someone off or why things escalate to such an intense situation."*



Trauma-Informed:

**Proactive, attempt to avoid future crises.**

*"Guests know that this is a safe space to come when they are struggling. We have plans in place with each of them about what to do in the case of a crisis, and we're always working with them to anticipate and plan for situations that may be tough for them."*



Traditional: Views people as vulnerable, broken, needing protection from themselves

*"I can't leave decisions up to the mothers themselves, because nothing will ever happen. They don't know where to begin and if given the choice, they would probably make unhealthy decisions for their families."*



Trauma-Informed:

**Focus on strengths, control, choice essential for success**

*"I marvel at the resourcefulness of our families and try to call it out whenever I can. Often, the mothers aren't used to people recognizing their strengths. It makes them uncomfortable at first, but over time, it really builds a deep confidence in themselves."*



## TICOMETER

Welcome to the TICOMETER™, a brief, user-friendly online tool to measure trauma-informed care in human service organizations. The following content will guide you through 35 questions that assess trauma-informed policies and practices in your organization. Please answer each question to the best of your ability, answering on behalf of your organization rather than your own individual performance.

[Begin Assessment](#)

