



Trauma Informed Care: A Clarification

Jim “Bo” Bolas
Director of Education
Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services
www.empirestatecoalition.org

This webinar is cooperatively based upon curriculum
developed by the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership
www.hhyp.org

Housekeeping



- Overview of ESC
- Overview of Today's Content
- Q & A at the end of the session

Learning Objectives



- What do we mean when we use the term “trauma”?
- What is “Complex Trauma”?
- ARC Framework
- What are Trauma Informed Consequences (TIC)?
- TIC’s: Putting Theory into Practice

The Significance of Trauma for Homeless Youth



- Youth Homelessness: 1 – 1.6 million/year
 - (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2006)

- Over the last quarter of a century, research has documented the high levels of exposure homeless youth have to potentially traumatizing events

Trauma Experiences



- What are some Traumatic and Stressful experiences Homeless Youth experience?

What was Dorothy's trauma?



What was Harry's trauma?



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What are some examples of “traumatic events”?

Why do some people respond differently?



- Pre-event factors
- Event factors
- Post-event factors
- Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics that help us cope



- Internal Locus on Control
- Self-efficacy
- Sense of coherence
- Strength (physical and emotional)
- Motivation to deal with the trauma
- Optimistic attitude



What is “Complex Trauma”?



- Complex Trauma describes
 - the dual problem of an individual’s exposure to traumatic events
 - the impact of this exposure on immediate and long-term outcomes. (Re-living or re-traumatization)
- Exposure often occurs in the care-giving system and social environment that are supposed to be a source of stability in a young person’s life.
- On-going exposure to traumatic events often leads to subsequent traumatic exposure

(NCTSN “Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents (White Paper 2003).

Examples of Complex Trauma



- Childhood abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect)
- Frequent change of caregivers
- Witness to domestic violence
- Victim of gang or street violence
- *Homelessness*

Complex Trauma vs. PTSD



- Complex Trauma refers to multiple and on-going stress, primarily experienced in childhood and adolescence.
- The impact of complex trauma may not mirror the symptoms of PTSD.

- A Dx of PTSD
 - may result from a single event at anytime in the lifecycle.
 - is limited to specific symptom criteria, including re-experiencing, avoidance and increased arousal.

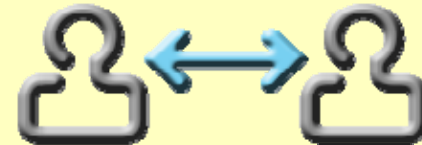
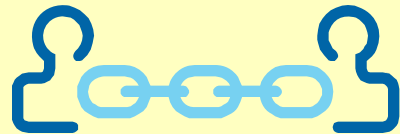
The ARC Framework



- ARC provides a conceptual framework and core principles of intervention for working with youth who have experienced multiple and/or prolonged traumas, a key characteristic of youth homelessness.

- Focusing on the impact of trauma in these domains:
 - Attachment
 - Self-Regulation
 - Competencies

Attachment



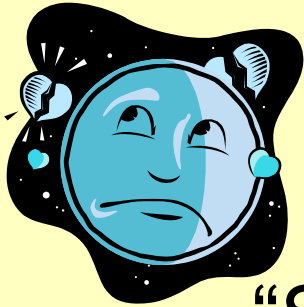
“Positive attachment is the capacity to form and maintain a healthy emotional bond with another person or persons which is a source of mutual comfort, safety and caring.”

Challenges to Positive Attachment



- Suspicious of others; preoccupied with perceived threats
- Defiant and/or aggressive towards peers, caregivers or other adults
- Non-discerning in making friends or sharing information
- Unaware of their own emotions
- Avoids asking for help or communicating needs
- Needy and demanding behavior
- Allows oneself to be victimized by others
- Isolative behavior
- Engages in loud attention seeking behavior
- Inappropriate attempts to gain intimate contact

Self-Regulation



“Self-Regulation refers to developing and maintaining the ability to notice and control feelings such as frustration, anger and fear.”



Challenges to Self-Regulation



- Hypersensitivity to physical contact
- Hyper vigilance – overreacts to perceived threats or danger
- Hyper arousal – feeling tense, on edge, easily startled, difficulty sleeping or having angry outbursts
- Somatization – experiencing emotional stress in one’s body
- Inability to be in the moment or to be “mindful”
- Disturbances in regulation of bodily functions – sleeping, eating and digestion

Competencies



“Developmental skill competency refers to mastering the developmental tasks of adolescence and developing the ability to plan and organize for the future”



Challenges to Competency



- Pessimistic and hopeless outlook
- Lacking a sense of meaning or purpose in life
- Perceptions of self:
 - Low sense of self efficacy (inability to complete necessary tasks within one's environment)
 - Low self-worth (not worthy or deserving of love, attention, help, etc.)
- Difficulties in the following:
 - Focusing on the task at hand
 - Planning and future-oriented thinking
 - Realizing consequences for one's actions
 - Setting realistic, achievable goals
- Examples of Developmental Skill Deficiencies
 - Budgeting and banking
 - Shopping and cooking
 - Completing job applications and interviewing

Special Sub-Populations



What forms of trauma do youth in the following sub-populations risk experiencing?



- LGBTQ youth
- Youth of color
- Immigrant youth
- Gang-involved youth
- Other populations



Case Study: Johanna



Johanna is 6 months short of her 18th birthday. She was involved in the foster care system for most of her life. She was removed from her home at age five due to physical abuse and neglect. From age 5-9 she was in 5 different foster homes, and in one instance “almost adopted.” She was reunified with her mother for a short time but was removed again at age 11 because her mother started using drugs. Following this, Johanna lived with an aunt, uncle, 3 more foster placements and most recently group homes and shelters. She has “AWOL’d” numerous times and ended up on the street.

What types of trauma has Johanna experienced?

What other types of trauma do systems-involved youth often experience?

Case Scenario: Jojo



Jojo knew he was gay from the time he was young, even before he knew the word. His family is very religious so he worked hard to hid this part of himself. When he was 17, a friend asked if he was gay and Jojo told him the truth. His family found out almost immediately and they kicked Jojo out of the house. They told him he was going to hell for being homosexual.

- What types of trauma did Jojo experience?
- What other types of trauma do LGBTQ youth experience?

Using Trauma as a lens to gain perspective on youth



- Builds empathy
- Normalizes their behavior and presentation
- Comprehensive and flexible
- Learning about trauma
- Thinking about how we respond to youth when they break rules at our agency
- Re-considering some of the rules themselves

Trauma Informed Consequences for Homeless Youth



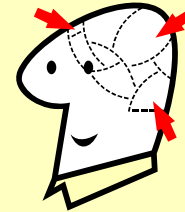
While safety is always primary, rules and consequences must take into account:

- normal adolescent development,
- impact of trauma on development and behavior,
- the realities of homelessness, and
- the unique histories of each young person we encounter.

What do we know about adolescent development and homeless youth that supports trauma-informed consequences?



- The adolescent brain
 - acutely sensitive to positive reward
 - relatively insensitive to negative consequences.



- Negative consequences of exiting youth from program.



- If removing youth, keep an “open door” for opportunities.

- Testing limits/challenging staff.



Characteristics of Trauma Informed Consequences



- Shape behavior;
- Build emotional management / increase confidence;
- Minimize disruptions to attachment (i.e. connections to caring adults);
- Service retention in spite of behavior;
- Access to basic needs;
- Take severity of infraction into thoughtful and appropriate response;
- Consider the role of problematic behavior and develop effective strategies;
- Take into account trauma triggers and past traumatic experiences;
- Take the long view and understand that change is slow and incremental;
- Upfront investment to support long term success.

What are the challenges of implementing trauma-informed consequences?



- Staff perception paradigm shift;
- Increased provider planning/patience/creativity;
- Time required for calm, thoughtful discussion process;
- Agency policy change challenge staff/supervisors;
- Balancing needs of individual with needs of whole;
- Agency/staff learning curve for supervision and support of implementation

Summary



In summary, following the ARC model ⁽²⁾, when imposing a consequence we can ask ourselves how this consequence *and the way in which it is discussed with the youth* enhance the following:

- a) The youth's attachment or relationship with me, the team, and the entire program;
- b) The youth's ability to self-regulate, i.e. practice self-control, self-restraint, or self-discipline in the future; and
- c) The youth's internal competencies such as judgment, decision-making, insight, reality testing and problem solving.


For more information, contact Arlene Schneir MPH
at aschneir@chla.usc.edu or 323-361-3901
SAMHSA Grant #SM57247

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¹Casey, BJ, Jones, RM, & Hare, TA. (2008). The Adolescent Brain; Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1124: 111–126. ² Kinniburgh, K., Blaustein, M., Spinazzola, J., & van der Kolk, B. (2005). Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency: A comprehensive intervention framework for children with complex trauma. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 424 - 430.

Trauma Informed Consequences (TIC) *Putting Theory into Practice*

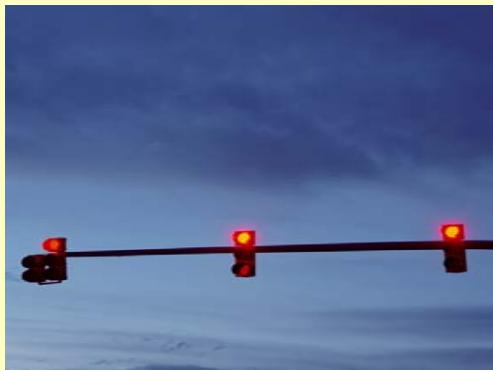


- Consequences → Individual needs
- + + Flexibility and critical thinking
- Careful observation 
- Putting behavior in context
- Trauma history factoring

Questioning for Responding to Behaviors with Trauma Informed Consequences



- What is the purpose of enforcing the rules?
 - Is it to discipline/teach the youth how to manage emotions or to enforce the rules for the “rule’s sake?”



Questioning for Responding to Behaviors with Trauma Informed Consequences



- Is this youth intentionally pushing my buttons?



- Why would he/she want this type of attention from me?

Questioning for Responding to Behaviors with Trauma Informed Consequences



- How much is *my* response?
- What assumptions am I making? Is there be another explanation?
- What are my options for response?
 - How does the young person expect me to respond?
- Which option most closely fits my intent to maintain safety *while* building the young person's capacity to manage intense emotions and learn more effective behavior?
- Which option is least disruptive to service delivery?

Discussion



Why does it seem like some youth are asking to be discharged from services by repeatedly breaking the rules even when they know the consequences?

Poll



If we don't exit/punish youth when they break the rules, aren't we enabling them?

Punishment vs. Trauma-Informed Consequences



Punishment

- Used to enforce obedience to authority
 - Uses words that escalate conflict
- Used to assert power and control
 - Leaves youth feeling helpless, powerless and ashamed.
- Benefit of the punisher, not always for the individual whose behavior needs to be corrected.

Trauma-Informed Consequences

- Designed to teach/ change/shape behavior
 - Offer options with firm limits
- Logical consequences clearly connected to behavior
 - Given with empathy; in respectful tone
- Are reasonable
 - Use words encouraging thinking
 - Preserve connections between people

Incident #1



Youth is verbally aggressive towards a staff member



Incident #1



■ Punishment

- Staff Interpretation?
- Reaction?

■ Trauma-Informed Consequences (TICs)

- Staff Reflection and Interpretation?
- Response?



Incident #1: Punishment

Staff Interpretation

- Youth is being disrespectful.
- Lack of service appreciation
- No tolerance

Reaction

- Staff threatens to exit youth if behavior continues

Incident #1: Consequences (TICs)



- Staff Reflection and Interpretation
 - Environmental catalyst?
 - Let youth know it's inappropriate to verbally abuse staff and, at the same time, help them develop more constructive regulation skills
- Response
 - Youth is asked to cool off in a safe place;
 - Staff person processes the experience with the youth when it is deemed appropriate (not while still agitated);
 - Staff person shares with youth their observation regarding the interaction and asks for feedback;
 - Staff explores with youth alternative/pro-social ways of communicating feelings

Incident #2



Youth comes to agency but doesn't do anything, just sits on couch and dozes



Incident #2



■ Punishment

- Staff Interpretation?
- Reaction?

■ Trauma-Informed Consequences (TICs)

- Staff Reflection and Interpretation?
- Response?

Incident #2: Punishment



□ Staff Interpretation

- Lazy and taking advantage of services
- Should be working on their GED or look for a job
- Here to help youth, not just let them sit doing nothing

□ Reaction

- Staff ignore youth

Incident #2:

Consequences (TICs)



□ Staff Reflection and Interpretation

- They are very tired (physically AND emotionally)
- What could be interfering with their ability to focus?
- Lots of youth worry about failing so they don't even want to try...How can we engage this person?

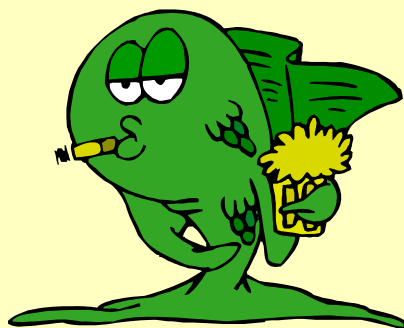
□ Response

- Staff approaches youth and asks if they need anything;
- Tries to engage youth in pro-social activity (game/group) to try to further engage in services;
- Even if the youth is unresponsive, staff gently continues to try to periodically engage them, spending time sitting with them as much as the youth can tolerate

Incident #3



**Youth enters agency
clearly drunk or high**



Incident #3



■ Punishment

- Staff Interpretation?
- Reaction?

■ Trauma-Informed Consequences (TICs)

- Staff Reflection and Interpretation?
- Response?

Incident #3: Punishment



□ Staff Interpretation

- The youth should know better
- Disruptive to youth and staff
- Not allowed

□ Reaction

- Exited from program and referred to detox

Incident #3:

Consequences (TICs)



- Staff Reflection and Interpretation
 - Disruptive to other youth/staff
 - Exiting youth risks their vulnerability/victimization and re-traumatization
 - Need safe place to sober up and further assessment re: substance use

- Staff Reflection and Interpretation
 - Youth asked to move to safe place in agency to sober up and be safe
 - When more coherent, staff person talks about using circumstances
 - Youth is reminded of concern about their safety and agency policies re: being drunk/high
 - Encouraged to speak to SA counselor to talk about use

Trauma Informed Consequences (TICs) Summary



TICs

=

Our thought, patience and perseverance

=

Their opportunities/options to heal

=

Their effective/pro-social coping styles

=

Successful/productive members of society



Helping or Harming

- Betrayal occurs at the hands of a trusted caregiver or supporter;
- Hierarchical boundaries are violated and then re-imposed at the whim of the person with more control/power;
- Secret knowledge, secret information and secret relationships are maintained and even encouraged;
- The voice of the youth is unheard, denied or invalidated;
- The young person feels powerless to alter or leave the relationship;
- Reality is reconstructed to represent the values and beliefs of the person with more control/power. Events are reinterpreted and renamed to protect the guilty.

Summary:

Youth Gaining Perspective Experiences



1. Creating a safe environment:



2. Listening, Without Trying to Solve:



3. Recognizing and highlighting growth or changed perspective when you see it:



4. Referring youth to counseling staff, if appropriate:



Summary: Building Resilience



- Creating resilience out of “train wrecks”...like a phoenix from the ashes.





Questions?

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THANK YOU!

Jim "Bo" Bolas
Director of Education
Empire State Coalition
www.empirestatecoalition.org
718.237.2722

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