

The impact of interpersonal violence and trauma:

Implications for social work practice



Nicole Chaladoff

Center on Violence Against Women and Children

PARTNERING  CHANGE

WHAT IS INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE (IPV)?

IPV is often not experienced as a single, isolated incident but as a complex and chronic process (Korn, 2002).

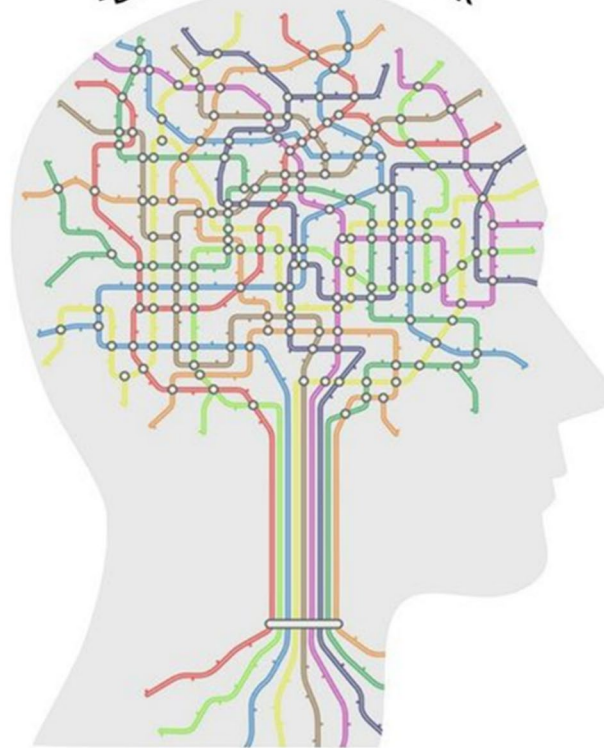
Interpersonal trauma results from deliberate, premediated acts against a person's will

These forms of victimization, exploitation, assault, abuse, and violence

Often committed by someone known to the victim and often results in repetitive acts due to accessibility.

Effects a person's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being

*"Our brains continually form maps
of the world - maps of what is
safe and what is dangerous."
-Dr. Bessel van der Kolk*



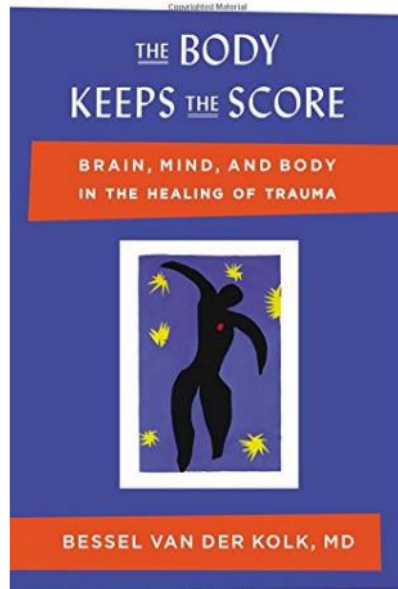
UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

Clinical Definition

“A very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time”

Victim- Centered Definition

“A Normal Reaction to an Abnormal Situation”

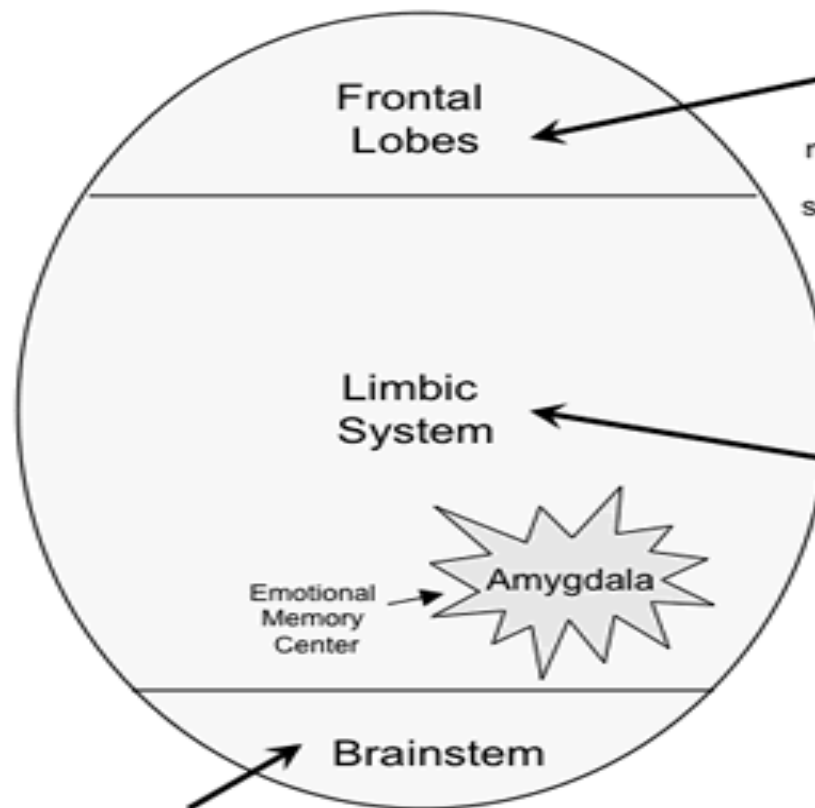


“We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on **mind, brain, and body**. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.”

— Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

We remember trauma less in words and more with our feelings and our bodies

[van der Kolk & Fislser, 1995]



Brain scan research shows that, when we remember a traumatic event, memory centers in the frontal lobes shut down, and we get overwhelmed by feelings and impulses or driven to action.

The limbic system responds to memories with increased activity, especially in the **amygdala**, the brain's and emotional memory center. The amygdala "sounds the alarm" as if we were in danger right now.

The reptilian brain reacts instinctively to the amygdala's "alarm." Heart rate increases. We stop breathing or hyperventilate. Muscles tense. We either speed up or shut down.

Copyright 2009 Janina Fisher, Ph.D.

Amygdala
detects threat



Activates
Hypothalamus
("Twitter of the
brain")



Release flood
of hormones



Effect hippocampus
functioning
(Stores memories)

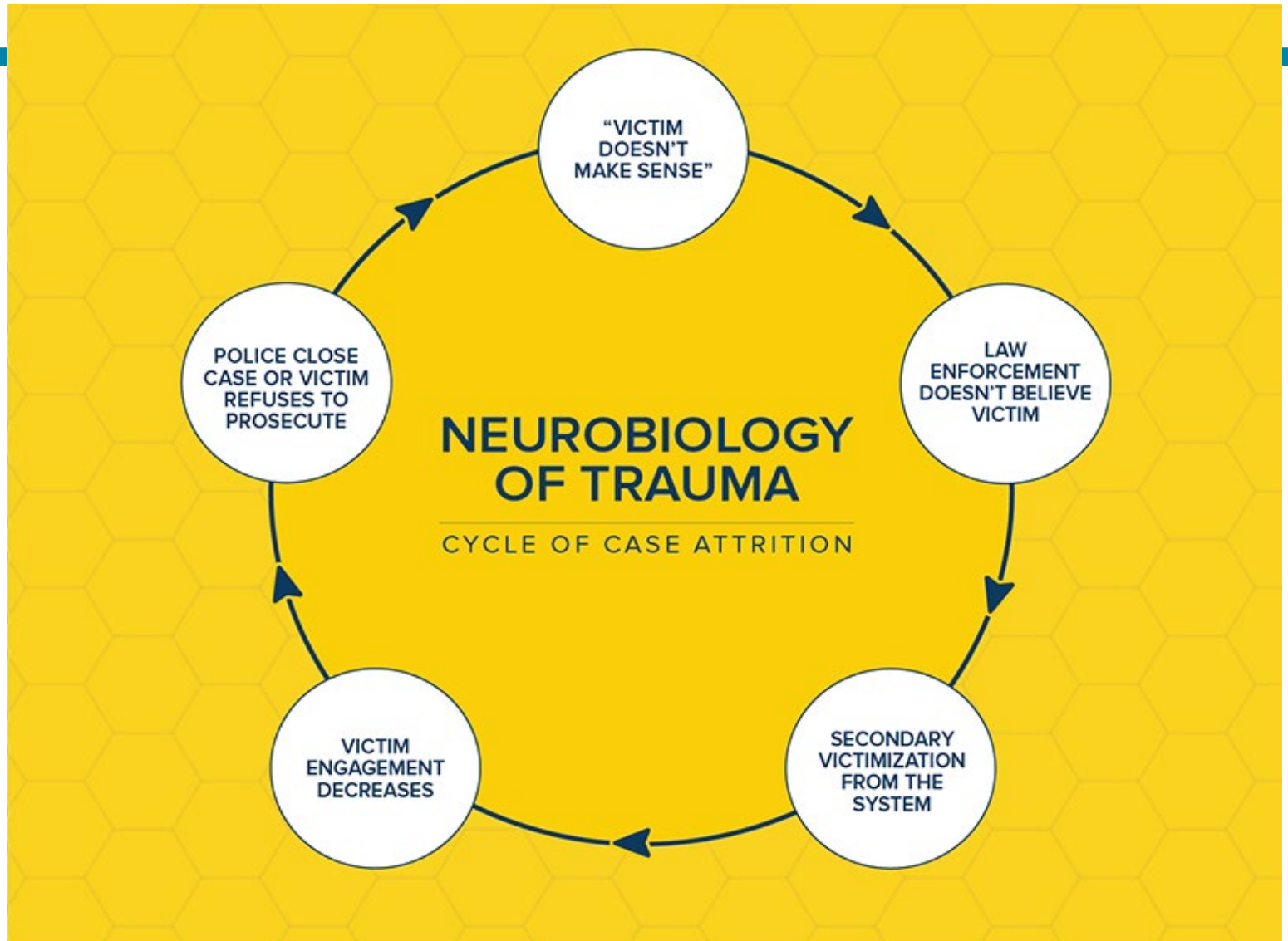


Fragment
memories



Memory recall
is slow &
difficult





Trauma-Informed Services

Trauma-informed

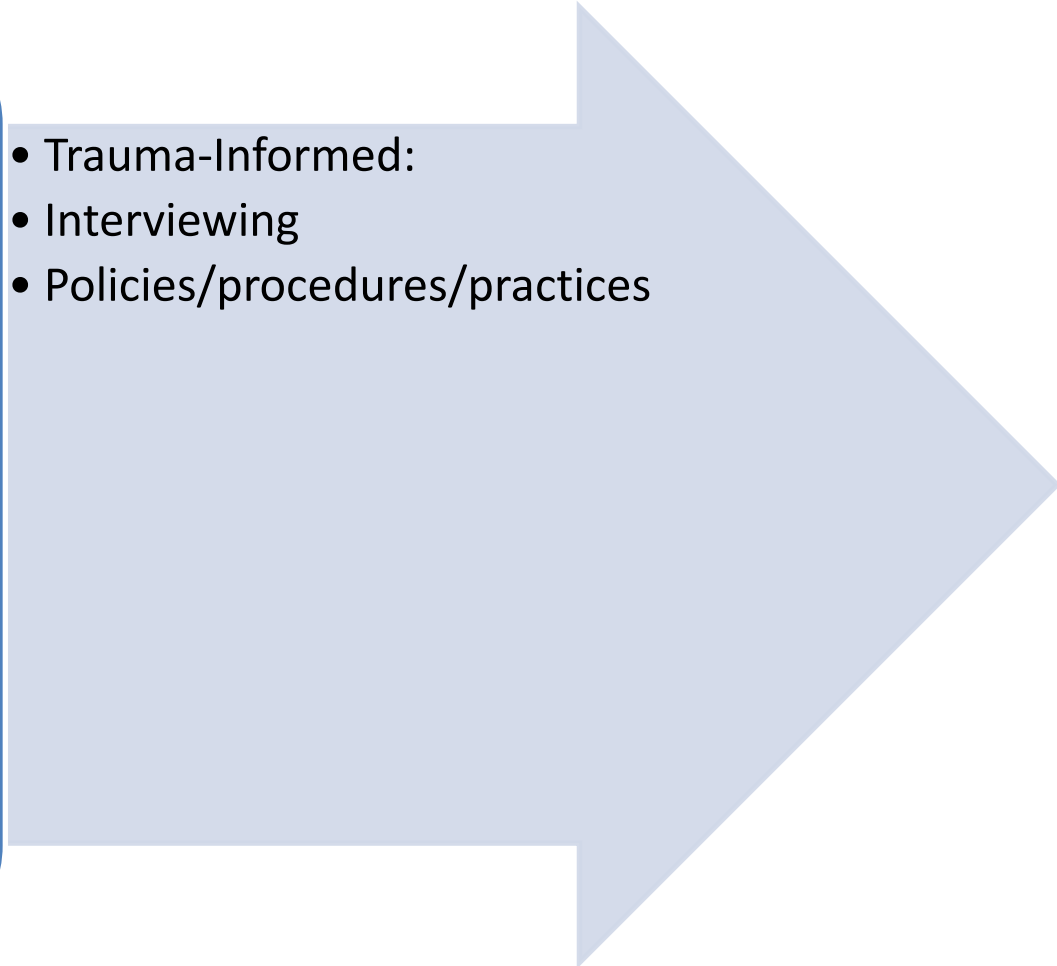
- Problems/Symptoms are inter-related responses to or coping mechanisms to deal with trauma.
- Providing choice, autonomy and control is central to healing.
- Primary goals are defined by trauma survivors and focus on recovery, self-efficacy, and healing.
- Proactive – preventing further crisis & avoiding retraumatization.


Traditional Approaches

- Problems/Symptoms are discrete and separate.
- People providing services are the experts. Trauma Survivors broken, & vulnerable.
- Primary goals are defined by service providers and focus on symptom reduction.
- Reactive – services and symptoms are crisis driven and focused on minimizing liability.



Implications for Macro Social Work Practice

- Trauma-Informed:
 - Interviewing
 - Policies/procedures/practices
- 



Implications for Clinical Social Work Practice

Mind/Body treatment approaches

- Trauma- Sensitive Yoga
- EMDR
- Theatre programs
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Creative approaches

I can be changed by
what happens to me.
But I refuse to
be reduced by it.

- Maya Angelou

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.
- Briere, J., & Scott, C. (2015). Complex trauma in adolescents and adults: Effects and treatment. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 38, 515-27.
- Campbell, R. (2014). *"The Neurobiology of Trauma" by Dr. Rebecca Campbell* [Video file]
- Cobb, A.R., Tedeschi, R.G., Calhoun, L.G., Cann, A. (2006). Correlates of Posttraumatic Growth in Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Post Traumatic Stress*. 19 (6). 895-903.a
- Herman, J. L. (1992). Complex PTSD: A syndrome in survivors of prolonged and repeated trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 5(3), 377–391.
- Lisak, D. (2013). *Neurobiology of Trauma - Dr. David Lisak* [Video file].
- Kelly, A., Garland, E.L. (2016). Trauma-Informed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Female Survivors of Interpersonal Violence. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 72(4). 311-328.
- Korn, D. L., Leeds A.M. (2002). Preliminary Evidence of Efficacy for EMDR Resource Development and Installation in the Stabilization Phase of Treatment of Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 58 (12). 1465-1487.
- Rhodes, A.M. (2015). Claiming peaceful embodiment through yoga in the aftermath of trauma. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. 247-256
- Van der Kolk, B. (2014). The Body Keeps Score.