


Supporting Youth in the Aftermath of Crisis, Trauma, and Loss: A Clinician's Guide


Marisa Nowitz, MSW, LCSW-S
Vice President of Education and Training
Trauma and Grief (TAG) Center at The Hackett Center for Mental Health
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



© 2014 TAG Center

Overview

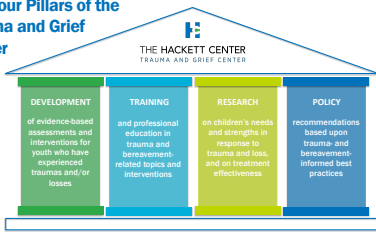
- ★ Introductions
- ★ Supporting Youth Exposed to Trauma and Loss (Part 1)
 - *Trauma and Grief Overview*
 - *Supporting Youth*
 - *Navigating Difficult Conversations*
- ★ Break
- ★ Beyond Burnout: Exploring the Cost of Caring (Part 2)
 - *Strategies to Enhance Resilience*
- ★ Wrap-up



© 2014 TAG Center

Trauma and Grief (TAG) Center at The Hackett Center for Mental Health Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
Executive Director: Julie B. Kaplow, PhD, ABPP

The Four Pillars of the Trauma and Grief Center




DEVELOPMENT
of evidence-based assessments and interventions for youth who have experienced trauma and/or losses

TRAINING
and professional education in trauma and bereavement-related topics and interventions

RESEARCH
on children's needs and strengths in response to trauma and loss, and on treatment effectiveness

POLICY
recommendations based upon trauma- and bereavement-informed best practices



© 2014 TAG Center

Supporting Youth Exposed to Trauma and Loss
Part 1

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTION
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

Trauma Overview

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTION
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

How do you determine if an experience is “traumatic” or just really stressful??

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTION
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

What is Trauma?

The experience of a real or **perceived** threat to life or bodily integrity

OR

the life or bodily integrity of a loved one

AND

causes an **overwhelming** sense of terror, horror, helplessness, and fear

Source: NCTSN "Think Trauma" Training (2012)
© 2014 TAC Center

Types of Traumas

Acute Trauma	Chronic Trauma
car accident	domestic violence
hurricane	child abuse/neglect
bereavement	poverty
mass violence	community violence

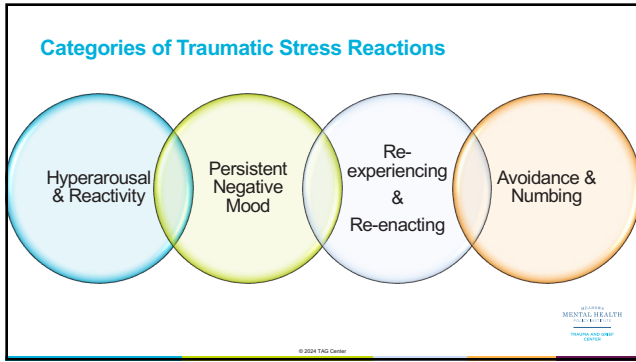
More than two thirds of children reported at least one traumatic event by age 16.

(Copeland, W.E. et al., 2007)
© 2014 TAC Center

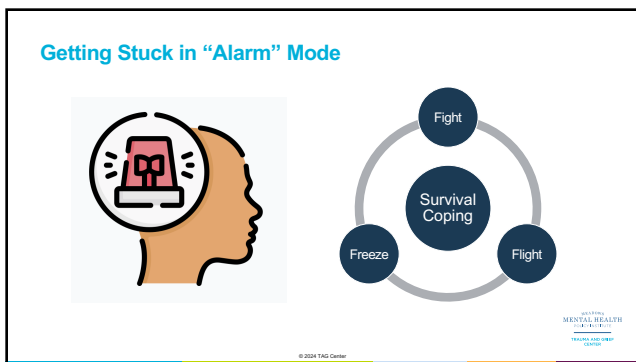
Posttraumatic Stress

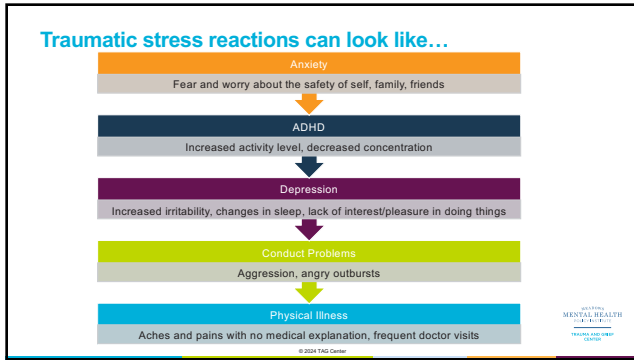
Psychological or behavioral reactions that can arise in response to trauma

© 2014 TAC Center



Traumatic stress is a **“normal”** response to an **abnormal** event.






Long-Term Consequences of Unaddressed Trauma

- Smaller brain volume
- Depression
- Suicide risk
- School problems
- Problems with peer relations
- Substance/drug abuse
- Violent behavior
- Delinquent behavior
- Intergenerational transmission of trauma/traumatic stress

© 2014 TAC Center

Grief Overview

© 2014 TAC Center



Bereavement
experience of deprivation or loss by death

Grief
psychological or behavioral response arising from bereavement

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTIONAL CENTER

Why Focus on Bereavement?

 <p>Most frequently reported type of trauma in clinic-referred youth (Pynoos et al., 2014)</p>	 <p>Most common form of trauma worldwide (Burns et al., 2020)</p>	 <p>Most distressing form of trauma among adults and youth in the general population (Breslau et al., 2004; Kaplow et al., 2010)</p>	 <p>Strongest predictor of poor school outcomes above and beyond any other form of trauma (Oosterhoff et al., 2018)</p>
---	--	---	--

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTIONAL CENTER

Important Facts About Grief

- ❖ Most children who experience bereavement will go on to lead healthy, happy, productive lives.
- ❖ There is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve.
- ❖ There is no set timeline for grief.
- ❖ Grief is not a problem to be fixed. It is a natural part of life and a reflection of the relationship we had with the person who died.

© 2014 TAC Center

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTIONAL CENTER



**Children's grief reactions
(not simply bereavement) play an important role in
future psychological functioning.**



© 2014 TAC Center

How Do Children Typically Grieve?


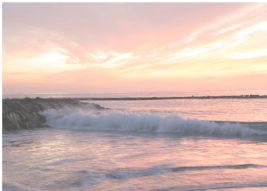
- “Typical” grief reactions are hard to define.
- Very few large studies of bereaved children... even fewer studies of bereaved children followed over time... even fewer with diverse populations
- Grief reactions influenced by:
 - ◊ developmental level
 - ◊ previous life experiences
 - ◊ relationship to deceased
 - ◊ culture
 - ◊ religious/spiritual beliefs
 - ◊ family
 - ◊ social environment
 - ◊ cause of death



© 2014 TAC Center

Typical Grief Reactions

- Can be very intense (pining, yearning, sadness, anger or protest over the loss).
- Are often at least temporarily associated with decreased functioning.
- Typically transition from pain to more pleasant reminiscing over time.



© 2014 TAC Center

Grief Within a Cultural Context

(Samuel, J., 2023)

Cultural factors that impact grieving may include:

- Religious beliefs about the afterlife
- Norms regarding emotional expression
- Family dynamics and gender roles
- Mourning rituals and customs for honoring the deceased



MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

© 2024 TAG Center

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)

- Newer diagnosis in DSM-5
- For diagnosis of a child, the death had to have occurred at least 6 months ago, symptoms must be present for at least a month and be intense enough to cause impairment.
- Approximately 10-20% of bereaved youth develop PGD, but most studies have focused on middle class, Caucasian youth only.
- Rates are closer to 20% among youth exposed to homicide
- Informed by Multidimensional Grief Theory

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

© 2024 TAG Center

Multidimensional Grief Theory

(Layne, Kaplow, & Pynoos, 2011)

Separation Distress

Existential / Identity Distress

Circumstance-Related Distress

Adaptive/Helpful

Maladaptive/Unhelpful

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

© 2024 TAG Center

A multidimensional framework is important because...

Distinct dimensions of grief:

- ❖ May be more prominent at certain developmental stages
- ❖ May not be present in all bereaved populations
- ❖ Require different treatment components



© 2014 TAC Center

Grief in the Context of Ambiguous Loss

(Boss, 1999)

Ambiguous loss differs from ordinary loss in that

- No verification of death (e.g., person is missing)
- No certainty the person will come back
- No guarantee things will return to the way they used to be

Two types of ambiguous loss:

- Person is physically missing
- Person is psychologically absent (i.e., emotionally or cognitively missing)



© 2014 TAC Center

Hypothesized Risk Factors For Childhood Maladaptive Grief

- Previous traumas
- Older children (teens)
- Prior mental health problems
- Avoidant coping strategies
- Impaired functioning of surviving parent
- Lack of social support
- Frequent exposure to trauma/loss reminders
- Secondary problems following death
- Circumstances of the death



© 2014 TAC Center

Trauma and Loss Reminders

SECTION 1
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

© 2014 TAC Center

Trauma and Loss Reminders

(Layne, et al., 2006)

Trauma Reminders	Loss Reminders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Images, sounds, smells, people, situations that remind child of the traumatic event• Often lead to PTSD• Always distressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Images, sounds, smells, people, situations that remind child of the absence of the person who died• Often lead to grief reactions• Can be comforting

SECTION 1
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

© 2014 TAC Center

Common Trauma and Loss Reminders Following Mass Violence

Trauma Reminders ← PAST

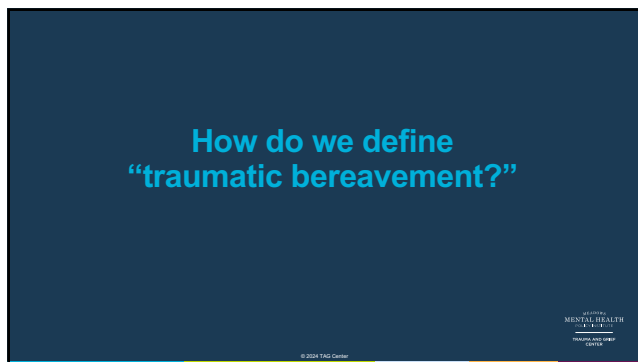
People, places, situations (school, people who were there, fire drills)
Sounds, sights (loud noises, fireworks, crying, yelling)
Time/date (same day of week, month of the year)
Bodily sensations (heart pounding, hands trembling, hunger)
Emotions (fear, sadness, anger, shame)

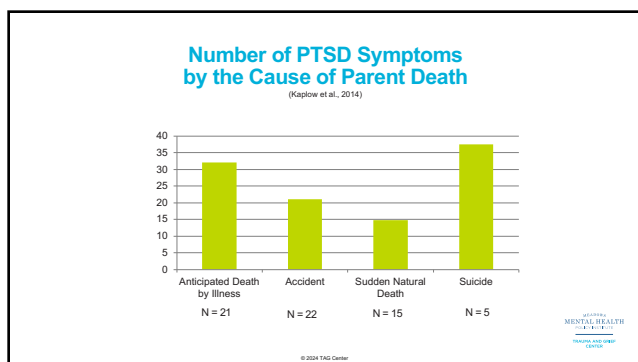
Loss Reminders ← FUTURE

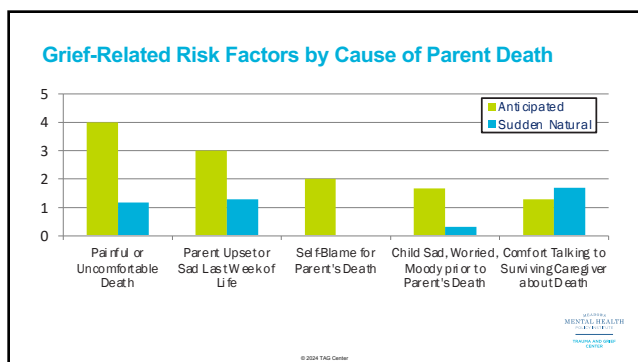
Empty situations (classes, extracurricular activities)
Shared activities (video games, recess, favorite music)
Celebrations/events (birthdays, graduation, holidays)

SECTION 1
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES
TRAUMA AND LOSS CENTER

© 2014 TAC Center







Consequences of Untreated Maladaptive Grief

(Kaplow et al., 2008)

- Relationship problems
- Substance abuse
- Police involvement (criminal behavior)
- School drop-out, poor school grades
- Violence (revenge)
- Depression and suicidal thoughts/behaviors

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIUM AND LOSS CENTER

© 2004 TAC Center

Why distinguish PTSD from grief?

- ✓ PTSD and grief are not the same thing
- ✓ Have different precipitating factors
- ✓ Have different physiological effects
- ✓ Require different assessment tools
- ✓ Require different practice elements

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIUM AND LOSS CENTER


© 2004 TAC Center

Supporting Youth

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIUM AND LOSS CENTER

© 2004 TAC Center

Not everyone exposed needs the same level of care.



© 2014 TAC Center

Not everyone needs the same level of care.

Circumstantial risk factors

- Life threat (severe injury)
- Exposure to graphic scenes
- Death of a loved one

Preexisting risk factors

- History of mental health issues
- Prior traumas and/or losses

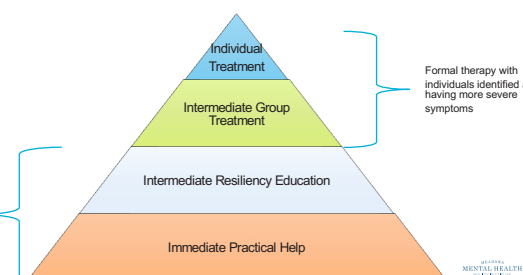
Environmental risk factors

- Caregiver impairment
- Exposure to trauma and loss reminders




© 2014 TAC Center

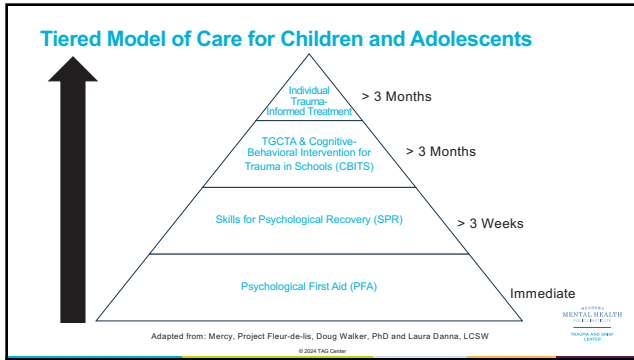
Tiered Mental Health Service Delivery Model Post-Disaster

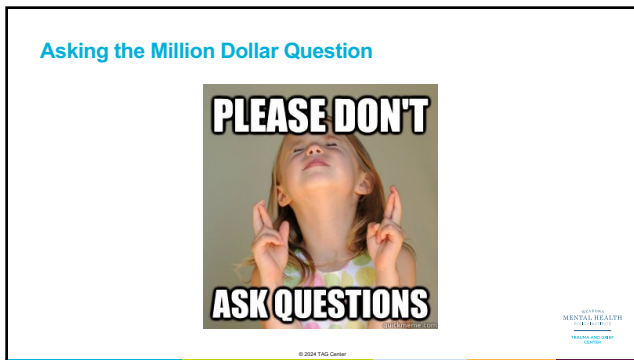


Adapted from: Mercy, Project Fleur-de-lis, Doug Walker, PhD and Laura Danna, LCSW



© 2014 TAC Center








Evidence-Based Risk Screening


PGD Checklist - Short Form

(Layne, Kaplow, & Pynoos, 2023)



PTSD RI-5-VBF

(Pynoos, R.S. & Steinberg, 2023)



© 2024 TAG Center

tagcenter.org

THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Trauma & Grief Center

The primary purpose of the Trauma and Grief (TAG) Center at The Hackett Center for Mental Health is to raise the standard of care and increase access to best-practice care among traumatized and bereaved children, adolescents, and their families.

Learn more about the TAG Center

DOWNLOAD BROCHURE
VIRTUAL LEARNING LIBRARY

SCREENING TOOLS FOR YOUTH
TAG COACHING TOOLKIT



THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH
TRAUMA AND GRIEF CENTER

THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH
TRAUMA AND GRIEF CENTER

© 2024 TAG Center

Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents

(Saltzman et al., 2017)

Module I

- Group Cohesion
- Psycho-Education
- Basic Coping Skills
- 8 Sessions

Module II


- Trauma Processing
- Session number depends on participants

Module III

- Grief Processing
- 6 Sessions

Module IV

- Resuming Developmental Progression
- Moving Forward
- 4 Sessions



THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH
TRAUMA AND GRIEF CENTER

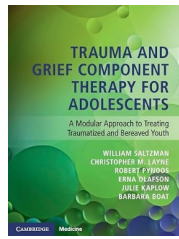
© 2024 TAG Center

Evidence of TGCTA's Effectiveness

(Grassetti et al., 2015; Layne et al., 2001, 2008; Sattzman et al., 2006)

Results of effectiveness studies showed:

- Reductions in PTSD, depression, and unhelpful grief reactions
- Improved school behaviors include:
 - enhanced classroom rule compliance
 - enhanced positive peer relationships
 - enhanced school performance
 - increased school interest
 - decreased school anxiety/withdrawal
 - decreased violence



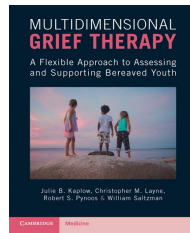
MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIING AND CENTER

© 2014 TAG Center

Multidimensional Grief Therapy

(Kaplow et al., 2023)

- An assessment-driven intervention based on Multidimensional Grief Theory
- Designed to promote adaptive grief reactions and reduce unhelpful grief reactions
- First evidence-based, grief-focused intervention for children and adolescents that directly addresses the three primary domains of grief
- Provides a "continuum" of grief-informed care given its tiered approach
- Can be used individually or in groups



MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIING AND CENTER

© 2014 TAG Center

MGT Treatment Effects on Psychological Distress

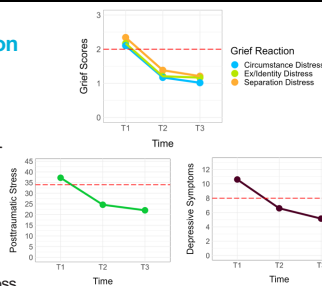
(Hill et al., 2019)

Significant reductions in symptoms of distress after receiving Phase I

- 40-47% decrease in symptoms after receiving Phase I of MGT

And after receiving Phase II

- Among youth who received Phase II, symptoms decreased an additional 22-44% from T2

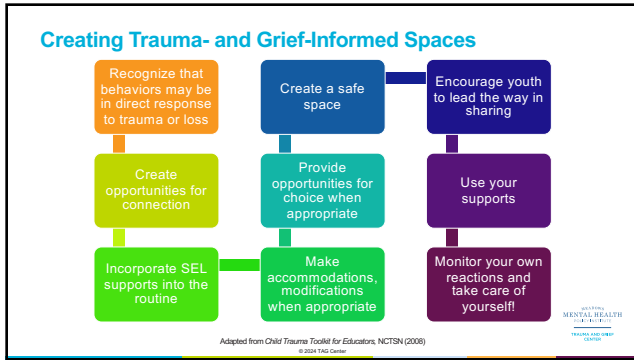


Note: Red line represents cut off for clinically elevated symptoms

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAIING AND CENTER

© 2014 TAG Center

Treatment effects were consistent across race, age, gender, and time since death.



Deep Breathing – The Invisible Coping Strategy

STAR BREATHING
Free Printable for Self Regulation

CALMING STOP
C - Calm down
A - Ask for help
S - Stop
T - Take a deep breath
R - Relax

Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower | Blow the pinwheel

Rainbow breathing

Put your finger on the outer rainbow. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. After each breath, move to the next color in the rainbow until you have reached 7 and taken 7 deep breaths.

© 2014 YAG Center

Feelings Faces

© 2014 YAG Center

Feeling Chart Options

© 2014 TAG Center

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND CENTER

Helpful Coping Strategies

Read a book	Weighted blanket	Eat ice
Write in a journal	Talk to a friend	Suck on a fireball
Exercise	Watch TV	Wash your face or hands
Deep breathing	Sleep	Pray
Think about something calm	Play a game or video game	Play with toys or puzzles
Listen to music	Meditate	Color
Sing	Do yoga or Tai Chi	Take a walk
Lift weights	Play sports	Count
Play an instrument	Paint or draw	Use a stress ball
Dance	Do a craft	

Source: NCTSN "Think Trauma" Training (2012)

© 2014 TAG Center

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND CENTER

Navigating Difficult Conversations

Considerations for Caregivers

© 2014 TAG Center

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND CENTER

The "Why"

- Kids will hear about it.
- When we don't discuss it, it sends the message it's too scary to talk about.
- Creating safe spaces for open discussion can help build trust and resilience.
- They will seek answers elsewhere if not from you.
- Talking to children about troubling current events doesn't make kids more traumatized.
- Even young children pick-up on verbal and non-verbal cues. They can sense when adults are stressed.



© 2014 TAC Center

Conversations: Early Childhood (0-5)

- ✓ Children this age are unable to process details of these types of events.
- ✓ When possible, shield preschool children from information and discussion.
- ✓ When shielding is not possible, keep language simple and focus on the helpers of the story.



© 2014 TAC Center

Conversations: School-Aged (6-11)



- ✓ Only share what you decide is necessary and answer questions honestly, in an age-appropriate way.
- ✓ For example, you might say "Yesterday a person went to a school and hurt people."
- ✓ Gently correct misinformation.
- ✓ Provide concrete examples of what is being done to keep their school/community safe.
- ✓ Acknowledge your own feelings and model healthy coping.
- ✓ Keep lines of communication open.



© 2014 TAC Center

Conversations: Adolescents (12-18)

- ✓ Start conversation with inquiring about what they may have already heard and correct misinformation.
- ✓ Encourage practicing healthy habits and connection with others.
- ✓ Find ways the adolescent can get involved (if that's something they are interested in doing).
- ✓ Discuss roles youth have in following safety guidelines and reporting suspicious activity to empower them to take action.



MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RECOVERY CENTER

© 2024 TAC Center

Remember the Six Ss

(Kaplow, 2022)

1. Safety & Security

Discuss stress in place to ensure safety.

Remind child of things in their control.

2. Simple & Straightforward

Use "kid-friendly" language.

Allow child to guide conversation.

3. Supervise

Monitor exposure to media/tv.

Check for incorrect information.

4. Structure

Maintain routines as much as possible.

Prepare child for changes in routine when needed.

5. Social Support

Encourage social interaction with family, friends.

This is especially important with adolescents.

6. Self-care

Monitor your own reactions.

Model healthy coping strategies.

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RECOVERY CENTER

© 2024 TAC Center

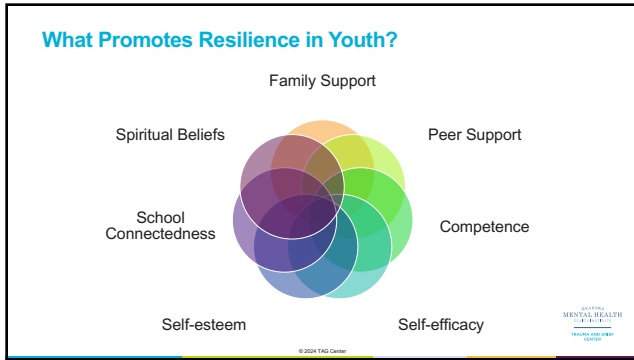
When to Seek Support

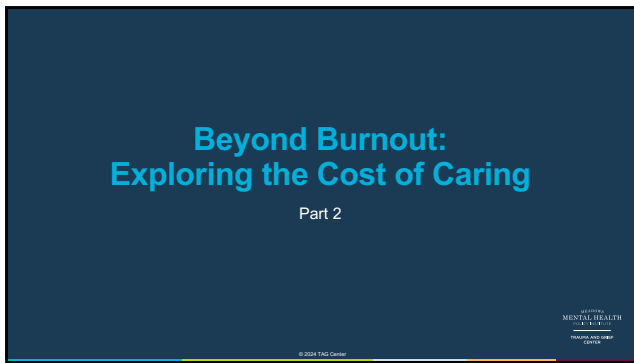


- Behaviors impact different parts of student's daily life (school, home, with peers)
- Extreme signs of depression (tearful, not able to get out of bed in the morning)
- Any gesture related to self-harm or mention of suicidal or homicidal ideation
- Signs of possible PTSD
- When in doubt, refer out!

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RECOVERY CENTER

© 2024 TAC Center





Being "Trauma-Informed"

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, **staff**, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively **resist re-traumatization**.

Source: SAMHSA (2014)
© 2014 TAC Center

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING CENTER

Provider Resilience

- Sense of Safety
- Coping Strategies
- Connection
- Self-efficacy
- Hope
- Self-confidence

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

© 2014 TAC Center

The Cost of Caring



MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

© 2014 TAC Center

Warning Signs



Slide Credit: NCTSN "Think Trauma" Training (2012)
© 2014 TAC Center

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER

Risk Factors

Personal

- History of unresolved trauma/loss
- Pre-existing psychological conditions
- Isolation
- Inadequate support system
- Empathic

Professional

- Lack of quality supervision
- High percentage of trauma in caseload
- Lack of professional support system
- Inadequate training
- Lack of experience

Spoiler Alert:

YOU ARE NOT SUPERHUMAN.

Self-Awareness is Key

Screeners for Secondary Traumatic Stress

[Work](#) / [Resources/Quizzes](#) / [FAQs](#) / [Screeners for Secondary Traumatic Stress](#)

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Take this screener to see if secondary traumatic stress is a risk for you.

TAKE THIS SCREENER

Moral Distress

Take this screener to see if moral distress is an issue for you.

TAKE MORAL DISTRESS SCREENER

Stress

Take this screener to see if stress is an issue for you.

TAKE PERCEIVED STRESS SCREENER

Burnout

Take this screener to see if burnout is an issue for you.

TAKE THE BURNOUT SCREENER




Compassion Satisfaction

Take this screener to see if compassion satisfaction is an issue for you.


TAKE THE COMPASSION SATISFACTION SCREENER

[UK Center on Trauma and Children – Secondary Traumatic Stress Innovations and Solutions Center](#)

Reaping The Rewards

-  **Compassion Satisfaction**
Deriving pleasure from helping others
-  **Vicarious Resilience**
Positive transformation as a result of bearing witness to individuals overcoming adversity
-  **Vicarious Transformation**
Ongoing, internal process that results in a sense of connection with others, a greater appreciation for one's life, and a greater sense of meaning and hope


© 2014 TAC Center



The "S" Word

Self-care is the ability to engage in helping others without sacrificing other important parts of one's life.

Source: NCTSN "Think Trauma" Training (2012)
© 2014 TAC Center




Cultural Considerations


(Jönsson, et al., 2020)

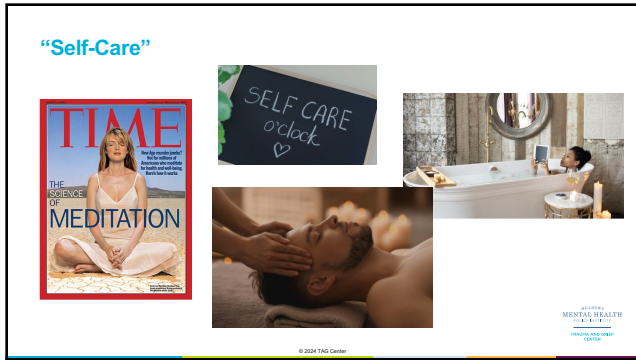
Cultural factors that can influence beliefs surrounding self-care practices may include:

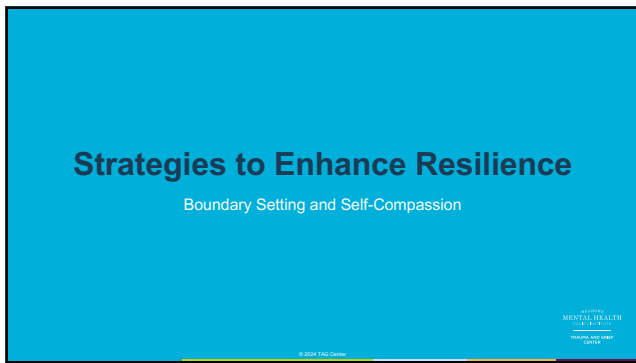
- Dietary traditions
- Family structure
- Beliefs about self-care
- Religious practices
- Beliefs about physical activity
- Beliefs regarding medical care

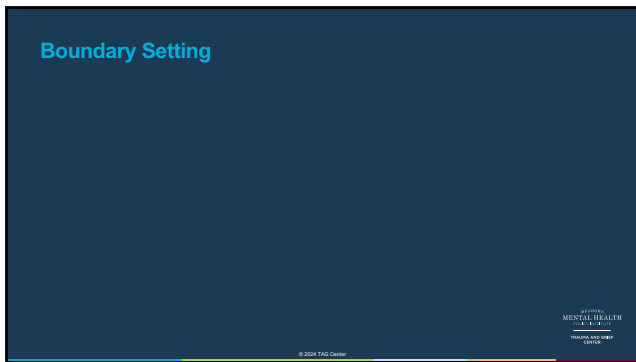


© 2014 TAC Center









Skills for Setting Boundaries

- Put guilt in the background
- Silence the "noise" from others
- Know your three choices (yes, no, negotiate)
- Clearly communicate your boundaries

Proja Lakshmin, MD
Real Self-Care: A Transformative Program for Redefining Wellness
(Crystals, Cleanses, and Bubble Baths Not Included) (2023)
© 2024 TAC Center

When You Don't Know What to Say

I wish I could, but right now I'm swamped. Let's check-in next week.

I've had some schedule changes. Can we move our call?

Thank you so much for thinking of me for this role, but I'm prioritizing _____ at the moment.

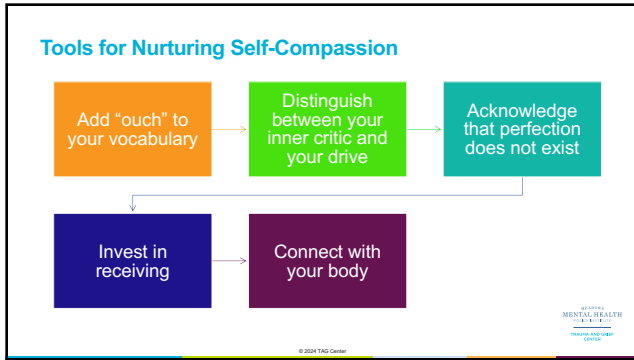
I'm sorry, but I'm not able to give that the full attention it deserves right now.

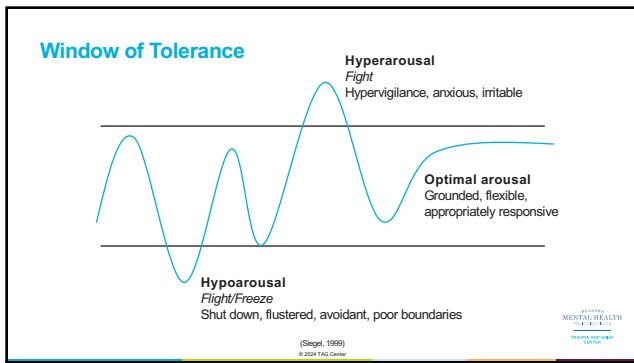
Other ideas?

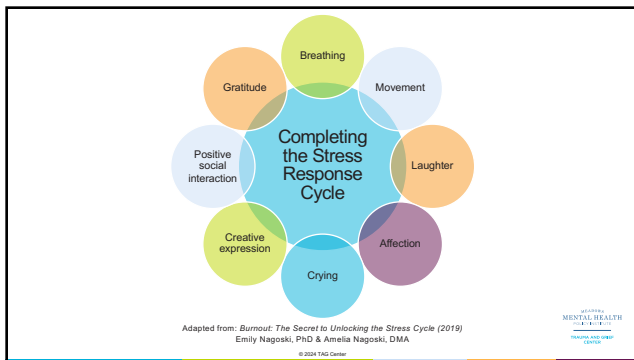
© 2024 TAC Center

Self-Compassion

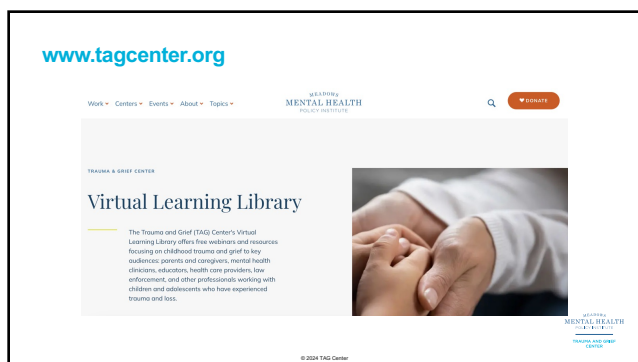
© 2024 TAC Center













Contact the TAG Center

Marisa Nowitz, MSW, LCSW-S
Vice President of Education and Training
mnowitz@mmhpi.org

Julie Kaplow, PhD, ABPP
Executive Director
jkaplow@mmhpi.org

TAG Center Virtual Learning Library
tagcenter.org

To learn more about TAG Center trainings:



© 2024 TAG Center

THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH
MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE
PASO del NORTE CENTER
Pasadena/Parkland Health Policy Institute

Thank you!

For more information, visit tagcenter.org.

THE HACKETT CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH | MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE | PASO del NORTE CENTER Pasadena/Parkland Health Policy Institute

TRAUMA AND GRIEF CENTER AT THE HACKETT CENTER | CENTER FOR CHILD AND FAMILY WELLNESS | CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND HEALTH | CENTER FOR HEALTH SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION
