

Developing Culturally Responsive, Trauma Informed Services & Responses

Olga Trujillo, JD

Director, Education & Social Change

Caminar Latino

Latinos United for Peace and Equity Initiative



Exploring the Impact of Trauma and How its Important to Your Services

- Examine my experience of violence and trauma
 - Show pictures
 - Describe experience
 - No graphic descriptions of violence
- Explore the bias, privilege & cultural implications
- Explore how trauma can impact your work with survivors
- Examine what you can do to create culturally responsive & trauma informed

the
sum
of my
parts



a survivor's
story of
dissociative
identity
disorder



OLGA R. TRUJILLO

Trauma and Dissociation

- Learn about the impact of trauma and dissociation
 - Incorporate survivors in your learning – don't just rely on clinicians...

What We See & Experience

- Flat demeanor or spacey look
- Not paying attention
- Overreacting to seemingly benign situations
- Minimizing the abuse
- Talking all over the place
- Scattered (non-linear) thinking
- Unable to remember key facts
- “Uncooperative”
- Not following-through

Diagnoses Arising from Trauma

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Nightmares
 - Nightsweats
 - Startle Response
 - Hypervigilance
 - Flashbacks
- Dissociative Disorders
 - Losing time
 - Numb
 - Spacey
- Anxiety and Panic Disorders
- Phobias – such as Agoraphobia & Claustrophobia

Dissociative Identity Disorder

- Have you heard of it?
- Have you ever worked with someone that has it?

What is DID?

- A person with DID feels as if she has within her two or more entities, each with its own way of thinking and remembering about herself and her life.
- These entities previously were often called “personalities,” even though the term did not accurately reflect the common definition of the word.

DID (continued)

- Other terms often used by therapists and survivors to describe these entities are: “alternate personalities,” “alters,” “parts,” “states of consciousness,” “ego states,” and “identities.”
- It is important to keep in mind that although these alternate states may feel or appear to be very different, they are all manifestations of a single, whole person.

What this means for your
work

Impact of Privilege & Bias

- Be aware of privilege and bias
- Understand the realities of survivors' lives
- Will be an issue for the survivor and her family – whether you see it or not
- Partner with survivors to address strategies to help:
 - How will the system see the survivor
 - What is the survivor's experience with the police, immigration, child welfare
 - Develop plans for how to address these with the survivor

Impact of Trauma on Your Work

- It is important to be able to identify when trauma may be an issue so that we can partner with survivors to craft strategies to help them:
 - Stay safe
 - Keep moving forward with what they want and need
 - Avoid triggers
 - Develop plans for when triggers arise

What You Can Do

Understand the Impact

- System responses are inherently triggering
 - Based on an adversarial system
 - Determine credibility
 - Loss of control over responses
 - Systems making decisions that can impact a survivor's everyday life
- Remember this might be a court **case**, or an **investigation** or a **support group** you are working on but this is the Survivor's **life**

Create Trauma Informed Responses

- Assists survivors in strengthening thier capacity to deal with the multiple complex issues she faces:
 - Accessing safety
 - Recovering from the traumatic effects of violence and other lifetime abuse
 - Rebuilding their lives
 - Engaging in the criminal justice system

Create Trauma Informed Responses

- All survivors of violence have access to advocacy services that are:
 - Inclusive
 - Welcoming
 - De-stigmatizing and not re-traumatizing

Components of Trauma Informed Services

1. Provide survivors with information about the traumatic effects of violence
2. Adapt response, programs and services to meet survivors' trauma related needs
3. Incorporate trauma into your investigations and prosecutions

Provide Survivors with Information

Normalize what they may be going through

- Discuss the link between trauma and violence
- Discuss some of the common emotional or mental health effects of violence and ways our responses can interfere with accessing safety, processing information, or remembering details
- Discuss ways that trauma can make it hard to trust, manage our feelings and can affect the ways we feel about other people, ourselves and the world

Adapt to Trauma

- Work to create programs, policies and settings that meet survivors where they are
- Be careful not to re-traumatize
 - Create a welcoming environment with a wide range of options for survivors needs and capacities – provide information in various ways to help the survivors hear it, integrate it and remember it - written, visual, audio ...

Adapt to Trauma

- Repeat information when asked and even if not asked
- Schedule extra time
- Help survivors know what to expect

Take time to do this right...

- Prepare early for system events
- Predictability helps a great deal
- Assess the environment where you will work with the survivor
 - Limit stimulation
 - Noise
 - Too much going on at once visually
 - Chaotic environments
 - Avoid tight, small spaces

What you can do

- Keep it simple
- Talk about trauma signs and symptoms
 - Normalize trauma and dissociation
- Be willing to do this over and over
 - Neuroplasticity

Help Access Services

- Adapt program requirements
- Repeat things as often as needed
- Use various modes of communication
- Talk about trauma related issues and how you'll handle them

What else can you do?

- Plan for “triggers”
- Encourage supportive connections
- Consider support animals or service animals
- Learn and teach grounding techniques



Got Emotional Support Animals?



No Really – Got Emotional Support Animals?

Partner with Survivors

Strategize with Survivors to Ensure Emotional Safety

- Build Trust
- Help Survivors Understand What to Expect
- Learn about “triggers”
 - She may not know all (or any) of them
 - Make a list that she can keep

Strategize with Survivors to Ensure Emotional Safety

- Anticipate “triggers”
 - What helps?
 - What can you do?
 - What does she do when this happens?
 - Plan for them.

Law Enforcement

- Look for Signs
- Trauma Informed Interviewing
- Adapt Credibility Assessment

Prosecutors

Incorporate a Trauma Informed Legal Advocacy Approach

- Look for Trauma
- Adapt Credibility Assessment
- Plan for Trauma in Court
- Prepare survivors and witnesses for court
 - Make sure they know what to expect
- Normalize trauma for court – so judges know what they are seeing

Judges

- Require trauma informed legal advocacy
- Learn about trauma
- Develop a trauma informed credibility assessment
- Allow Experts
- Allow accommodations for participation
- Bring in trauma trainings for attorneys, advocates and all who work in courts

All of You

- Make meaningful connections
- Adapt and accept
- Accommodate
- Hope
- Remember – Kindness really does matter

Resources

- REPRESENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS WHO ARE EXPERIENCING TRAUMA AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES: A HANDBOOK FOR ATTORNEYS, Co-authored by Mary Malefyt Seighman, Erika Sussman, and Olga Trujillo (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, January 2012).
- Preparing Survivors for Court (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health (May 2013)



Olga Trujillo, J.D.
Director of Education & Social Change
Caminar Latino
Latinos United for Peace & Equity Initiative
otrujillo@caminarlatino.org