Trauma Informed De-escalation

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Spectrum of Trauma

- Acute Trauma: A single time limited event

- Chronic Trauma: Multiple traumatic exposures and/or events over extended periods of time

- Complex Trauma: Experiences of multiple traumatic events and the impact of exposure to these events (often occurring within the care giving system)

- Toxic Stress: Adverse experiences that lead to strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response system

- Secondary/Vicarious Trauma: Exposure to the trauma of others by providers, family members, partners or friends in close contact with the traumatized individual

- Trauma and Resilience: An Adolescent Provider Toolkit; Adolescent Health Working Group 2013

The Effects of Trauma

▶ Trauma is what happens when the extreme stress of an event or circumstances (adverse events)overwhelm someone's ability to cope.

▶ Exposure to adverse events can have lasting effects on relationships, educational/vocational attainment, and general health.

▶ Traumatic experiences may also affect how a person interprets their current environment.

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- ▶ TIC refers to a culture and practices which acknowledge the prevalence of trauma and encourages tier 1 interventions available to all over trauma specific treatments.

- ▶ Trauma is often conceptualized as an internal state or response, however, it is manifested in observable behavior.

- ▶ We need consider both past adverse/traumatic events and current contingencies when looking for the potential causes/functions of behavior.

Core TIC Commitments

1. Acknowledge trauma and its potential impact
2. Ensure safety and trust
3. Promote choice and shared governance
4. Emphasize skill building

Core TIC Commitments

- Acknowledge trauma and its potential impact
  - Requires a proactive trauma assumed approach
  - Actively inquire about trauma histories (remote setting events)
  - Knowing better equips us to make good choices
  - Be responsive to indicators that people are struggling or in distress

Core TIC Commitments

- Ensure safety and trust
  - Physical safety
    - training for staff in crisis prevention and de-escalation such as Safety Care
  - Emotional safety
    - Build trust and rapport
    - Don't sacrifice safety and trust for the sake of changing behavior

Core TIC Commitments

- Safety
  - Consistency in the environment and in staff responses
  - Allowing the inappropriate and challenging behavior while we help them build appropriate replacement skills
- Trust
  - Developed through the consistent experience of safety
  - Dense and predictable schedules of reinforcement
  - Reinforcement of challenging behavior short term helps build trust by letting them know we understand and are attentive to their needs

Core TIC Commitments

▶ Shared Governance and choice

- ▶ Shared governance is related to choice, but the aim isn't necessarily a specific effect on behavior

- ▶ Has more to do with values; valuing other people's values

- ▶ Understanding what their values are

▶ Values are the motivation for change (What would make your life better?)

▶ Gives people a voice in decisions made about their treatment and care

- ▶ Proactive social validation; decisions made WITH clients/students rather than applying interventions TO them

- ▶ Promotes self-advocacy and gaining control over their own lives

Core TIC Commitments

▶ Emphasize skill building

  ▶ Prioritize skill building over behavior reduction

    ▶ Many problem behaviors are rooted on skill deficits

  ▶ A range of skills need to be taught

    ▶ Resiliency

    ▶ Self-advocacy

    ▶ Emotional understanding

    ▶ Self-management, etc.

Toward a Trauma Informed Framework for Behavior Analysis, Dr. Jennifer Austin, Ph D, BCBA-D

More strategies

▶ https://blog.womensconsortium.org/trauma-informed-de-escalation-strategies-for-behavioral-health-professionals

▶ Clinicians can help diffuse volatile situations by:

• Understanding anger. Anger is considered a secondary emotion that arises from hurt, sadness, fear, and insecurity.

• Thinking about safety for the client and for yourself. If you do not feel safe being alone with an individual, remove yourself from the situation.

• Practicing reflective listening.

• Asking open-ended questions.

• Offering choice.

• Continuing to offer support/help.

Other resources

- https://www.behavioristbookclub.com/clarifying-tic-content

- https://southwestkey.org/stories/de-escalation-strategies-and-how-to-use-them/

- https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/trauma-focused-cognitive-behavioral-therapy

- https://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Trauma-Informed-Strategies-to-Deescalate-Classroom-Conflict.pdf