

Trauma Awareness

because recovery from trauma is possible

Non-Direct Trauma Exposure

Can people experience trauma symptoms if they were not directly exposed to trauma?

Absolutely - in the wake of trauma events that have significantly impacted the lives of numerous people, or even our environment, we are continuously exposed to various types of trauma. Media, news and social media have allowed us more exposure to more events than ever before - and we are repeatedly exposed to this information throughout the day and from numerous sources. It is important to have conversations about what we see and how we are being impacted by what we are exposed to. This information can impact our lives in different ways.

What are other symptoms one might experience?

EMOTIONAL

Trauma exposure can impact emotions - you might notice:

- anxiety
- guilt
- numbness
- sadness
- hypersensitivity
- overwhelmed

RELATIONSHIPS

Both personal and professional relationships can be profoundly impacted - you may notice:

- isolation
- mistrust
- projection
- intolerance
- poor communication

PHYSICAL

Our emotional health is strongly connected to our physical health - a few things you may notice:

- somatic symptoms
- impaired immune system
- aches/pains
- difficulty sleeping

Reducing Symptoms

Reduce Exposure

The first rule to reduce symptoms involves reducing exposure. It is critical to reduce exposure of non-direct trauma. This may include exposure to news, social media and on-line information.

Connect with people and environment

Unplug from social media and electronics and connect with people. Making meaningful connections with people and environment can help reduce symptoms and bring balance to one's life.

What about Children?

Children can also be impacted by non-direct trauma. Some of the typical symptoms they may experience can include somatic symptoms (headaches, stomachaches), increased anxiety or worry, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with attention or memory, nightmares or other sleep problems. Sometimes children may experience worries about things that may not be connected to the non-direct trauma exposure.

What is Trauma?

There are several definitions of trauma - The definition I use is broader to encompass the experiences of trauma and abuse that are often missed in diagnostic definitions. ***An actual or perceived event or experience that compromises one's physical, mental, spiritual or emotional sense of security. A traumatic experience may include a number of emotions (fear, hopelessness, horror, confusion, helplessness) and a wide variance of intensity level. A number of protective and risk factors along with the type of trauma, intensity of risk, and emotion around the event will influence the response one may have to an event or experience.***

Did you Know ...

Exposure to secondary trauma can create symptoms that mimic symptoms of PTSD?

Here are a couple of my favourite resources:

Here's a great App - Mindshift This app has numerous tools to help one manage symptoms of anxiety including information, guided meditation "chill out tools", breathing tools, symptom check list and cognitive strategies. This is a free app, and an upgraded version is available for a fee. However, the free version has plenty available and is sufficient.

Another great resource is childtrauma.org This site has great information around children's exposure to trauma and the impact of continued exposure of children to trauma. This is a great site for parents, therapists, and educators.

ABOUT ME

Throughout my work I have developed a strong passion around the area of trauma and vicarious trauma. I have worked in the field of Addiction and Mental Health in a variety of roles since 2001, teaching a sessional class on Trauma and Healing at the University of Lethbridge for several years, along with being in private practice since 2011. I have also had the wonderful opportunity to instruct numerous workshops to a variety of professionals from one hour to two days. I continue to care for myself and my passion in this area through learning and indulging in my curiosity.

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