



First Responder and Health Care Provider Trauma and Emotional PPE

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# Objective

- ▶ Learn how the DSM 5 describes a traumatic event
- ▶ Learn the difference in a trauma and PTSD
- ▶ Review First Responder and Medical Personnel trauma and mental health Statistics
- ▶ Learn about Co-occurring mental health conditions
- ▶ I will share some basic Emotional PPE and Resilience tips
- ▶ And I will discuss evidence based treatments for Acute Stress Disorder and PTSD
- ▶ Ways to support your colleagues and yourself

# What is a Traumatic Event

- ▶ According to DSM-V a traumatic event involves
  - ▶ Death
  - ▶ Serious Injury
  - ▶ Sexual Violence
  - ▶ Loss of a Loved One or Loss of a Patient
  - ▶ Exposure to these events may be
    - ▶ Direct
    - ▶ Witnessed
    - ▶ Indirect (hearing about a close friend or relative who experience a traumatic event)
    - ▶ Repeated or extreme indirect exposure
      - ▶ .e.g., emergency personnel or first responders who repeatedly hear about other people experiencing these events

# Statistics

- ▶ Studies have found that nearly 90% of adults in the US have been exposed to at least one of these kinds of traumatic events in a lifetime
  - ▶ 28% of adults in the US will develop Acute Stress Disorder and/or PTSD
    - ▶ 8% men
    - ▶ 20% women
    - ▶ Certain types of traumatic events are more likely to cause PTSD than others
      - ▶ For Women: the types of traumatic events that are most likely to result in PTSD are rape, being threatened with a gun, physical attacks, and witnessing death (so we need to be mindful of this for our females who are treating COVID patients)
      - ▶ For men, the type of traumatic event that are most likely to cause PTSD are Rape-66%, combat exposure 39%, sexual assault other than rape 12%, and witnessing death or a traumatic event 6%
- ▶ For First Responders and Medical Personnel:
  - ▶ 99% experience their first traumatic event occur within the first 6 months of the job

# Why is trauma hardest for first responders and medical personnel

- ▶ Stigma to show raw emotion
- ▶ You have to keep working even in the middle of a national pandemic. The show must go on. Illness doesn't stop. Patients needs are endless...
- ▶ Fear of administrative consequences for seeking mental health treatment
- ▶ My agents and medical providing personnel have told me things like:
  - ▶ “I signed up for this career so I should just be tough.”
  - ▶ “I can handle it.”
  - ▶ “Liquor makes it go away. I will be alright”
  - ▶ “Nobody will understand.”
  - ▶ “Therapy shows weakness.”
- ▶ This is the mentality that causes our first responders to have the highest PTSD, alcoholism and suicide rate in the nation

# First Responder stats

- ▶ Suicide is the #1 killer of our first responders
- ▶ First responder suicide rates are 1.5 times that of the general population and in 90% of the cases the victim has been drinking heavily
- ▶ Approximately every 48-72 hours a first responder takes his or her own life (an average of 125-150 a year)
- ▶ Annually, near 3 times as many officers complete suicide than are killed by felons
- ▶ Depression is 20% more common than the general population for male first responders and more than twice the general population for female officers
- ▶ High rates of domestic violence amongst our first responder population.

# Correctional Officer Statistics

- ▶ CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS have 3 times higher divorce and substance abuse rates than that of the general population
- ▶ ON AVERAGE A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER WILL LIVE ONLY 18 MONTHS AFTER RETIREMENT
- ▶ 34% of all assaults in prison or jails are committed by inmates against medical staff and officers.
- ▶ Correctional Officer's 58<sup>th</sup> birthday, on average, is their last
- ▶ The rate of suicide in Correctional Officers is 2x that of police
- ▶ Correctional Officers have a 39% higher suicide rate than any other occupation

# How do we diagnose trauma, Acute Stress Disorder a

- ▶ A trauma is defined as a deeply disturbing event that causes negative emotions each time you think about it. All of us have trauma at some point in our lives.
- ▶ In my 20 year career the traumas that seem to be most problematic for my patients are **unresolved** childhood traumatic events.
- ▶ Acute Stress Disorder is defined by exposure to a traumatic event, presence of 9 symptoms from the 5 traumatic symptom categories. The categories include intrusive symptoms such as distressing memories, flashbacks, negative mood, dissociative symptoms such as being in a daze or inability to remember important aspects of the traumatic event, avoidance symptoms like efforts to avoid cognitive and behavioral reminders of the event, and arousal symptoms such as sleep disturbance, angry outburst, problems concentrating, and exaggerated startled response. Symptoms must be persistent for 3 days to 1 month immediately following the trauma.



# How is PTSD diagnosed

- ▶ PTSD includes 20 symptoms that fall into 4 major categories that LAST AT LEAST A MONTH, Seriously interfere with functioning, and aren't due to substance use, medication or illness.
  - ▶ Re-experiencing the trauma
  - ▶ Avoidance of trauma reminders both cognitively and behaviorally
  - ▶ Negative alterations in mood and thoughts
  - ▶ Increased arousal and reactivity

# PTSD symptoms

- ▶ Thoughts about trauma come into the person's head when they don't want them
- ▶ Scary dreams
- ▶ Feelings very emotionally upset
- ▶ Heart racing, dizziness, shaking when something reminds them of the trauma
- ▶ Trying not to think about the trauma
- ▶ Trying to avoid being around things that remind them of the trauma
- ▶ Not remembering important parts of what happened during the traumatic event
- ▶ Strong negative emotions about the world or oneself
- ▶ Believing it is one's own fault that the trauma happened
- ▶ Intense or long lasting feelings such as fear, anger, shame or guilt
- ▶ No longer being interested in activities one used to enjoy before the trauma
- ▶ Feeling distant or cut off from other people
- ▶ Difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- ▶ Frequent irritability towards others
- ▶ Excessive drug or alcohol use, self harm, or suicidal behavior
- ▶ Being jumpy when there is a loud noise
- ▶ Difficulty focusing on task such as reading, work, or watching tv
- ▶ Difficulty fall or staying asleep

- ▶ These symptoms must last for at least a month, and they must seriously interfere with the patients functioning and can't be due to causes other than the traumatic event such as medication, other illness or substance abuse
- ▶ **2 dissociative subtypes:**
- ▶ 1. depersonalization: the feeling that this is not happening to me or as if one is watching oneself from outside their body
- ▶ 2. Derealization: the experience of unreality, distance, or distortion (e.g., feeling as if “things around me are not real”)

**\*According to SAMHSA (2018), as the number of traumatic events increases, the risk of:**

1. Depression
2. Alcoholism
3. Drug abuse
4. Suicide attempts
5. Self Harm
6. Heart and liver disease

1. Pregnancy problems
2. Uncontrolled anger
3. Family, financial, academic/job problems
4. Usually we see these issues co-occur with trauma diagnoses

# Diagnosing ASD and PTSD

- ▶ We provide full psychological assessments using evidence based protocols.
  - ▶ CAPS
  - ▶ PCL
  - ▶ MMPI
  - ▶ MCMI
  - ▶ MFAST

# Treatment of PTSD

- ▶ Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- ▶ Prolonged Exposure
  - ▶ 10 week protocol
  - ▶ Audio tape Imaginal Exposures to target the cognitive avoidance
  - ▶ Assign In vivo Exposures that target the behavioral avoidance
- ▶ Brain spotting
  - ▶ A type of psychotherapy that uses your field of vision to access traumatic memories
- ▶ EMDR
  - ▶ Reprocess negative beliefs using bilateral stimulation

# Early Intervention is KEY

**\*PTSD, ASD, SUDS, Depression, Bereavement and Anxiety are all treatable mental health conditions**

**\*\*Multimodal Approach: Evidence based therapy and a experiential therapy (with experiential therapies such as art therapy, mindfulness, empty chair, yoga, empty chair, role-playing, music therapy)**



# General Mental Health Tips for First Responders and Medical Personnel

- ▶ Wisdom of the 12 step community
  - ▶ One day at a time
  - ▶ ACCEPTANCE IS THE KEY to FACING REALITY
- ▶ SLEEP IS A WEAPON: Keep your sleep schedule
- ▶ Morning meditation or mindfulness practice (insight meditation app)
- ▶ TIPP
- ▶ Take time to restore and rejuvenate in nature or take a vacation if even to just drive down the natchez trace one random Tuesday afternoon
- ▶ Take care of your body to be your best self
  - ▶ Eat healthy foods
  - ▶ Vitamin C and D3 and probiotics; Turmeric Root
  - ▶ Avoid excessive alcohol use
- ▶ We need Connection and even if we don't others we need to feel connected
- ▶ Take breaks
- ▶ Avoid all day exposure to the news
- ▶ Use Humor: Laughter is the best medicine
- ▶ Exercise can be as effective as anti-depressant
- ▶ Read Books (getting past your past and the body keeps the score are great trauma books)




# Resilience

- ▶ Pursue a meaningful goal
- ▶ Challenge assumptions
  - ▶ In DBT we call this checking the facts...
  - ▶ Reality and the facts are things we can see, hear, taste, touch and smell...Our mental perceptions of things aren't always factual
- ▶ Develop Cognitive Flexibility
  - ▶ Everything is not All or Nothing
  - ▶ This kind of thinking can be painful
- ▶ We grow through suffering
- ▶ Take Action Despite Fear
  - ▶ In DBT we call this opposite action
- ▶ Emotion Regulation
- ▶ The feeling of Agency
  - ▶ Autonomy and the power of me internally
    - ▶ Spend time alone in silence
- ▶ Social Support is so important

# How can you help yourself and your colleagues

- ▶ Communicate with your team about traumatic events. We have a team that meets each week and we discuss things that are hard and collaborate so no one feels alone
- ▶ Debriefing from critical incidents can decrease trauma effects
- ▶ Pay attention: Notice if there is a sudden change in behavior in a team-mate
- ▶ Avoid work task in Isolation
- ▶ Open Communication about grief and suffering
- ▶ Enjoy things that are fun and free during your down time
- ▶ Spend Quality time with your friends and family
- ▶ Validation is so important. You may not agree with each other but you can find the kernel of truth in the others point of view. Anxiety and worry are normal
- ▶ Anxiety is a normal human emotion. The Buddhist say the Anxiety doesn't just go away until we pay attention to what it is trying to tell us...



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- ▶ It has been a real joy to work with my first responders and medical personnel over the years. You give me so much hope in the world.
  - ▶ Really you are my heros. You run into the fire when most run away from it. I want to thank you for that.
  
  - ▶ Are there any questions?

THURSDAY AUGUST 20

**"Do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men."**

**Col 3:23 NAS**

LOVE WHAT YOU DO

**Y**ou will know that your job is your "calling" when you *do* what you love, and *love* what you do. Philanthropist and industrialist Andrew Carnegie said: "The average person puts only 25 percent of their energy and ability into their work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50 percent, and stands on its head for those few and far-between souls who devote 100 percent." Thomas Edison loved work. In his latter years he established Menlo Park, the world's first factory for making nothing but inventions. It was a forerunner to the private research laboratories now maintained by so many large companies. At Menlo Park Edison promised to turn out "a minor invention every ten days, and a big thing every six months or so." At one point he was working on forty-seven things at once. Other inventors may have been richer, but no inventor has ever been more enthusiastic or successful. When you believe that what you do makes a difference, you have a different feeling about what you do. When you believe your job has worth in God's eyes, you're no longer vulnerable to the critics or dependent upon the cheerleaders. Paul said, "I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me" (Ac 20:24 NIV). One of the last prayers Jesus prayed was "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do" (Jn 17:4 NIV). If you are serious about pleasing God, make that your prayer too.

FRIDAY AUGUST 21

**"The Lord gives wisdom."**

**Pr 2:6 NKJV**

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU LISTEN TO

**W**hat are the people in your life telling you? Are they increasing your self-doubt or strengthening your faith? Just because people tell you something doesn't make it so. In 1492 the people surrounding Columbus thought the earth was flat. The "experts" examined his travel plans and said his idea was impossible. But Columbus didn't fall off the end of the earth as they predicted—instead, he discovered America! Along the same lines, Thomas Edison tried to persuade Henry Ford to abandon his fledgling idea of a motorcar because he was convinced it would never work. He told Ford, "Come work for me and do something worthwhile." Although Edison was a great inventor, it sounds like he was only positive about what he could do and rather pessimistic about what *others* could do. So the next time you get in your car to go somewhere, be glad Ford didn't share Edison's negative outlook about automobiles. Don't let someone else's limited thinking

## ▶ REFERENCES

- ▶ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health - Fifth Edition (APA)
- ▶ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ([http://www.samhsa.gov/children/social\\_media\\_apr2019.asp](http://www.samhsa.gov/children/social_media_apr2019.asp))