TRAUMA & THE BRAIN

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Trauma: Define & Types
2. Damage to the Brain - Understanding Trauma Affects
3. Body Responses to the Trauma
OBJECTIVES

1. Fill the missing gap in treating trauma and other diagnosis.
2. Better educate and understand the role of trauma to become a stronger, more well-rounded clinician.
3. Help our clients understand that trauma is an injury - not a flawed characteristic.
WHAT IS TRAUMA?
ACUTE TRAUMA
Single event that has occurred; one time or on a small scale

COMPLEX TRAUMA
Exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events

CHRONIC TRAUMA
Repeated and prolonged exposure to events

SECONDARY TRAUMA
Indirectly experiencing or witnessing a trauma event
Healthy vs PTSD (Mental Health, M., 2017)
Areas of the brain trauma affects

**Pre-Frontal Cortex**
Executive Functioning & Reasoning

**Hippocampus**
Memory & Learning

**Amygdala**
Emotional Response Center
PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

- **Dorsolateral**: Overall management of flexibility, timing, working memory & how much attention we need for a task
- **Orbitofrontal**: Decision making, social interactions & inhibits us from doing things
- **Ventromedial**: Assists with emotional regulation & decisions based on prior experiences

(SoP, 2017)
DAMAGED PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

- Lacks confidence with decision making
- Begins to question self
- Withdraw socially
- Lacks understanding of situations
- Easily confused
- Cannot make decisions
- Loses focus easily
- Does not complete tasks
- Cannot remember things as easily
- Hyper-sensitive with emotions

(SoP, 2017)
**AMYGDALA**

- Emotional response center
- Increased fear response
- Overactivated w/events which make us respond more intense
- Threat then associates reactions for threats now

**AFFECTS**

- Emotionally dysregulated
- Sensitivity with our senses
- Excessive reactions
- Unhealthy coping behaviors
- Feelings of being on high alert
- Fight, Flight or Freeze heightened
**HIPPOCAMPUS**

- Stores the memories
- Recalls the negative associations made from trauma
- Connects quickly to the amygdala for fear based responses

**AFFECTS**

- Forgets things
- Cannot recall memories
- Affects formations of new memories
- Disoriented
- Changes the story, timeline or details of memories
UNRESOLVED VS. RESOLVED

AMYGDALA
HIPPOCAMPUS

PRE-FRONTAL
CORTEX
HOW WE RESPOND

- Oncoming threat;
  - Brain assesses the intensity of the threat
  - Based on previous experiences, memories or feelings, brain responds
  - Fight, flight or freeze or prepare
WHEN WE DO NOT LISTEN...

OUR BODY WILL RESPOND

Panic Attacks
Chronic Pain
Headaches
Muscle Spasms
GI Issues
Traumatizing Event

Negative Beliefs

Insecurities

Hyper-Vigilant

Less Resilient

Fatigued

Panic

Fear

Stress Response

Body Responses
WAYS TO HEAL
1. **Psychotherapy**
   Not to solve but to help become aware

2. **EMDR**
   De-sensitize to the trauma and process

3. **Psychedelics**
   Opens people's mind to a larger reality
YOGA
Relationship with internal sensory system

MOVEMENT/ROLES
Playing different roles than the one stuck in

NEUROFEEDBACK
Shaping and redirecting brain pathways
WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Educate yourself with trauma & trauma interventions
- Get comfortable with complex trauma!
- Talk about trauma and its affect
- Move through the layers with the client
- Become familiar with interventions or refer out!
- Help to find the relief by sitting with the discomfort.
CONCLUSION

- Trauma can be talked about!
- It's hard but it doesn't have to be avoided.
- Should be part of your treatment conversations.
- Normalize!
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

Don't hesitate to ask any questions!
REFERENCES
