Beyond Trauma:
A Healing Journey for Women

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Crisis = Danger & Opportunity
Definition of Trauma

The diagnostic manual used by mental health providers (DSM IV-TR) defines trauma as, “involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.”

“The person’s response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior).”

Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women

Trauma Theory
Sandra Bloom
Mary Harvey
Judith Herman
Peter Levine
et al.

Integrates cognitive-behavioral, expressive arts, guided imagery, and relational therapy.
Sexual Assault Graph

Female proportion of all sexual assault victims
Percent of sexual assault victims

0%  20%  40%  60%  80%  100%

Age of victim

Bureau of Justice Statistics
Sexual Assault Graph

Age distribution of sexual assault victims, by gender

Rate per 1,000 victims

Female

Male

Age of victim

Bureau of Justice Statistics
Process of Trauma

TRAUMATIC EVENT
Overwhelms the Physical & Psychological Systems
Intense Fear, Helplessness or Horror

RESPONSE TO TRAUMA
Fight or Flight, Freeze, Altered State of Consciousness, Body Sensations, Numbing,
Hyper-vigilance, Hyper-arousal

SENSITIZED NERVOUS SYSTEM
CHANGES IN BRAIN

CURRENT STRESS
Reminders of Trauma, Life Events, Lifestyle

PAINFUL EMOTIONAL STATE

RETREAT
ISOLATION
DISSOCIATION
DEPRESSION
ANXIETY

SELF-DESTRUCTIVE ACTION
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
EATING DISORDER
DELIBERATE SELF-HARM
SUICIDAL ACTIONS

DESTRUCTIVE ACTION
AGGRESSION
VIOLENCE
RAGES
Brain

**Left Side of Brain**
- Analytic
- Logical

**Right Side of Brain**
- Intuitive
- Emotional
ACE Study
(Adverse Childhood Experiences)

- Recurrent and severe emotional abuse
- Recurrent and severe physical abuse
- Contact sexual abuse
- Growing up in a household with:
  - An alcoholic or drug-user
  - A member being imprisoned
  - A mentally ill, chronically depressed, or institutionalized member
  - The mother being treated violently
  - Both biological parents *not* being present

(N=17,000)
ACE Study
(Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Results
ACEs still have a profound effect 50 years later, although now transformed from psychosocial experience into organic disease, social malfunction, and mental illness.

- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Injection of illegal drugs
- Obesity

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

- Compassion fatigue
- Burnout
- Vicarious traumatization
Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women

Three Modules:
- Violence, Abuse and Trauma
- The Impact of Trauma on Women’s Lives
- Healing from Trauma

Integrates cognitive-behavioral, expressive arts, guided imagery, and relational therapy.
Beyond Trauma Themes

- Safety
- Empowerment
- Connection (Aloneness)
- Normal reactions (Shame)
- Mind-body connection
- Substance abuse
- Woman-centered
Beyond Trauma
Module A
Session 1

Connections between Violence, Abuse & Trauma
Inner Self & Outer Self

• **Impacts Inner Self** – It can impact our inner life... our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values. For example, some women believe that “you can’t trust anyone”, and “the world is a very unsafe place.”
• Impacts Outer Self – It can impact our outer life… our outer life consists of our relationships and our behavior. Many women who have experienced trauma struggle with their relationships – families, friends, sexual relationships.
Traumatic Events

Trauma can take many forms:

- Emotional, sexual or physical abuse,
- Extremely painful and frightening medical procedures
- Catastrophic injuries and illnesses
- Rape or assault
- Muggings
- Domestic violence
- Burglary
Traumatic Events (cont.)

• Witnessing murder
• Automobile accidents
• Immigration
• Natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, floods, volcanoes)
• Abandonment (especially for small children)
• Terrorism such as September 11, 2001
• Witnessing violence such as a parent harming another parent
Traumatic Events (cont.)

- Loss of a loved one and severe bereavements (even of a pet)
- Combat/war
- Torture
- Kidnapping
- Intergenerational (cultural) trauma

Of all these forms of trauma, women are at greater risk of interpersonal abuse than men.
Safety

• Internal

Internal safety is how we take care of our emotions and feelings. If we feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, lonely or frightened, we need to have ways to take care of ourselves when we are stressed.
Safety

• External

External safety issues involve actions we take in our surroundings. We may lock our doors, choose not to go out alone at night, or un-list our telephone number. We do things to try and keep ourselves physically safe in our environment.
Beyond Trauma
Module A
Session 2

Power and Abuse
From the manual *In Our Best Interest: A Process for Personal and Social Change.*
Available through Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 W. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55806
Beyond Trauma
Module B
Session 3
Reactions to Trauma
Biological Reactions to Trauma

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
Symptoms of Trauma

• Hyper-arousal – this is the most common reaction. It includes difficulty breathing (panting, shallow, rapid), increased heart rate, cold sweats, muscular tension, tingling, racing thoughts, worry.

• Constriction – this alters breathing, muscle tone and posture. It constricts blood vessels in the skin, arms, legs, and internal organs, and tenses muscles.

Hyper-arousal and constriction describe a physical response.
Symptoms of Trauma (cont.)

• Dissociation – your mind disconnects from the event or physical reality of what is happening. This is a mind-body split. This feels like “losing time” and can include loss of memory.

• Denial – this is like dissociation only not as severe. A woman ignores or fails to acknowledge a feeling or situation or acts as though it is unimportant.

Dissociation and denial are part of the psychological response.
Trauma and the Brain

• Exposure to trauma can create a PTSD response in the limbic system

• The PTSD response can become complex and chronic.
Reactions

- Physical reactions are automatic and are not controlled by us.
- Brain reactions are also automatic.
- The body stores reactions. Then the body reacts as though it is back re-living the traumatic events of the past.
# Trauma History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
<th>Adult</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life before the event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life after the event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall impact of the event:</td>
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Beyond Trauma
Module B
Session 4

How Trauma Impacts Our Lives
Women report the following:

- “Losing control” of life
- Re-experiencing – can’t concentrate
- Self-image changes
- Depression
- Relationship problems
- Sexuality issues
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 5

Spirals of Recovery and Healing
Upward Spiral

Addiction (constriction)

Transformation

Recovery (expansion)
Upward Spiral

Transformation

Trauma (constriction)

Healing (expansion)
## Self-Care Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Just a little</th>
<th>Pretty much</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I keep up my physical appearance (nails, hair, bathing, clean clothes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I exercise regularly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I eat healthy meals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I get restful sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td>I go to work/school (or complete tasks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can adapt to change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep up my living space</td>
<td></td>
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## Self-Care Scale

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I take constructive criticism well</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can accept praise</td>
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<tr>
<td>I laugh at funny things</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge my needs and feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>I engage in new interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can relax without drugs and alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>I value myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>I live a clean and sober life</td>
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Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 6

Grounding and Self-Soothing
Grounding techniques are strategies to help a person who is dissociating ("losing time", emotionally absent) “come back” into current reality and feelings.

Grounding techniques help the person become aware of the here and now. Grounding techniques can help women realize that they are in the here and now and what they are experiencing is in the past and it is not happening now.
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 7
Abuse in the Family
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 8
Mind and Body Connection
Emotional Wellness

• Sense having a feeling.
• Locate feeling in the body.
• Name the feeling.
• Express feeling appropriately
• Ability to contain feeling.
Emotional Wellness

• Slow Down. Stop.

• What am I feeling?

• Does the intensity of the feeling match the situation?

• How old am I… as I have this feeling?
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 9
The World of Feelings
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 10

Healthy Relationships:
Wheel of Love
Relationship Wheel

Respect
Mutuality
Compassion
Respect, Mutuality, Compassion

**Respect**

Respect is the appreciation of someone’s values and it begins to happen when we see their integrity. We often earn respect when we are willing to do the right thing or take the “right action,” particularly when the choice is difficult.
Respect, Mutuality, Compassion

**Mutuality**

Mutuality means there is an equal investment in the relationship. Each person has a willingness and desire to see the other, as well as being seen; to hear the other, as well as being heard; and to be vulnerable, as well as respecting the other’s vulnerability. Mutuality also means that there is an awareness of the “we,” not a sole focus on two “I”s.
Compassion

Compassion is similar to empathy but it occurs on a deeper level. Empathy is understanding another’s feeling and being able to feel with them. Compassion means that we go a step further and join with them in their struggle or pain. When we are compassionate we lend our selves to another’s process – we give of ourselves in order to be with them emotionally.
From the manual *In Our Best Interest: A Process for Personal and Social Change.*
Available through Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 W. 4th St., Duluth, MN  55806
Wheel of Love
Beyond Trauma
Module C
Session 11

Endings and Beginnings
Appreciation

• What I appreciate about the other women in the group.

• What I appreciate about the group.
Upward Spiral

Transformation

Trauma (constriction)

Healing (expansion)