Cleaning Our Trauma
Colored Glasses

Healing Ourselves Before Helping Others
What is trauma?

trau·ma
ˈtroumə,ˈtrômə/

noun

1. a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.
2. "a personal trauma like the death of a child"
Trauma is anything that overwhelms the brain’s ability to cope.
● Traumatic Events
● Adverse Childhood Experiences
● Trauma Response
● Complex Trauma
● Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
● Vicarious Trauma
Trauma and Substance Use Disorder

Persons with an ACE score of 5 or more are……

5 to 7 times more likely to use substances

Over two-thirds of people seeking treatment for substance use disorder report one or more traumatic life events

(Back et al., 2000)
What does this have to do with me?
“I’m recovered”
Trauma and the Brain

**Amygdala** - The brain's emotional computer and alarm system

**Hippocampus** - Brains storage for our most recent conscious memories

**Thalamus** - Translates sights, sounds, smells into the language of the brain

**Prefrontal cortex** - Where information is used to make decisions about cognitive and emotional responses
FIGHT - FLIGHT - FREEZE
What’s really happening when we go into "Survival Mode"

Learning/Thinking Brain
(Prefrontal Cortex)
The logical smart part of your brain goes “off line”

Limbic System
Lower Brain Functions “Take over!”

Illustration for The Greenhouse KC LLC www.TheGreenhouseKC.com
Brain Image courtesy of Illustrationof.com #1214809
**Physical Impact of Trauma**

**Brain Architecture**
Shrinkage in prefrontal cortex, corpus callosum, and hippocampus. Enlarged and more reactive amygdala. Resolution: safe and stable nurturing relationships, walk in nature, touch, exercise.

**Brain Waves**
Predominance of wrong brain waves in wrong part of the brain leads to anxiety, unable to concentrate, and seizures. Resolution: neurofeedback.

**Neural Pathways**
Need to ‘rewire’ our brain to old thought patterns and habits of mind, conscious, and unconscious. Resolution: neurofeedback, meditation, mindful action, positive self-talk.

**Neurotransmitters**
Vulnerable to addiction because dopamine transmitters/receptors not developed or damaged. Reduces motivation & focus, creates fatigue. Low serotonin causes depression.

**Hormones**
Prolonged high cortisol and ghrelin creates greater reactivity to stress. Long term damage to cells, structures of the body, and other hormone glands (thyroid). Resolution: oxytocin.

**Toxin Elimination**
Intestines and kidneys less able to eliminate toxins (slow gut or unbalanced flora). Resolution: salt baths, sauna.

**Nervous System**
Supercharged sympathetic nervous system: Parasympathetic nervous system not engaged to bring back into balance. Resolution: yoga, breathing, or other physical/emotional regulation.

**Immune System**
Resistance to cortisol or lower cortisol creates unchecked inflammation. Cause of many diseases: asthma, arthritis, etc. Resolution: meditation/mindful action, walking in nature, diet, rest.

**Cellular Change**
Shortens telomeres which prematurely ages and reduces reproduction of cells & can cause cancer. Resolution: social support. Epigenetics turns genes on or off in adaptation to dangerous environments. Effect can last generations, Resolution: Safe environment (perception of).
We “see” thru our past experiences and only know what we know.

Trauma Colored Glasses
Trauma response is VERY vocal however many of us don’t realize what it is!

We are “hardwired” for survival! Denial is common!

It is OUR responsibility to recognize our triggers and manage our personal trauma response!
Trauma Response Cues

Physical Responses:
- Nausea
- Tightness of chest
- Heaviness
- Pain
- “Knot” in stomach

Emotional Responses:
- Crying
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Outbursts
What it looks like within personal interactions:

- Upset with someone else's behavior
- Anger with someone else's lack of progress
- Critical of someone else's response
- "What were you thinking?"
- "What don't you understand?"
- "You just need to....."
- "You really should...."
Healed response

- Non judgemental
- Open
- Safe
- COMPASSIONATE
We CANNOT help others when we are in our own trauma response.
What can we do in the moment?

- Spectator of our own thoughts
- Recognize Triggers
- Take a breath
- Time Out
- Vocalize our response- “Because of my past experiences I may react out of emotion however I will do my best to be present with you.”
- Apologize if we do react from emotion
What can we do on our own?

- Therapist that specializes in trauma
- EMDR
- Hypnotherapy
- Meditation
- Trauma Release Exercises
- Yoga
- Self Care
Self Care

- Be kind to yourself
- Be mindful of negative thoughts
- Baths
- Music
- Reading
- Whatever brings a smile to your face and heart
Healing Ourselves before Helping Others Improves Connection, Lessens Resistance, and Strengthens ALL Relationships!
If this presentation has triggered a trauma response...
Please reach out!

Offering help is courageous and compassionate, but so is asking for help.

-Brené Brown
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“You cannot solve a problem with the same consciousness that created it. You must stand on a higher ground.”