Fostering a Culture of Resilience

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Today’s Presenter

Karen Johnson, MSW, LCSW
Trauma-Informed Lens Consulting
It’s been quite the journey
Goals for Today’s Call

Learn
Impact of toxic stress, distress and trauma on brain functioning and behavior
Benefit of practicing regulation

Identify
Two strategies for creating psychological safety in the workplace
Three strategies for strengthening organizational resilience
Adversity, Trauma and Toxic Stress

• **Childhood adversity** – wide range of circumstances or events that pose a serious threat to a child’s physical or psychological well-being.

• **Adverse childhood experiences** – a subset of childhood adversities included in the seminal ACEs study.

• **Trauma** – possible outcome of exposure to adversity that occurs when a person perceives an event or set of circumstances as extremely frightening, harmful or threatening.

• **Toxic stress** – can occur when an individual experiences adversity that is extreme, long-lasting and severe without adequate support and the stress response system becomes overactivated.
Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

Toxic Stress – Why It Matters

**POSITIVE STRESS**
Mild/moderate and short-lived stress response necessary for healthy development

**TOLERABLE STRESS**
More severe stress response but limited in duration which allows for recovery

**TOXIC STRESS**
Extreme, frequent, or extended activation of the body's stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult

Intense, prolonged, repeated and unaddressed

Social-emotional buffering, parental resilience, early detection, and/or effective intervention

ACEsConnection Presentation, 2018
Hierarchy of Brain Development

Abstract Thought
Concrete Thought
Affiliation
“Attachment”
Sexual Behavior
Emotional Reactivity
Motor Regulation
“Arousal”
Appetite/Satiety
Sleep
Blood Pressure
Heart Rate
Temperature

Regulation

The basic strategy for quieting our lower brain

“Regulation gives us the ability to put time and thought between a feeling and an action.”

Bruce D. Perry
Practical Regulation Strategies for your Organization

Three ways to regulate:

1. Top down – use our cortex
   Pause between a stimulus and action
   Mindfulness
   Journaling
   Mantras – “This will not last forever”

2. Bottom up: somatosensory, rhythmic, repetitive interventions
   Walking and other exercise
   Focused breathing
   Music and dance

3. In context with other people

Regulate, Relate, Reason

What strategies have you been using to create wellness and regulation across your teams during these challenging times?
Work Force Concerns

- **Burnout** – physical and emotional exhaustion experienced when a worker has low job satisfaction and feels powerless and overwhelmed at work.
- **Compassion Fatigue** – profound emotional and physical wearing down that happens when helpers are unable to rest and refuel.
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress** – mirrors the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Vicarious trauma** – profound shift in world view.
- **Moral injury** – occurs when people face obstacles in living out personal and ethical standards.
Compassion Fatigue’s Path

Compassion Resilience

Leave Profession

Renewal vs Pathology

Zombie

Withdrawal

Irritability

Zealot

Eric Gentry, PhD. 2012
Two Important Tenets of a Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Approach

We change the question from “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

__________________

We assume everyone is doing the best they can
Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Principles

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Respect for cultural, historical and gender differences
- Peer support and mutual self-help

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014
• Create psychological safety – the belief that the work environment is safe for people to be candid and have difficult conversations
• Teach and model regulation and calming strategies
• Model vulnerability
• Focus on connection at work

Johnson, K. March 2020
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the belief that the work environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking. It refers to the experience of feeling able to speak up with relevant ideas, questions or concerns. It is present when colleagues trust and respect each other and feel able - even obligated – to be candid.

## Leader’s Toolkit for Building Psychological Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Setting the Stage</th>
<th>Inviting Participation</th>
<th>Responding Productively</th>
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| **Leadership tasks** | **Frame the Work**  
- Set expectations about failure, uncertainty and interdependence  
Emphasis Purpose  
- Identify what’s at stake, why it matters, and for whom | **Demonstrate Situational Humility**  
- Acknowledge gaps  
**Practice Inquiry**  
- Ask good questions  
- Model intense listening  
**Set up Structures and Processes**  
- Create forums for input  
- Provide guidelines for discussion | **Express Appreciation**  
- Listen  
- Acknowledge and thank  
**Destigmatize Failure**  
- Look forward  
- Offer help  
- Discuss, consider and brainstorm next steps  
**Sanction Clean Violations** |
| **Accomplishes**     | Shared expectations and meaning                                                    | Confidence that voice is welcome                                                        | Orientation towards continuous learning                                                  |

Trust and Transparency

- Listen without judgement
- Provide consistent communication about expectations
- Share information and control
- Express empathy
- Practice self-compassion

Johnson, K. March 2020
Neff, K., Self-compassion
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Collaboration and Mutuality

- Communicate often and through multiple mechanisms
- Look for common experiences
- Check in with staff often
- Work together to consider solutions

Johnson, K. March 2020
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Empowerment, Voice and Choice

- Seek staff input
- Honor different ways to engage in the work
- Ensure current expectations and boundaries are realistic and understood
- Model feedback loops and engaging in difficult conversations

Johnson, K. March 2020
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Peer Support and Mutual Self-Help

- Consider creating a buddy system
- Bring Mental Health First Aid at Work to your workforce
- Ensure staff know how to access Employee Assistance Program
- Promote positive connections at work

Johnson, K. (March 2020)  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

• Be curious about how people across all sectors and groups are impacted by current events.
• Ensure everyone is invited to contribute to the solutions.
• Create a positive culture in which staff can have hard conversations around bias, diversity, equity, inclusion, and systemic racism.
• Be aware of our own implicit biases.

Practice cultural humility

Johnson, K. March 2020
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014
Practice Self-Compassion

**Self-Kindness**
Be loving towards ourselves instead of self-critical.

**Common Humanity**
Everyone suffers. You are not perfect. No one is. You are not alone.

**Mindfulness**
Notice our struggle. Feel it, instead of being reactive. Be with it, avoiding self-judgment or overreaction.

When you feel like you have fallen short, how do you practice self-compassion?

Compassion Resilience Toolkit for Health and Human Services Leaders and Staff – Compassion Resilience Toolkit  *Kristin Neff*
Embrace Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another

*I feel with you, I am with you*

Sympathy

*I feel for you. I see you over there and that sucks, so I am glad I’m over here.*

Learn to Rumble

A discussion, conversation or meeting defined by a commitment to:

• Lean into vulnerability
• Stay curious and generous
• Stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving
• Take a break and circle back when necessary
• Listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard (Harriet Lerner)

*Let’s have a real conversation, even if it’s tough.*

*It’s an intention setter and a behavioral cue or reminder*

Regulate, Relate, Reason

Talking about systemic racism

Regulate
To self & Others

Reason

NN COVID-19 Stress, Distress & Trauma Series (2020, June 15)
Transgenerational Trauma & Racism with Lea Denny & Stephen Bradley
https://vimeo.com/429647117
Ask for Help

Be smart enough to know when you need help and brave enough to ask for it.
Remember
You are doing the best you can
and it is enough
References


• Compassion Resilience Toolkit, retrieved from [https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/](https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/).


• Johnson, K. (March 2020). *Building Organizational Resilience in the Face of a Ubiquitous Challenge*. 
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• Neff, K. Self-compassion, retrieved from https://self-compassion.org.


• Stevens, J. (2018). ACEs Connection Presentation.


Thank you for your time!

Karen Johnson
Trauma-Informed Lens Consulting
https://traumainformedlens.net/
262-391-0403
Thank you!

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