

The National Native Children's Trauma Center The University of Montana

Trauma and Recovery in the Veteran Community

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Welcome!

- What we do
- Traumatic events: Historical Trauma
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- What is trauma?
- American Indian Veterans
- Trauma informed services
- The importance of culture in healing

National Native Children's Trauma Center

- Category II Treatment and Service Adaptation Center within the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Focus on increasing service providers' ability to respond to the trauma-related needs of American Indian/Alaska Native children and youth in culturally appropriate ways
- Provide training in evidence-based and promising practices as well as technical assistance in trauma informed systems change across all tribal child-serving systems

What We Believe

- Tribes know the consequences of trauma in their own communities and are intensifying their commitments to community, family and individual wellness in response
- Many non-tribal mental health service providers and treatment models minimize the value of tribal holistic practices
- Trauma intervention is necessary and effective

The 3 E's of Trauma

Event

- Acute
- Chronic
- Complex/Developmental
- Historical
- Secondary

Experience

- Developmental Level
- Protective Factors
- Connection to Perpetrator

Effect

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Social

Prevalence of PTSD in the General Population

- National Comorbidity Survey Replication (2001-2003)
 - Of 5,692 participants, estimated lifetime prevalence of PTSD among adult Americans was 6.8%
 - 3.6% among men
 - 9.7% for women



Prevalence of PTSD in Veterans

- National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (1986-1988)
 - Lifetime prevalence for PTSD was 30.9% for men and 26.9% for women
- Gulf War Veterans (1995-1997)
 - Prevalence of PTSD at time of study was 12.1% in the sample. Authors estimated the prevalence of PTSD among the total Gulf War Veteran population to be 10.1%
- Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (2008)
 - Among the study sample, prevalence of PTSD at the time of the study was 13.8%

American Indian Veterans

- 31,000 American Indian/Alaska Native men and women are on active duty today
- 140,000 living American Indians are veterans
 - 11.5% of these veterans are female, as compared to 8% of all other ethnicities
- 18.6% of American Indians served in the post-9/11 period. This is a higher percentage than any other ethnicity (18.6% v. 14% respectively).

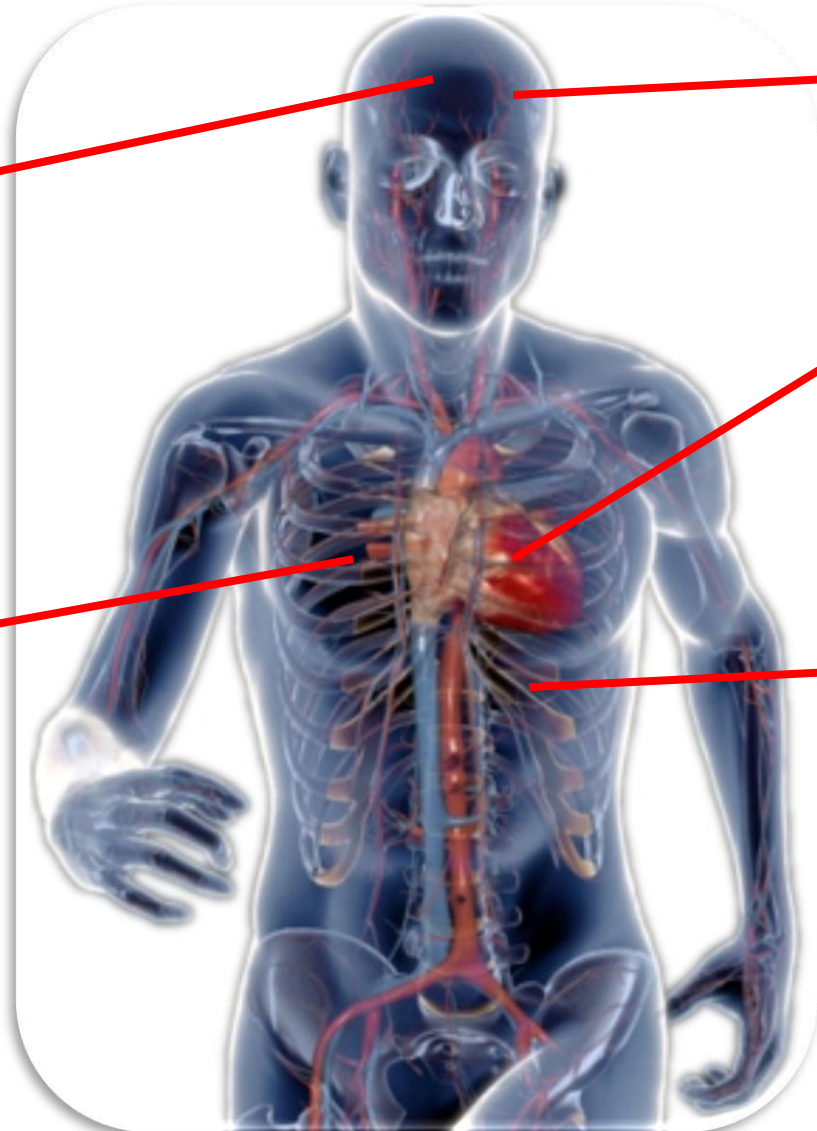
We Learn by Experience



We Learn by Experience



Fight, Flee, or Freeze (to protect)



Hippocampus

Hypothalamus

Heart rate and blood pressure increase

Breathing rate increases

Release of adrenaline and cortisol

Factors That May Determine Impact of Trauma

- Period of service
- Impact of deployment
- Impact of reintegration
- Disabilities from war or service
- Number of deployments
- Moral injury
- Survivor guilt
- Experiencing childhood trauma

Community & Systems Level Trauma

- Racism/ Discrimination
- Poverty
- Food Insecurity
- Housing Instability
- Involvement with the justice System
- Involvement with the child welfare system
- Underfunded and lacking medical facilities

Trauma Responses

- Re-experiencing
- Hypervigilance
- Avoidance
- Dissociation

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd_basics.asp

What Trauma Can Look Like

- Family and friends
 - Isolating from relationships and community
 - Difficulties with parenting
- Work and education
 - Difficulties getting and keeping a job
 - Difficulties returning or entering school or advanced education
- Substance use
 - Alcohol use as a way to manage PTSD symptoms, discrimination and isolation
- Physical health
 - PTSD symptoms can negatively impact the body
 - Chronic substance misuse may be associated with other poor health habits

Recognizing Trauma Reactions in the Courtroom

Let's look at some examples:

- Hypervigilance: Exaggerated startle response to a loud noise in the courtroom
- Emotion Dysregulation: Yelling
- Avoidance: Not showing up to court
- Impaired Memory: Difficulty remembering everything that is said after court or about a situation when they were dysregulated
- Avoidance or Dysregulation: Responding with, "I don't know" or refusing to answer questions
- Physical Reactions: Excessive sweating or fidgeting.
- Numbing: No emotional expression
- **What are some more you can think of? What have you seen?**

Trauma Informed Services

- **Realizing** the prevalence of trauma
- **Recognizing** how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce
- **Responding** by putting this knowledge into practice
- **Resisting** re-traumatization

Assessment & Referral

- Treatments and referrals: Do not assume that a general mental health evaluation includes a trauma assessment or that treatment is going to be trauma focused. Generic interventions that are not trauma focused may be ineffective.
- Appropriate trauma-informed assessment would include:
Past/Current traumas that may impact functioning; strengths in coping and problem solving and identifying social supports; self-report measures and clinical interviews assessing mental health status; presence or absence of post traumatic reactions; recommendations for treatment.

Trauma Informed Approaches

- Evidence based practices designed to treat trauma
 - Examples include: Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- To the extent possible, offer American Indian clinician and Veteran pairing or Veteran clinician and veteran pairing

PRACTICE

- Psychoeducation
- Relaxation
- Affect Regulation
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Trauma Narrative
- In vivo Exposure
- Conjoint Parent-Child
- Enhancing Safety

The Importance of Culture

- Holistic healing should include connection to culture/accessing traditional healing as a way to support well-being



Questions?