



TRAUMA AND PSYCHEDELIC
PLANT MEDICINE
INTEGRATION

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RECOGNIZING THE POTENTIAL TRIGGERS AND SENSITIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH TRAUMA BACKGROUNDS

In the context of trauma-informed plant medicine integration, it is crucial to recognize that individuals with trauma backgrounds may carry heightened sensitivities and triggers. This segment delves into the nuanced understanding of trauma-related triggers and sensitivities, emphasizing the importance of creating safe and supportive spaces for those navigating trauma healing. By fostering awareness of potential triggers, facilitators and participants can approach plant medicine experiences with greater sensitivity and compassion, nurturing an environment conducive to healing and empowerment.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES

When we explore the intricate interplay between trauma and psychedelic experiences, shedding light on the profound impact of trauma on individuals undergoing psychedelic therapy or engaging in recreational psychedelic use. By delving into the multifaceted dimensions of trauma and its interaction with psychedelic substances, this paper aims to deepen our understanding of how trauma influences the subjective experiences and therapeutic outcomes associated with psychedelics. Through an empathetic and introspective lens, we navigate the complexities of trauma-informed psychedelic exploration, acknowledging the potential for both healing and vulnerability within these experiences.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the therapeutic potential of psychedelic substances, particularly in the context of trauma treatment and mental health care. However, the presence of trauma within individuals seeking psychedelic experiences poses unique considerations and challenges that warrant thoughtful exploration.

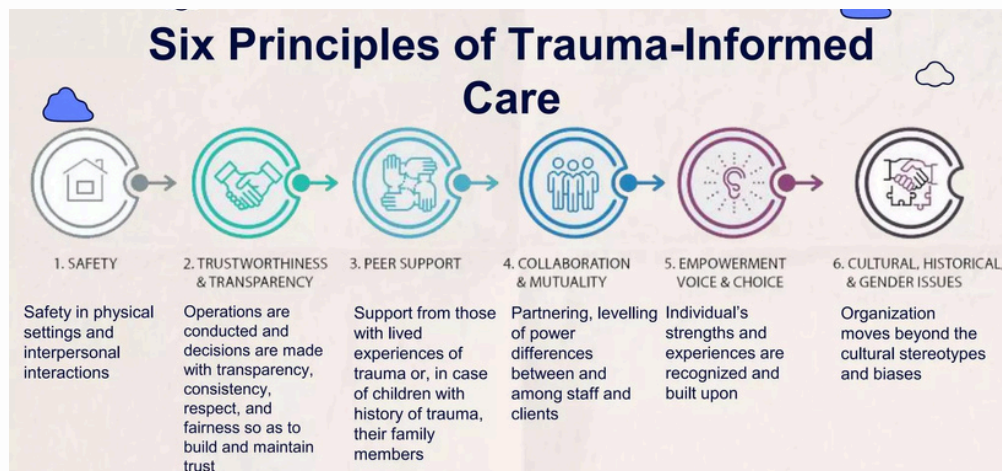
Trauma, whether stemming from acute incidents or prolonged adversity, can significantly shape an individual's psychological landscape, influencing their emotional responses, cognitive patterns, and sense of safety. When individuals with trauma histories engage with psychedelics, the impact of trauma can reverberate through their experiences, potentially affecting the nature of their psychological processes, emotional release, and integration of insights gained from the psychedelic journey.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA'S INFLUENCE ON PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES:

Trauma, in its various forms, can imprint deep-seated wounds within the psyche, leading to patterns of hyperarousal, dissociation, and emotional dysregulation. When individuals with trauma engage in psychedelic experiences, these underlying patterns may be amplified or activated, potentially leading to intensified emotional responses, re-experiencing of traumatic memories, or heightened vulnerability. The altered state of consciousness induced by psychedelics can bring forth deeply buried emotions and unconscious material, creating a fertile ground for the surfacing of trauma-related content. Furthermore, the dissolution of ego boundaries and heightened sensitivity during a psychedelic experience can render individuals with trauma more susceptible to emotional overwhelm, necessitating a trauma-informed approach to ensure safety and support.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES IN PSYCHEDELIC THERAPY:

In the context of clinical psychedelic therapy, the integration of trauma-informed principles is paramount to ensure the well-being and therapeutic efficacy of individuals with trauma histories. Therapists and facilitators must cultivate an environment of safety, trust, and empowerment, acknowledging the potential triggers and sensitivities of trauma survivors. The establishment of a supportive therapeutic alliance, clear communication of boundaries, and the implementation of grounding techniques are essential components of trauma-informed psychedelic therapy. Furthermore, the preparatory and integration phases of psychedelic therapy should encompass a nuanced understanding of trauma's impact, fostering a sense of agency and self-compassion within the individual, while also providing space for the processing and integration of trauma-related material that may arise during the psychedelic experience.



RECREATIONAL PSYCHEDELIC USE AND TRAUMA AWARENESS:

In the realm of recreational psychedelic use, individuals with trauma histories may engage with psychedelics for personal exploration, spiritual insights, or creative expression. It is crucial for the broader psychedelic community to embrace trauma awareness and empathy, recognizing the diverse backgrounds and psychological profiles of individuals partaking in these experiences. Cultivating environments that promote safety, compassion, and mindfulness can enhance the potential for individuals with trauma to engage in recreational psychedelic use with a greater sense of agency and self-awareness. Additionally, peer support networks and harm reduction initiatives can play a pivotal role in creating inclusive spaces for trauma-informed psychedelic exploration outside of clinical settings.

The intersection of trauma and psychedelic experiences unveils a tapestry of vulnerability, resilience, and potential for profound healing. By honoring the complexity of trauma and its influence on psychedelic journeys, we pave the way for a more compassionate and inclusive approach to psychedelic therapy and recreational use.

Embracing trauma-informed principles within the psychedelic landscape fosters a culture of empathy, understanding, and empowerment, offering individuals with trauma histories the opportunity to navigate their psychedelic experiences with greater safety, support, and reverence for their inherent resilience.

As we continue to explore the healing potential of psychedelics, may we hold space for the intricate narratives of trauma survivors, weaving threads of compassion and wisdom into the fabric of psychedelic exploration.

Psychedelics for Trauma

- **Change In Thought Patterns**

New, healthier thinking occurs, breaking negative thought loops and intrusive thoughts
- **Easier Processing of Trauma**

Otherwise difficult mental health content can be processed in a safe environment with professional support
- **Emotional Release**

This processing can lead to catharsis and relief, especially for suppressed feelings related to trauma
- **Fear Extinction**

Challenging triggers can lose their hold on the mind as people open up to new possibilities.

Trauma-informed principles are a set of foundational beliefs and practices that guide individuals, organizations, and communities in understanding, recognizing, and responding to the impact of trauma on individuals' lives. These principles are rooted in creating a safe, supportive, and empowering environment that acknowledges the prevalence of trauma and its profound effects on individuals' well-being.

Here are some key elements of trauma-informed principles:

- 01 Safety:** Prioritizing physical, emotional, and psychological safety for individuals who have experienced trauma. This involves creating environments that foster trust, predictability, and a sense of security, ensuring that individuals feel safe to express themselves and engage in healing processes.
- 02 Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Establishing clear, consistent, and honest communication that fosters trust and builds rapport. It involves being transparent about processes, expectations, and intentions while also respecting individuals' autonomy and agency.
- 03 Choice:** Empowering individuals with a sense of autonomy and choice in their healing journey. This involves respecting their decisions, providing options for participation, and involving them in the decision-making process, thereby promoting a sense of control and empowerment.
- 04 Collaboration and Mutuality:** Engaging in partnerships and collaborations that honor the expertise and experiences of individuals who have faced trauma. It involves creating an atmosphere of respect, equality, and shared decision-making, recognizing the value of co-creating solutions and interventions.
- 05 Empowerment:** Fostering a sense of resilience, agency, and personal strength in individuals who have experienced trauma. This involves highlighting their strengths, promoting self-advocacy, and cultivating a belief in their capacity for growth and healing.
- 06 Cultural, Historical, and Gender Considerations:** Recognizing the impact of culture, history, and gender on individuals' experiences of trauma. It involves acknowledging the diversity of backgrounds and identities, while also addressing systemic and societal influences on trauma and healing.
- 07 Trauma Awareness:** Promoting a deep understanding of trauma's impact on individuals, communities, and systems. This involves educating and training individuals to recognize trauma symptoms, responses, and triggers, while also cultivating empathy, compassion, and sensitivity in interactions.
- 08 Resilience and Recovery:** Emphasizing the potential for resilience, growth, and recovery in the aftermath of trauma. This involves instilling hope, validating individuals' experiences, and fostering an environment that supports their journey toward healing.

By embodying trauma-informed principles, individuals and organizations can create spaces that honor the complexities of trauma, while also promoting safety, empowerment, and compassionate care. These principles are integral to supporting the healing and well-being of individuals who have experienced trauma, fostering resilience, and promoting a culture of understanding and empathy.

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF SET AND SETTING IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAUMA-INFORMED PLANT MEDICINE EXPERIENCES:

The concept of "set and setting" holds profound significance in the context of trauma-informed plant medicine experiences. This exploration delves into the environmental, emotional, and interpersonal factors that shape the plant medicine journey. Participants are guided to understand the impact of mindset (set) and the physical and emotional environment (setting) on the unfolding of their plant medicine experiences. By integrating trauma-informed principles into the creation of supportive set and setting, individuals can navigate their healing journey with a sense of safety, empowerment, and reverence.

CULTIVATING A COMPASSIONATE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR PLANT MEDICINE INTEGRATION:

This segment focuses on the cultivation of a compassionate and supportive environment for plant medicine integration, emphasizing the essential role of empathy, non-judgment, and active listening. Participants are encouraged to embody a sense of communal care and understanding, fostering an atmosphere where vulnerability is met with compassion and where the healing journey is honored with reverence. By cultivating an environment grounded in empathy and support, individuals can feel held and nurtured as they explore the transformative potential of plant medicines within the context of trauma-informed care.



Empathy plays a pivotal role in trauma-informed care, serving as a foundational element that fosters a deep understanding, validation, and compassion for individuals who have experienced trauma.

Here are key aspects of the role of empathy in trauma-informed care:

01. **Understanding and Validation:** Empathy involves actively listening to and acknowledging the experiences of individuals with trauma histories without judgment. It requires an open-hearted approach to understanding the complex and often painful narratives of trauma survivors. By offering validation and recognition of their experiences, empathetic care providers and supporters create an environment where individuals feel seen, heard, and affirmed in their journey toward healing.
02. **Cultivating Safety and Trust:** Empathetic interactions contribute to the establishment of a safe and trusting environment for trauma survivors. By demonstrating genuine care, understanding, and non-judgmental support, care providers and community members can help individuals feel secure in expressing their emotions and experiences. This sense of safety lays a foundation for the healing process and empowers individuals to engage in their own recovery journey.
03. **Respecting Individual Autonomy:** Empathy in trauma-informed care involves respecting the autonomy and agency of trauma survivors. By recognizing their inherent worth and dignity, empathetic care providers honor individuals' choices, preferences, and boundaries. This respect for autonomy empowers trauma survivors to participate in their healing process and make decisions that align with their personal needs and values.
04. **Building Connection and Support:** Through empathy, care providers and support networks foster meaningful connections with trauma survivors. This connection serves as a source of emotional support, understanding, and shared humanity, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting a sense of belonging. Empathetic connections also provide a platform for trauma survivors to share their experiences and receive encouragement and validation from others who understand and empathize with their journey.

Key aspects of the role of empathy in trauma-informed care, continued:

05. **Trauma-Informed Communication:** Empathy is central to trauma-informed communication, guiding care providers and supporters to convey understanding, warmth, and sensitivity. Through empathetic language and non-verbal cues, individuals can express care, concern, and validation, creating an environment where trauma survivors feel respected, valued, and understood.
06. **Encouraging Healing and Growth:** Empathy serves as a catalyst for healing and personal growth within trauma-informed care. By offering empathy, care providers and supporters encourage trauma survivors to explore their emotions, process their experiences, and embark on a journey toward resilience and recovery. Empathetic support can instill hope, foster self-compassion, and inspire individuals to embrace their inner strength and capacity for healing.

In essence, empathy is a cornerstone of trauma-informed care, promoting an environment of understanding, safety, and empowerment for individuals who have experienced trauma. By embodying empathy, care providers and communities can honor the narratives of trauma survivors, fostering a culture of compassion, connection, and resilience within the healing process.



Trauma-informed care is an approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and seeks to create an environment that promotes healing, resilience, and empowerment for individuals who have experienced trauma. This approach is grounded in an understanding of the profound effects of trauma on individuals' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, and it aims to provide support that is sensitive to the unique needs of trauma survivors. **Here are the key elements of trauma-informed care:**

01. **Safety:** Trauma-informed care prioritizes physical and emotional safety for individuals who have experienced trauma. It involves creating an environment that is predictable, trustworthy, and fosters a sense of security. Safety is foundational to the healing process and allows individuals to feel comfortable expressing their emotions and engaging in their recovery journey.
02. **Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Establishing clear, honest, and consistent communication is essential in trauma-informed care. Building trust and rapport with trauma survivors requires transparency about procedures, expectations, and intentions. This helps create an atmosphere where individuals feel respected, valued, and understood.
03. **Choice:** Empowering individuals with a sense of autonomy and control is integral to trauma-informed care. Respecting their decisions, providing options for participation, and involving them in the decision-making process promotes a sense of agency and empowerment, which is crucial for their healing journey.
04. **Collaboration and Mutuality:** Trauma-informed care emphasizes collaboration and partnerships that honor the expertise and experiences of trauma survivors. It involves creating an atmosphere of respect, equality, and shared decision-making, recognizing the value of co-creating solutions and interventions.
05. **Empowerment:** Fostering a sense of resilience, agency, and personal strength is a central tenet of trauma-informed care. Highlighting the strengths of trauma survivors, promoting self-advocacy, and cultivating a belief in their capacity for growth and healing are essential components of this approach.
06. **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Considerations:** Recognizing the impact of culture, history, and gender on individuals' experiences of trauma is crucial in trauma-informed care. It involves acknowledging the diversity of backgrounds and identities, while also addressing systemic and societal influences on trauma and healing.
07. **Trauma Awareness:** Trauma-informed care promotes a deep understanding of trauma's impact on individuals, communities, and systems. Educating and training individuals to recognize trauma symptoms, responses, and triggers while cultivating empathy, compassion, and sensitivity in interactions.
08. **Resilience and Recovery:** Trauma-informed care emphasizes the potential for resilience, growth, and recovery in the aftermath of trauma. It involves instilling hope, validating individuals' experiences, and fostering an environment that supports their journey toward healing.

By embodying trauma-informed care principles, individuals and organizations create a supportive and compassionate environment that honors the complexities of trauma while promoting safety, empowerment, and holistic well-being for trauma survivors.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT

Trauma is one of the most common and underestimated causes of human suffering. If we go back to the roots of the word “trauma”, we find that it comes from Greek and means “wound” or “injury.” Today, when we think of trauma, we have in mind violence, sexual abuse, and severe disasters. Less attention is often paid to the “minor” ongoing injuries. In fact, however, there is no such thing as “minor” or “major” trauma. Trauma occurs when life situations cause injury to the body, psyche, and soul. Trauma overwhelms us, especially emotionally. How big the trauma is, depends on the person experiencing it. It is very individual, and even “everyday” events can leave wounds or injuries and thus be experienced as traumatic.

The hallmark of a traumatic event is that it is a life-threatening situation in which the brain shuts down all unnecessary perceptions and actions and triggers important actions, such as the fight or flight reflex. It switches to instinctive behaviour, as is the case with animals. The body is then ready to freeze, fight or flee. Stress hormones such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, and endorphins are released. Environmental stimuli such as smells, surroundings, or sounds are no longer consciously perceived, and all senses focus on the threat.

Regardless of the specific situation that triggered the trauma, it is unmistakable that the entire body is affected. After a traumatic experience, changes occur on a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual level. Therefore, it is very important to heal with a holistic approach. Various studies have also shown that the brain changes immediately after trauma. The hippocampus, which is important for memory consolidation, shrinks, the amygdala, which plays an important role in emotional evaluation and recognition of situations and analysis of potential danger, becomes overactive, and the anterior cingulate cortex, which regulates autonomic processes (e.g., decision making and learning), decreases in functionality. Normally, these changes regress. If the trauma was excessively severe or repeated several times over a long period of time, these changes can be prolonged and, in the worst cases, have permanent effects.

A common phenomenon with trauma is that these events often cannot be consciously remembered. In many cases, they move into the implicit, unconscious memory. This is a protective function of the brain, without which humans probably could not survive. Moreover, the body, and our cells store these experiences, and each of our traumas, even the “minor” ones, alienates us a little from ourselves, and from our own lives. The unity we were born with breaks down.

Impact of Childhood Trauma



How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

EXPLICIT MEMORY

IMPLICIT MEMORY

SEMANTIC MEMORY

EPISODIC MEMORY

EMOTIONAL MEMORY

PROCEDURAL MEMORY

What It Is

The memory of general knowledge and facts.

Example

You remember what a bicycle is.

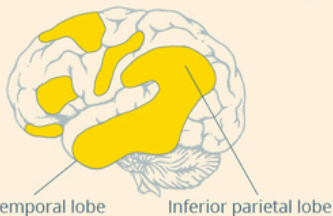


How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can prevent information (like words, images, sounds, etc.) from different parts of the brain from combining to make a semantic memory.

Related Brain Area

The temporal lobe and inferior parietal cortex collect information from different brain areas to create semantic memory.



What It Is

The autobiographical memory of an event or experience – including the who, what, and where.

Example

You remember who was there and what street you were on when you fell off your bicycle in front of a crowd.

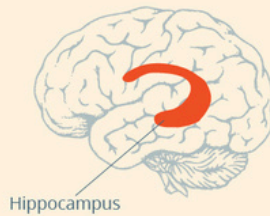


How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can shutdown episodic memory and fragment the sequence of events.

Related Brain Area

The hippocampus is responsible for creating and recalling episodic memory.



What It Is

The memory of the emotions you felt during an experience.

Example

When a wave of shame or anxiety grabs you the next time you see your bicycle after the big fall.

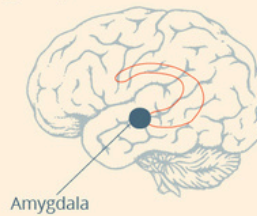


How Trauma Can Affect It

After trauma, a person may get triggered and experience painful emotions, often without context.

Related Brain Area

The amygdala plays a key role in supporting memory for emotionally charged experiences.



What It Is

The memory of how to perform a common task without actively thinking

Example

You can ride a bicycle automatically, without having to stop and recall how it's done.

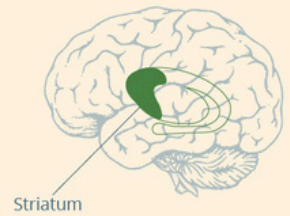


How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can change patterns of procedural memory. For example, a person might tense up and unconsciously alter their posture, which could lead to pain or even numbness.

Related Brain Area

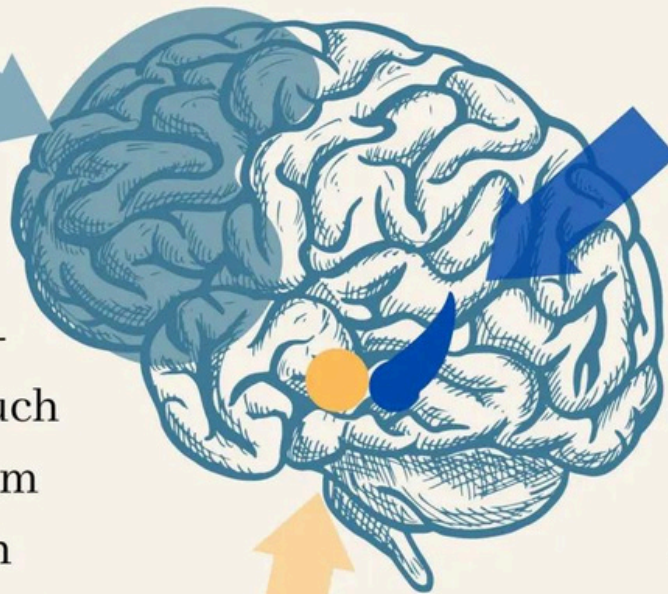
The striatum is associated with producing procedural memory and creating new habits.



HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS THE BRAIN

Prefrontal Cortex

Rational thinking - regulates emotions such as fear responses from the amygdala - with PTSD this has a reduced volume



Hippocampus

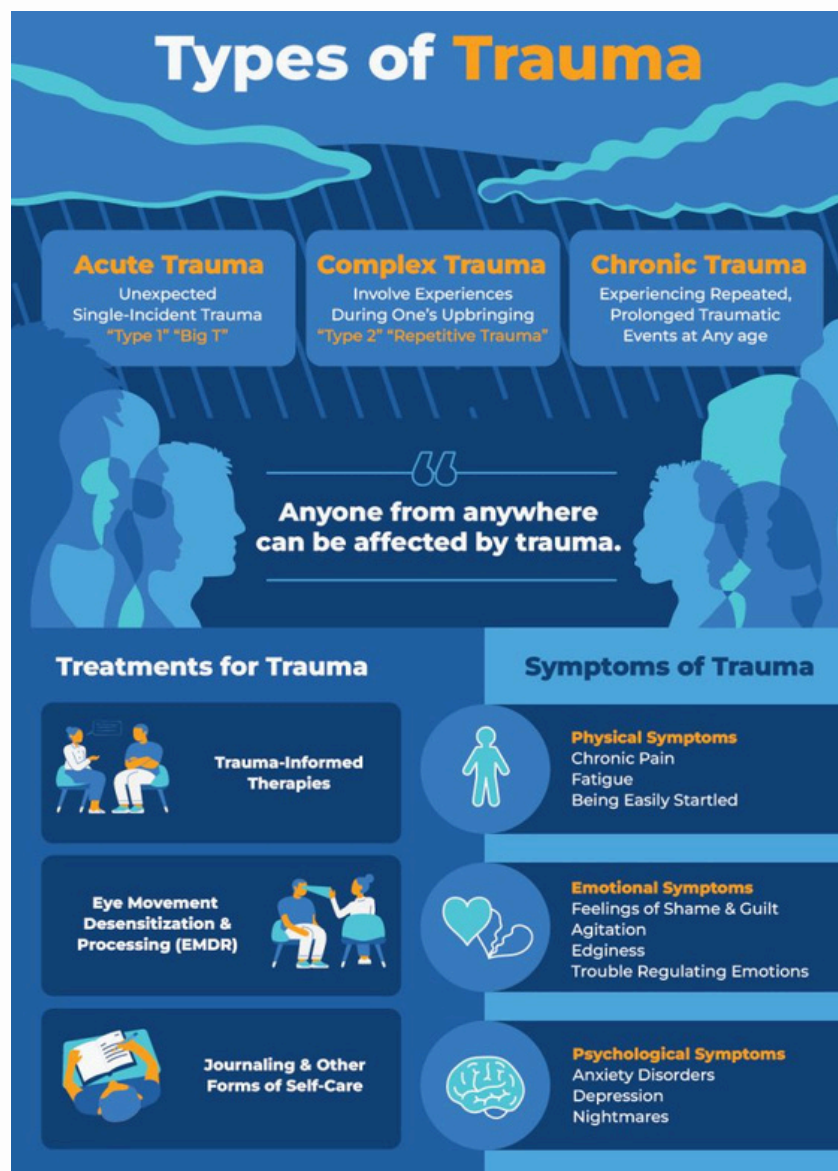
Responsible for memory and differentiating between past and present – works to remember and make sense of the trauma. With consistent exposure to trauma, it shrinks.

Amygdala

Wired for survival, when active it is hard to think rationally. The more hyperactive the amygdala is, the more signs of PTSD are present.

DEFINITION OF TRAUMA AND ITS VARYING FORMS:

Trauma encompasses a wide spectrum of distressing experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. It can manifest in various forms, including but not limited to physical, emotional, psychological, and relational trauma. These experiences can stem from events such as abuse, neglect, violence, accidents, natural disasters, and ongoing stressors. Trauma can also arise from systemic oppression, discrimination, and intergenerational trauma, impacting individuals and communities across generations. Understanding the diverse forms of trauma is essential for recognizing the complexity of individual experiences and the multifaceted nature of healing.



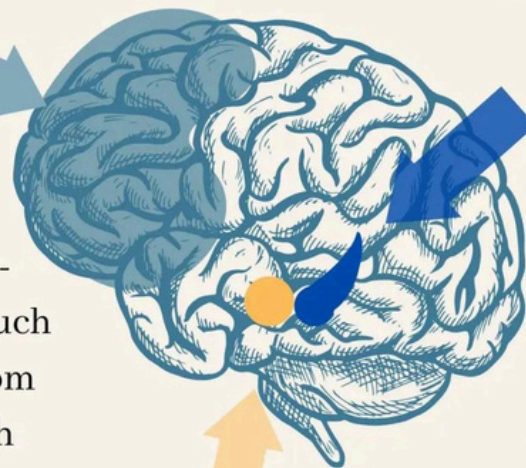
THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON THE MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT:

Trauma reverberates across the mind, body, and spirit, leaving profound imprints on an individual's well-being. It can disrupt cognitive functions, emotional regulation, and the perception of safety, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, depression, hypervigilance, and dissociation. Physiologically, trauma may manifest as chronic pain, autoimmune disorders, and disruptions in the nervous system, impacting overall health and vitality. Spiritually, trauma can create a sense of disconnection, loss of purpose, and a fragmented relationship with oneself and the world. Understanding the holistic impact of trauma is crucial for approaching healing with compassion and comprehensive support.

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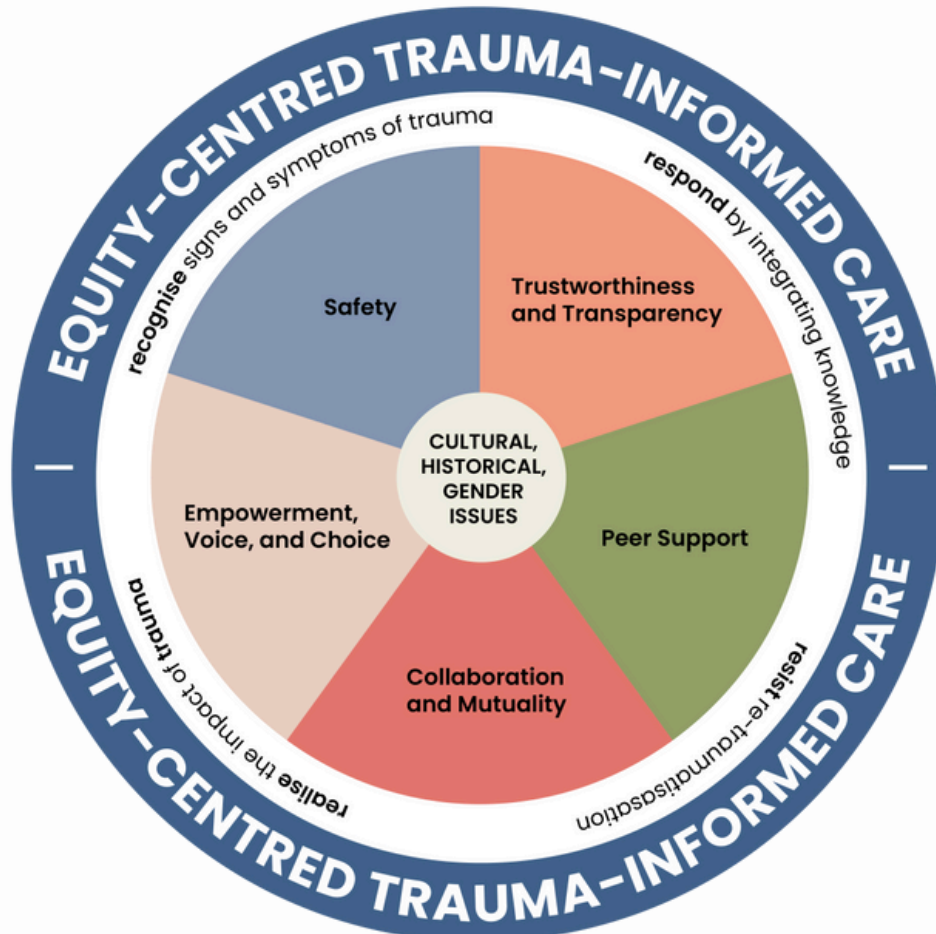
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EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND ITS GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Trauma-informed care is a framework that prioritizes safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment in all interactions and interventions. It involves recognizing the prevalence and impact of trauma, integrating this knowledge into policies and practices, and actively seeking to prevent re-traumatization.

The guiding principles of trauma-informed care emphasize creating environments that foster safety, promoting resilience, and acknowledging the impact of trauma on individuals and communities. It also involves centering the voices and experiences of those who have experienced trauma, creating a culture of respect, validation, and empowerment.



CULTIVATING EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH TRAUMA HISTORIES:

Empathy and understanding are foundational elements of trauma-informed care. Cultivating empathy involves actively listening to individuals' narratives, acknowledging their experiences without judgment, and honoring their resilience and survival. It also entails recognizing the diverse ways in which trauma can manifest and being sensitive to the unique needs and triggers of each individual.

Understanding the complex interplay of trauma and its effects on an individual's life allows for the creation of supportive, nurturing, and validating spaces where healing can unfold. Through empathy and understanding, we can co-create environments that honor the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, fostering a sense of safety, connection, and hope on the path to healing.

Since traumatic memories, emotions, and energetic blocks are always trapped in the body, bodywork is a very effective way to achieve healing from trauma. It also brings emotional release from stored emotions such as fear, guilt, shame, anger, and sadness.

SAFE TOUCH AND BODY MASSAGE:

The sense of touch has long been underestimated. However, it is actually very important for survival. It makes us breathe more calmly, lowers our heart rate and blood pressure, and allows us to relax. Oxytocin also protects us from disease, relieves pain, and helps build and deepen love and trust. It nurtures us and connects us not only to others but to ourselves. We can offer this work to people who have problems with touch, whether the person suffers from a lack of touch, has difficulty giving and receiving touch, or wants to learn more about how to communicate their wants and dislikes in a conscious and self-directed way.

Another form of safe touch is tantric body massage. It is different from other forms of massage and is a sacred practice that skilfully incorporates the tantric essence of shakti or energy into the massage. Tantric body massage is a profound tool for spiritual and emotional healing. In this way, we can touch person's deepest layers and aspects and release energetic blockages related to trauma. Through tantric body massage, stored traumas in the body can be released, and emotional wounds healed.



BODY MOVEMENT, SHAKING AND DANCING

When the human system is ready to fight or flee, but the traumatic event puts the person in a state of rigidity and immobility, powerful energy remains trapped in the body. Animals have a natural impulse to shake off this energy when the danger has passed, but humans do not. Instead, we tend to block, tense, and contract our bodies. This causes energy to be stored in the body, leading to trauma. Through body shaking and other movements, such as dancing, we can release these blockages and release the stored energy to bring it back into a free and easy flow. It serves as a channel to vent our feelings, improves our state of consciousness, and connects us to our bodies and the present moment.



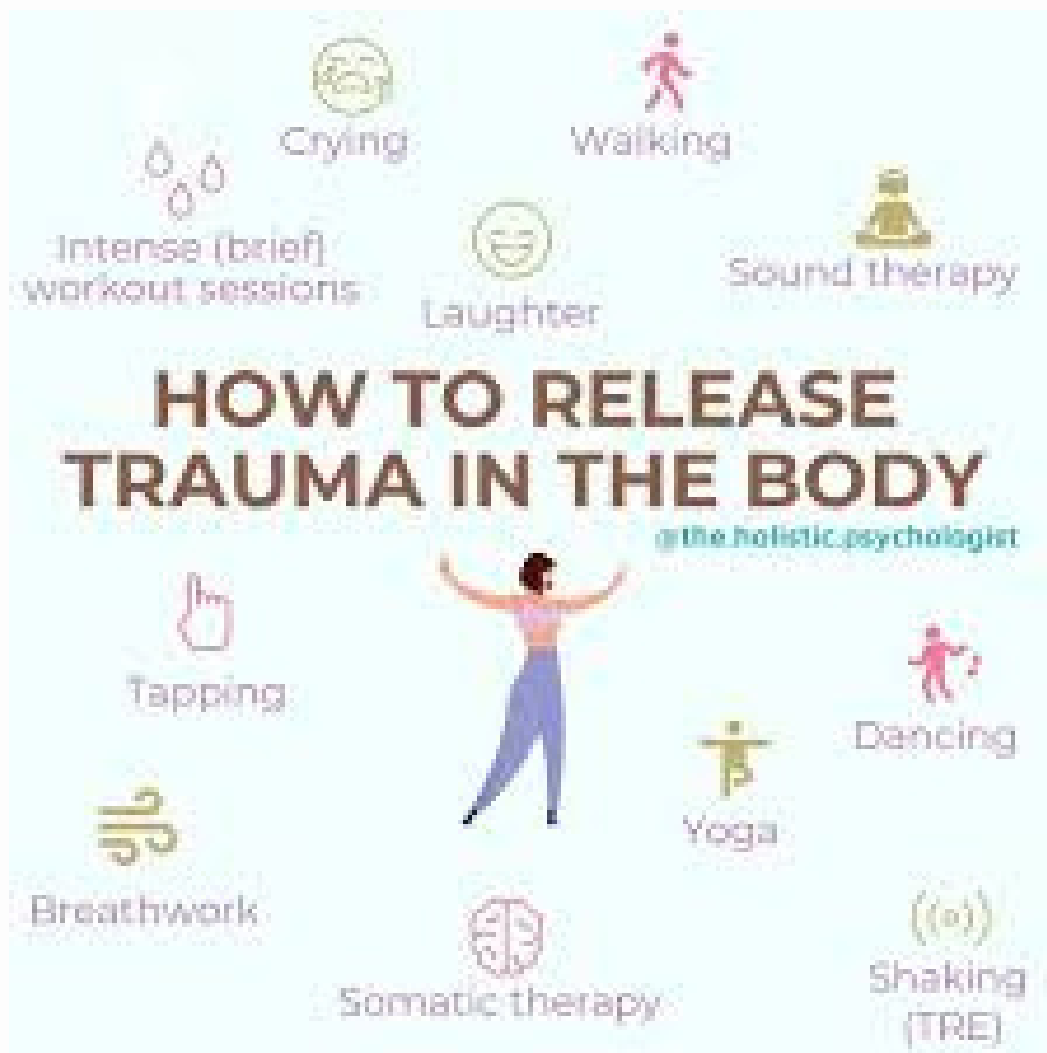
DE-ARMOURING AND PRESSURE POINTS

De-armouring is a form of deep cleansing of the body. Armouring is a learned, unconscious muscle tension created by trauma or other negative experiences such as emotional shocks, fears, painful life experiences, emotional wounds from past sexual relationships, as well as karmic pain. De-Armouring is a blend of energy work and deep tissue massage. It is an intuitive bodywork, and with a lot of attention and mindfulness, tensions, blockages, pain, and emotions can be released even across generations by pressing different reflex points on the body and in the yoni.



SOUND

Since most people freeze and fall silent during trauma, it is natural to reactivate the throat. Sounds on the exhale help you connect with your breath, but even a shout in your hands or a pillow is very helpful in releasing emotions such as frustration, anger, and resentment. Making sound also dispels physical pain.



BREATHING EXERCISES

Proper breathing techniques can heal. Breathing releases emotional tension and stimulates the vagus nerve, which calms the mind. It can also relieve pain, eliminate indigestion, and strengthen the brain.

Our cells are oxygenated, and the flow of energy in the body can be increased. We can release toxins, painful feelings, negative thoughts, held traumas, and stored tension in the body.

However, it takes a trained facilitator to offer the right breathwork, and for some traumatised people it can even be too much in the first phase.



MEDITATIONS, VISUALISATIONS, AND AFFIRMATIONS

Meditation offers the opportunity to observe one's own body, and notice subtle physical impulses and emerging sensations to release the trapped trauma.

If focusing on one's own body is too early and thus too overwhelming, we can also move it to a neutral place and turn attention outward.

If we take on limiting beliefs as a result of the trauma, we can keep ourselves safe by meditating and repeating mantras or affirmations. This helps reprogram the brain to accept encouraging beliefs.

