

Module #12 Mindfulness and SOS

Activities

1. Introduction
2. Content- Mindfulness definition and practice
3. Discussion
4. Content – SOS
5. Discussion
6. Summary

Handouts/Supplies

- Bag of individually wrapped candy or chocolate
- Handout 12.1 Mindfulness Handouts – What and How skills
- Handout 12.2 SOS Thermometer
- Handout 12.3 Mindfulness exercises

Objectives

- Participants learn about the core elements of mindfulness and how mindfulness practice can help homeless youth
- Participants learn how to use SOS with homeless youth

Introduction

Today we are going to introduce two skill sets that can be helpful to teach youth and that staff might find helpful too. These two skills are Mindfulness and SOS. Mindfulness is a concept that goes back to Buddhism and is part of several therapeutic treatments for trauma. Mindfulness is about paying attention in a particular way. Mindfulness is a mental state, characterized by concentrated awareness of one's thoughts, actions or motivations. We believe that by building mindfulness skills in homeless youth (or in youth in general), we can help them be less reactive to their environment, build more positive decision-making skills, and become more aware of some of the negative judgments and thoughts that pass through their mind.

Content- Mindfulness skills and practice

There are two core skills in mindfulness, the “what skills” and the “how skills”. The what skills include:

- Observe
- Describe
- Participate

The how skills include:

- Refrain from judgment
- Stay focused
- Do what works
-

Instead of trying to explain this further, we are going to give you a chance to practice mindfulness yourself. We are passing out candy. Pick one that appeals to you but don't open it or start eating it yet.

We want you to experience this candy in a way that you have never experienced it before. When we have finished providing all the instructions, we are going to have you examine the candy and use all of your senses- touch, smell, sight, taste, and hearing. Even if you have eaten this candy dozens or hundreds of times before, see if you can observe something that you don't ever remember noticing.

It is normal and expected to be distracted while you are learning mindfulness. If you find that you have strayed, don't judge yourself, just try to refocus on the experience. We will spend about 2 minutes enjoying our candy and then we will ask if folks are willing to share their experiences.

Discussion

(note to facilitator- facilitator always shares their experience first)

What did you notice about yourself during this exercise?

Could you imagine doing something like this with the youth that you work with?

How do you think that mindfulness skills could help homeless youth?

Did you notice self-judgments during this exercise? Were you aware of how frequently we judge ourselves?

Content- SOS¹

(Handout – again facilitator shares first)

SOS is a tool that we have borrowed from the SPARCS curriculum. It stands for Slow Down, Orient, and Self Check and it is designed to help youth learn how to slow down and think about their current situation. We have just talked about a lot of significant issues and we thought it would be a good idea for us to do an SOS to check in with you and see how you are feeling.

Activity

Pass out the SOS worksheet and go around the room asking each person to share their scores (the first number for how personal distress they are experiencing right now and the second number for how much personal control they feel they have right now).

Discussion

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that this tool might be useful for homeless youth who are under a lot of stress?
(It also helps them gain the knowledge that an individual can feel very stressed out but still be in control)
 2. Can you imagine how you might be able to use the SOS in your work with youth?
 3. What kinds of situations seem like a good fit for an SOS?
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¹ These activities and handouts were adapted from "SPARCS: Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress –Group Trauma Treatment Curriculum (2006). Ruth DeRosa, Mandy Habib, David Pelcovitz, et al."

Summary

As I mentioned in the beginning of this module, we have found mindfulness and SOS to be very useful skills to use and practice with youth. Engaging youth in a mindfulness or SOS exercise at the beginning of group or individual session can help them become more focused on the moment. For staff that are feeling stressed, mindfulness exercises can provide a brief respite. You can also use SOS to check in with your co-workers on a tough day.

Mindfulness "How" Skills

Don't Judge



See without evaluating
Acknowledge, but don't judge it-
for example, replace: "You're a jerk" with
"You took my stuff"
Don't judge your judging

Stay Focused



Do ONE thing at a time!
Let go of distractions
Throw yourself in the current moment, the now
Concentrate your mind

Do What Works



Focus on what's going to help
Do what you need to do to achieve your goals
Play by the rules
Act as skillfully as you can
Let go of feelings that hurt you & hurt others

Adapted from Rathus, Miller & Landsman (1995), adapted from Linehan (1993)

Mindfulness “What” Skills

Observe

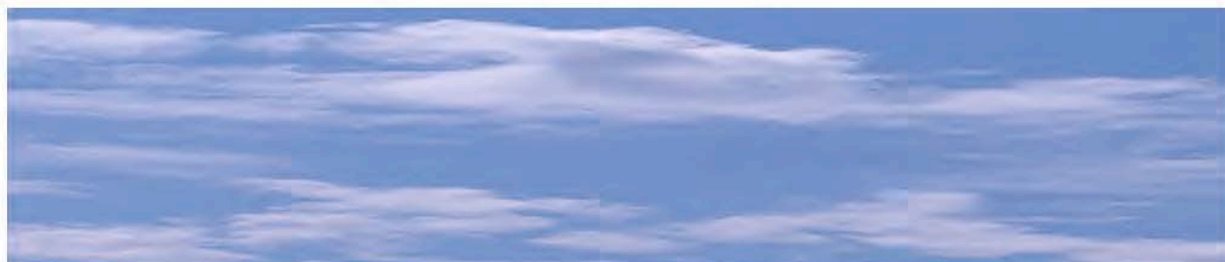
Just notice
Don't push away your thoughts and feelings
Don't hold on to them
Use your 5 senses- sight, sound, taste, touch, smell
Watch your thoughts, feelings come & go like clouds in the sky

Describe

Put words on the experience-
 “My stomach muscles are tightening”
Name your feelings-
 “I'm so mad I could scream”
Label thoughts as thoughts not facts-
 Thinking you're dumb doesn't mean you are dumb
Name thoughts, feelings, and sensations separately

Participate

Become one with your experience
 Like riding a bike, playing sports or an instrument
Throw yourself into what you do- really get into it
Without being self-conscious, without fear
Practice, practice, practice



Adapted from Rathus, Miller & Landsman (1995).
adapted from Linehan (1993)

Handout 12.2

H 1.2

SPARCSSM (V16)

Session 1, Handout 2: SOS: Slow down, Orient, Self-Check

SOS

SLOW DOWN ORIENT SELF-CHECK

What is the situation? What is going on? _____

Practice steps 1, 2, & 3. Circle ratings for step 3.

Step 1: **S**LOW DOWN

- Pause, take a time out, calm your body, relax
- Take a deep breath- feel the air, listen to your heart, notice your chest
- One thought at a time

Step 2: **O**RIENT YOURSELF

- Bring your mind & body back to the present time/place
- Look around- notice where you are, who you're with, what you're doing
- Feel yourself in the chair, feel your feet touching the floor

Step 3: **S**ELF CHECK

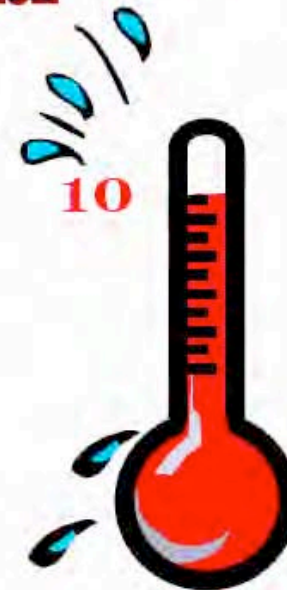
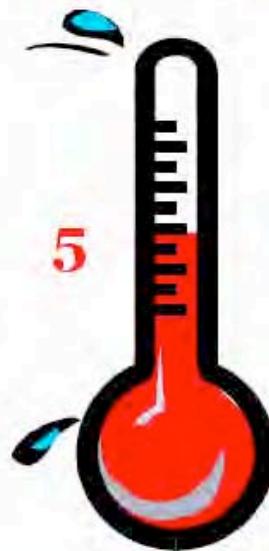
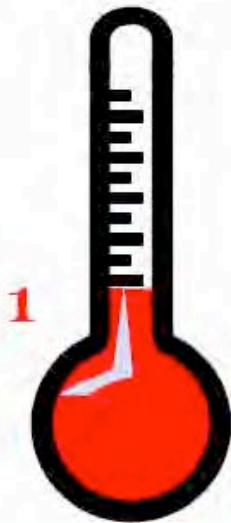
- Personal Distress Right now I feel . . .
Completely Calm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Most Distressed Ever
- Personal Control Right now I am . . .
Completely In Control 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Totally Out of Control

Adapted from
Ford et al. (2004)

SOS THERMOMETER

SLOW DOWN ORIENT SELF-CHECK

10 high



1 low

Personal Distress

Right now I feel ...

Completely Calm

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Most Distressed Ever

Personal Control

Right now I am ...

Completely in Control

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Totally Out of Control

Handout 12.3 Mindfulness Exercises

1. Blowing Bubbles
2. What's Different?
3. Check the Chip
4. Thumpeta - Thump Heart Rate
5. Not Being Mindful
6. Observe Thoughts
7. "Snap-Crackle-Pop"
8. Observe Your Emotions
9. Mindful to Music
10. Guess What it is: Observe & Describe an Object
11. Observe & Describe Object
12. Balance
13. Mindful Eating
14. Observe the Urge
15. Focus on Your Face
16. Finding Humor When It Happens
17. Sound Ball
18. Breathe
19. Listening Mindfully
20. Minding Personal Space
21. Let's Dance
22. Sandpaper and Softness

1. Mindfulness Exercise: Blowing Bubbles

- Distribute bubble liquid and wands
- Group leaders should model 3 tasks during mindfulness exercises;
 - Fully participate in the moment
 - Observe their experience
 - Describe their own experience to participants before asking participants to describe theirs
- Mindfulness is hard: by modeling it for members, leaders show that the act of becoming mindful is a process and takes practice
- Blow bubbles for 2-3 minutes- give the following instructions:
 - Practice focusing on your bubbles
 - Where they go
 - What they look like
 - Size, shape, number, color
 - OK if distracted by someone else's bubbles
 - don't judge yourself if you get distracted
 - bring yourself back to the task- mindfully blowing own bubbles
- Stop after about 2-3 minutes
 - Describe your experience as group leader to the group
 - **Ask:** Did you throw yourself into blowing bubbles?
 - **Ask:** Were you focused on other people? Their bubbles?
 - **Ask:** Were you able to bring yourself back to the bubbles when you got distracted? What was it like trying to bring yourself back?
 - **Ask:** Did you find yourself judging (your distraction, your bubbles, other people's bubbles, etc.)?
- **Rationale:**
 - Focusing: staying focused even with distractions, is good practice for figuring out options in tough situations- helps get what you want and need in the moment
 - Redirecting; distractions are everywhere, getting distracted is a part of life - when that happens, just bring yourself back to the task at hand
 - Doing things non-judgmentally: notice when you judge, don't judge your judging
 - Judging is more likely to put us in emotion mind

1. Mindfulness Exercise: What's Different?

- Ask for two volunteers. Ask them to stand and tell the group to take a good look at them, to be observant. Next, one of the group leaders and the two volunteers leave the room. The 2 group members change 2-4 things about their appearance. (switch shoes, take out shoelaces, remove a watch, switch or take off a piece of jewelry, roll up a sleeve, etc). They return to the group and group members try to guess what is different.

- **Rationale:**
 - It is easier to recognize the things that stress us out if we notice details about what we are thinking and feeling inside of us as well as things that are happening outside of us.
 - If we recognize what the triggers are, then we can deal with them more effectively. That's what this mindfulness exercise is about—noticing, being aware or mindful.

2. Mindfulness Exercise: Check the Chip

- Give each group member one potato chip and instruct them to NOT eat the chip
 - Instruct them to look at it carefully and mindfully
- What does it look like? Notice details
- Smell like?
- Feel like?
 - Allow 1-2 minutes for them to examine the chip
- Ask group members to describe what they noticed as they were fully participating in the moment
- **Rationale:** Paying attention to information, what's going on around you, can help you cope better with stressful situations. The more information you have, the better you can problem-solve. You get more information when mindful of what's going on around you.

3. Mindfulness Exercise: Thumpeta -Thump Heart Rate

- Heart is more than just a pump, it communicates all kinds of information to the brain
- Quiet yourself, find your pulse (either at their wrists or neck),
- Be sure all members have located their pulse before continuing.
- Pay attention mindfully to your pulse, feel it beating, pay attention to the beat
- **Ask:** Is it even? Is it strong? Are the beats the same length? Is the time between the beats the same?
- Allow 1-2 minutes
- Members share observations
- **Rationale:**
 - Paying attention to your body's reaction, like your heart rate, can give you important information. It can give you clues about what might be triggering/stressing you, This information can help you cope more effectively when your body's alarm system is on all the time.
 - When you pay attention to your pulse, you are focusing all of your energy on it. You can focus in on your life the same way. You can direct your life by directing how you think. This makes you more able to cope and handle life.

4. Mindfulness Exercise: Not Being Mindful

- Group participants pair up for this exercise
 - Speaker talks about neutral topic (1-2 minutes) –For example, how their day was at school/work, dinner last night, news about a friend, etc. Don't select a heated topic or raise a current conflict.
 - The listener acts distracted, insensitive, not mindful. Look around the room, write, whistle, etc.
 - Switch roles- the listener becomes the speaker (1-2 minutes)
 - The listener is again distracted and not mindful of the speaker
- **Ask:** What is it like to talk to someone who is not being mindful?
- **Ask:** If we look like we're not paying close attention to what the other person is saying are we more or less likely to get what we want?
- **Rationale:** If the other person understands that you are listening, s/he is more likely to listen to you when you talk or ask for something. You have been a great listener if the other person knows that you were listening and knows that you understand his/her point of view. This is important, both in close relationships and even casual ones.

5. Mindfulness Exercise: Observe Your Thoughts

- Instruct members to notice thoughts as if ...
 - Scrolling by on a lighted sign/message board
 - Floating by like clouds or
 - Moving across a conveyor belt & landing in a box for you to examine later
- Notice them without judging or getting caught up in them, believing them or reacting to them
- Notice them without holding on to the thought, without pushing away
- When you become distracted, bring yourself back to the next thought
- **Rationale:**
 - It is easier to recognize the things that stress us out if we notice details about what we are thinking and feeling
 - If we pay attention to what we are thinking and what is bothering us, without judgment and without acting impulsively, then we can deal with it more effectively.

6. Mindfulness Exercise: "Snap-Crackle-Pop"

- Group members stand and form a circle
 - Identify the starter
 - Starter points over his/her head to person to the left or right and
- says "SNAP"
 - Recipient points to someone across his/her own chest (to the left or right) and
- says "CRACKLE"
 - Second recipient points straight at anyone in the circle and
- says "POP"
 - "POPPed" person starts the cycle again with SNAP
 - Each person has 3 seconds to respond (or they are out)
- Members who mis-gesture, use the wrong word, or take too long to respond, leave the circle and distract remaining players: by doing things like. by yelling "snap, crackle, pop", clapping, singing, gesturing, making noises, etc.
- Play for 3-5 minutes nonstop or until only two players are left
- Ask for volunteers to share thoughts, feelings, or observations
- **Ask:** Did you ever have a fight with someone when s/he kept bringing up other things? Maybe other things they were angry about or other things you did in the past (not related to current conversation)?
- **Ask:** Generally, does that make things worse or help resolve things?
 - E.g. Maria asks her sister if she can borrow her sweater. Her sister immediately yells and reminds Maria how she spilled soda on the pants she borrowed last week. Instead of getting caught up in her sister's insults, Maria remains focused and proceeds with MAKE A LINK. She is successful because she is able to stay in the present moment (instead of fighting about what happened last week), and she is able to let go of distractions (e.g. like bringing up all the things her sister has done wrong too).
 - There are many distractions that can come up when people try to "MAKE a LINK." e.g. changing the subject, bringing up previous conflicts, saying things that make you feel bad, interrupting, attacking, criticizing
- **Rationale:**
 - The more mindful you were during "snap, crackle, pop" the more likely you were to stay in the circle. Being mindful means being present in the moment and letting go of distractions. The more mindful you are when talking to people and trying to MAKE a LINK, the more likely it is that you will be successful.
 - One of the core skills of mindfulness is being able to fully participate in the moment. This means not thinking about the next move (e.g. should you snap or crackle?). It means just participating. Mindfulness takes practice. Don't get discouraged. The more practice you get, the easier it is.

- When we first learn to ride a bike, play an instrument or learn a dance it's difficult and we have to think about each little step. Later, we can fully participate without feeling as self-conscious and the skills flow without much thought.

7. Mindfulness Exercise: Observe Your Emotions

- Notice emotions you are having for next 2 minutes
- Label emotions to yourself as you notice them
- Describe to yourself where emotion is felt
 - E.g. I have a knot in my stomach, my head is starting to pound and I'd label this as feeling anxious.
- After 2 minutes (or less if needed), leaders model describing their experience. Participants who are comfortable volunteering explain what they noticed.
- **Rationale:** Observing, describing emotions that you feel is an important step for getting into wise mind.

8. Mindfulness Exercise: Mindful to Music

- Play musical selection
 - Ask the group to notice:
 - Urges to move
 - Thoughts and associations
 - Feelings
 - Try not to judge the music as good or bad
- After 2-3 minutes, discuss observations of and thoughts and feelings about the exercise
- **Rationale:**
 - To get into wise mind, let go of judgment
 - Judging makes people feel more emotional (i.e., notice the difference between saying, "she's a *#@," or saying, "she didn't answer when I said hello.")

9. Mindfulness Exercise: Guess What it Is: Observe & Describe an Object

- Prior to start of session, leaders fill paper bag with small objects
 - Items may be those commonly found in the room (e.g. pencil, keys, eraser, water bottle)
 - Can also use items from elsewhere (e.g. batteries, sponge, bag of rice)
- Provide instructions:
 - Group members take turns reaching into the paper bag without removing the item they've chosen.

- Ask for 2-3 volunteers to take turns
- Time allowing, have each member take a turn
- They are going to give the group clues
 - Do NOT tell members what the object is
 - Do NOT tell members what the object is used for
 - Pretend you are describing it to someone who can't hear or can't see.
 - How would you describe it to someone so they could draw it?
- Once the item has been guessed (or if enough time has passed), take it out of the bag. If unable to guess, leader can help by modeling "describe").
- Instruct members to observe what they are holding Describe it to the other group members. Leaders assist by asking questions:
 - Notice the texture:
- Is it soft? Hard? Squishy? Rough? Smooth? Fluffy?
 - Notice the size:
- Is it large? Small?
 - Notice the weight:
- Light or heavy?
 - Notice the shape:
- Is it round? Oval? Square? Triangular? A combination of different shapes? Does it have clearly defined edges? Etc.
- Once members have gone, ask them to share observations
 - Point out how much information they were able to get and provide without even being able to see the object
 - Imagine how much more information they would have had using all 5 of their senses. They got a lot of information by really paying attention.
 - It's not that easy to observe and then describe something. Observing and describing might sound simple, but it takes practice.
- **Rationale:**
 - A lot of times we have more information around us than we realize. We just need practice in *noticing* it. By practicing how to observe what is around us, we will get more information and learn more about a situation.
 - With more information, we may be able to deal with a situation better; we may have more choices and therefore may be more likely to get what we want Observing will help you get the information you need.
 - Describing helps you organize the information you get. It helps you think clearly, It leads you into Wise Mind.

10. Mindfulness Exercise: Observe & Describe Object

- Instruct group to observe and describe something outside of them
- Members choose an item in the room to observe and describe
 - Item can be something they can hold (e.g. pencil, keys, eraser, water bottle)
 - Item can be something they can't hold (e.g. picture on the wall, the blackboard, window, tree outside the window)
- Provide following instructions:
 - Observe the object. As appropriate, what does it feel like? Smell, sound, taste, and look like?
- Describe the object. Use words.
 - Pretend you are describing it to someone who can't hear or can't see.
 - How would you describe it to someone so they could draw it?
- Don't use words that judge:
 - Avoid words like "pretty", "ugly", "good", and "bad"
- Allow 1 minute of observing and describing (to themselves)
- Members share observations

- **Rationale:** In order to make a decision, you need as much information as you can get. Observing will help you get that information. Describing helps you organize the information you get. It helps you think clearly. Leads you into Wise Mind

11. Mindfulness Exercise: Balance

- Ask group members to stand up behind their chairs and try to balance on one foot. (If they need to, they can touch the back of the chair in front of them momentarily.)
- Mindfully focus on standing up straight and tall and holding your balance
 - Notice what it feels like when you have obtained balance.
 - Notice what it feels like when you feel yourself tipping to one side or the other and what it feels like to right yourself.
 - Even if you keep tipping, try not to judge yourself and continually try to bring yourself to a balanced position in the center.

- **Rationale:**
 - This activity represents a metaphor of getting into wise mind—maintaining a balance between emotion and reasonable mind.
 - Balancing takes practice—on your feet or in wise mind The more you do it, the easier it gets
 - Try not to judge; makes it more difficult

12. Mindfulness Exercise: Mindful eating

- Distribute different types of food (e.g. candy, fruit, snacks) (see list of materials for examples)
- **Ask:** Has anyone ever devoured a whole bag of potato chips or a meal without really stopping to appreciate it?
- Instruct everyone to pick 1-2 items. Members should:
 - eat the item mindfully
 - pay attention to each of your 5 senses- not just taste
 - ask yourself "what does it smell like? Feel like? Sound like? Look like? And taste like?"
- Group shares observations
- **Ask:** what was that experience like? What did you notice?
- **Rationale:**
 - Turn off "automatic pilot"- You get more from a situation when you stop and focus on the experience. Usually we go through life on "automatic pilot"- we do things automatically, without thinking. When we do that, we miss out on a lot. We don't notice things (good or bad) and we don't appreciate things as much. By doing something- just one thing (like eating)- mindfully, you notice a lot more than if you do it automatically.
 - You learn more and get more information when you do things mindfully

13. Mindfulness Exercise: Observe the Urge

- Sit straight-up in chair, shoulders back, arms in lap or folded
- Notice urges to move (e.g. to stretch, change position, scratch)
- Resist urges to move
 - **Say:** "Notice where you feel the urge, observe what it feels like"
- Does it tickle or feel tight
- Is it intense?
- How long does it last?
 - **Say:** "Resist the urge and instead describe it silently to yourself in words"
 - Urges may come, go, like waves
- Share observations, thoughts, feelings about exercise after 2-3 minutes
- **Rationale:** We often act on urges to do, say things that make situations worse
 - Practice noticing urges
 - Demonstrates that one can have urges without acting on them, even if uncomfortable. You can observe without acting, and eventually it goes away.

14. Mindfulness Exercise: Focus on Your Face

- Ask group participants to focus on their faces and their facial expressions
 - Notice without action:
- Forehead
- Eyebrows
- Nose
- Cheeks
- Mouth
- Chin
 - Identify tension and other physical sensations in each part
 - Try to notice each part without changing one's expression

- **Rationale:**
 - We all guess what other people are thinking and feeling by the looks on their faces
 - We may have expressions on our faces that we are not aware of but that people are interpreting
 - Paying attention to one's own face will provide information about one's thoughts and feelings
 - Becoming aware of one's face is a step toward Wise Mind

15. Mindfulness Exercise: Finding Humor When It Happens

- Complete self-check
- Show 8-10 minute funny video clip
 - Mindfully practice noticing the experience of watching the clip
- Do another self-check
- Discuss the emotions that group members felt during the film clip
 - Ask group member's to label their emotions (refer to Handout 4.2, "Emotional Vocabulary")
- Discuss the experiences the group members had
 - **Ask:** Did you enjoy the video clip more while being mindful?

- **Rationale:**
 - Sometimes people engage in pleasant activities on automatic pilot—to live "in the now, be aware of experiences as they occur.
 - This exercise is helpful to those who sometimes do fun things without being mindful as well as to those who tend to withdraw

16. Mindfulness Exercise: Sound Ball

- This activity involves the "how" skill of "don't judge". Leaders should be very familiar with the rationale prior to beginning exercises-
- Leaders should be very familiar with the rationale prior to beginning exercises-
 - Leader should model the use of the "what" and "how" skills throughout the activity
- Observe and note judgments by the group as they occur (do so in a non-judgmental manner)
- Verbalize own judgments - "this is hard", "I feel silly but I'm trying not to judge", "I'm having a hard time with what to do next", etc.
- Remind members to stay focused
- Remind members to fully participate - "the more you do it, the easier it gets, don't have to think about it as much"
- Instruct: Practice what and how skills together
 - What: try and "fully participate" in this activity
 - How: "stay focused"- don't think about anything else, e.g. what happened yesterday, what you're doing after group, what's for dinner, etc.
 - How: "stay focused" - don't get distracted by someone else
 - How: "don't judge" - don't judge yourself, don't judge others. If you find yourself judging, just notice it - don't judge it- and move on
- Instruct participants to stand in a circle
- One person throws a pretend, or real ball to someone else in the circle while making a noise or a nonsense word (e.g. gersnibble). Leaders demonstrate.
 - catcher makes same sound, then
 - throws to someone else, making a different sound
 - catcher repeats sound, then throws to someone else, repeating the cycle
- Stop after 1 minute and ask:
 - How was it? What was it like? Some people were smiling, giggling. What were you thinking?
- Did anyone think "I'm not doing this right", "I look stupid", etc.?
- When we are worried about how to do something or what we look like is it easier or harder to fully participate?
- Repeat Sound Ball (2 minutes):
 - **Instruct:** Let's try again, but really get into it, fully participating
 - **Instruct:** Throw yourself into it, without fear, without feeling self-conscious.
- Members share observations
 - **Discuss:** contrast between the first and second time, A what they observed, described, judgments, etc.

- **Rationale: for group members**

- It's hard not to judge - it takes practice. When you don't judge, you feel better about yourself. Have more fun.
- It's hard to stay focused - when you are thinking about other things or other people, it's easy to get distracted- you're not fully participating in the experience and you miss a lot of information
- People can enjoy things more when they are fully present and in the moment, fully participating in what is going on. If you're trying to get something done, or cope with lots of stuff, you will be more successful, if you can fully participate in the moment
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- **Rationale: for leaders**

- These exercises involve the "how" skill of "don't judge"-
- In order to fully participate (a "what" skill)- you have to be able to let go of judgments
- People will often feel self-conscious making funny sounds in front of others
- The experience of self-consciousness occurs when you judge yourself (e.g. "I look silly", "I'm no good at this")
- These judgments frequently stop us from acting in a particular way- they inhibit us. Prevent us from the "what" skill of fully participating.
- Judgments make us feel badly about ourselves or others- throw us into Emotion Mind
- Judgments can keep us from fully enjoying the moment
- Life can be less restrictive and more rewarding if we let go of judgments
- This exercise also involves the "how" skill of "stay focused"-
- In order to fully participate (a "what" skill)- you have to be able to stay focused
- It is difficult to do either of these activities well while doing or thinking about something else- in order to fully participate, you have to concentrate entirely on the exercise at hand
- If you are able to focus all of your attention on one thing only, you will become better at it

17. Mindfulness Exercise: Breathe

- Ask participants to practice focusing on just the present moment, the here-and-now by noticing:
 - Each breath as it goes in and out
 - Their lungs expanding
 - What it feels like to exhale
- Remind them that thoughts may drift to what happened at school or at home or what might be for dinner tonight. That's okay and to be expected- just bring yourself back to the present and back to your breath.
- **Ask** volunteers to describe their observations after 1-2 minutes.

- **Rationale:**

- Being mindful, aware of what is going on right now without judging is the path to wise mind.
- Being able to stop and focus on the present moment, on what's happening right now, is essential for figuring out what you are feeling and what's needed in the moment.

18. Mindfulness Exercise: Listening Mindfully

- Group participants pair up for this exercise
 - Speaker talks to the listener about an upsetting situation
 - Listener is mindful and focuses on the speaker and what he/she is saying
 - Remind listeners to have good eye contact, notice speaker's face and tone of voice.
 - Let speaker know you understand his/her point of view
- After 1-2 minutes, ask: What is it like to talk to someone who is listening mindfully? How is it different from the exercise we did a while back when the listener wasn't mindful?
- **Ask:** If you are communicating and paying close attention and focusing on what the other person is saying, are you more or less likely to establish or improve a relationship?

- **Rationale:** If the other person understands that you are listening mindfully to him/her, s/he is more likely to listen to you. You have been a great listener if the other person knows that you understood his/her point of view. Mindful listening improves relationships, both close relationships and those that are not so close.

19. Mindfulness Exercise: Minding Personal Space

- Separate participants into two groups (A and B) and ask them to line up on opposite sides of the room
- Assign a partner from Group B to each member of Group A (preferably the person standing directly opposite him or her)
- Instruct Group B members to pay mindful attention to their comfort levels during the following exercise:
 - Group A members walk slowly toward their partners
 - Group B members say "Stop!" when their partners are too close
- Group members then exchange roles and repeat the exercise
- Ask/discuss the following:
 - What was it like when your partner got too close to you?
 - How did you know when you started to feel uncomfortable?
 - Discuss that people have the right to maintain comfortable boundaries

- **Rationale:** By paying attention to your reactions in the moment, your wise mind can give you important information about your boundaries and what you are comfortable with and not comfortable with. Don't forget to listen to your intuition.

20. Mindfulness Exercise: Let's Dance

- This activity is recommended because participants often feel self-conscious. Therefore it provides an opportunity to practice the "how" skill of "don't judge" as well as the "what" skill of "participate"
- Leaders should be very familiar with the rationale prior to beginning exercises-
 - Leader should model the use of the "what" and "how" skills throughout the activity
- Observe and note judgments by the group as they occur (do so in a non-judgmental manner)

- Verbalize own judgments - "this is hard", "I feel silly but I'm trying not to judge", "I keep forgetting where to step next", etc.
- Remind members to stay focused
- Remind members to fully participate - "the more you do it, the easier it gets, don't have to think about it 05 much"
- Instruct: Practice what and how skills together
 - What: try and "fully participate" in this activity
 - How: "stay focused"- don't think about anything else, e.g. what happened yesterday, what you're doing after group, what's for dinner, etc.
 - How: "stay focused" - don't get distracted by someone else
 - "How: "don't judge" - don't judge yourself, don't judge others. If you find yourself judging, just notice it - don't judge it- and move on
- "Sequenced Dance" (4 min.)
 - Instruct members to stand in a circle
 - Members can keep hands at their sides, or place hands on shoulder of person on either side. (Some groups may not feel comfortable with any physical contact).
 - Practice first: Go through sequence twice (1-2 minutes).
 - Give instructions
- Tap right foot:
 - in front of you to beat of 1-2-3-4
 - to the side to beat of 1-2-3-4.
 - behind you...1-2-3-4
 - Bring right foot back in place. Feet together
- Repeat sequence with left foot. Tap left foot:
 - in front of you to beat of 1-2-3-4
 - to the side to beat of 1-2-3-4.
behind you...1-2-3-4
 - Bring left foot back in place, feet together.
- Take two steps to the right
- Step to the right with right foot.
- Follow with left. Feet together.
- Step to the right
- Feet together
- Repeat sequence from beginning- tap right foot in front, to side, in back, back in place, feet together
 - Begin activity with music (2 minutes).
- Use music with rhythmic beat- e.g. Irish march

- **Ask** (after 2-3 minutes): How was it? What was it like?
 - **Comment:** some people were smiling, giggling. What were you thinking?
- **Ask:** Did anyone think "I'm not doing this right", "I look stupid", etc.?
- **Ask:** When you are worried about how to do something or judging what you look like are you fully participating?
- **Ask:** When you worry about looking silly, do you feel more or less self-conscious? How do judgments make you feel about yourself? Do these judgments keep you from having fun?
- When you are judging yourself or others you are concentrating on what you look like and not on what you are doing. This means you are not staying focused and not fully participating

- Repeat (2 mins):
 - **Instruct:** this time, let's try again, but let's fully participate
 - **Instruct:** really throw yourself into it, without fear, without feeling self-conscious.

- Members share observations
 - **Discuss:** contrast between the first and second time, what they observed, described, judgments, etc.

- **Rationale: for group members**
 - It's hard not to judge - it takes practice. When you don't judge, you feel better about yourself. Have more fun.
 - It's hard to stay focused. When you are thinking about other things or other people, it's easy to get distracted- and you're not fully participating in the experience. As a result you miss a lot of information
 - If you are able to focus all of your attention to one thing only, you will become better at it
 - The more you practice something, the better you get at it. Pretty soon, you don't have to think about it as much, you just do it. Let's Dance is like learning to ride a bike - at first you have to concentrate on the steps, but eventually with practice, it becomes automatic. That's what mindfulness is like.
 - People can enjoy things more when they are fully present and in the moment, fully participating in what is going on. If you're trying to get something done, or cope with lots of stuff, you will be more successful if you can fully participate in the moment

- **Rationale: for leaders**
 - Practice "what" and "how" skills together
 - This exercise involves the "what" skill of "participate"-
 - At first you have to really concentrate, however, the more you do it, the better you get at it.
 - The goal is to experience the activity fully- really get into it.
 - The more you practice, the less you have to think about it, and the more you can become one with it and experience it fully (e.g. like learning to ride a bike)
 - This exercise involves the "how" skill of "don't judge"-

- In order to fully participate (a "what" skill)- you have to be able to let go of judgments
- People often feel self-conscious doing a new dance in front of others or making funny sounds
- The experience of self-consciousness occurs when you judge yourself (e.g. "I look silly", "I'm no good at this")
- These judgments frequently stop us from acting in a particular way and they inhibit us. These judgments prevent us from the "what" skill of fully participating,
- Judgments make us feel badly about ourselves or others. They throw us into Emotion Mind
- Judgments can keep us from fully enjoying the moment
- Life can be less restrictive and more rewarding, if we let go of judgments
- This exercise involves the "how" skill of "stay focused."
- In order to fully participate (a "what" skill), you have to be able to stay focused.
- It is difficult to do either of these activities well while doing or thinking about something else. In order to fully participate, you have to concentrate entirely on the exercise at hand
- If you are able to focus all of your attention to one thing only, you will become better at it

21. Mindfulness Exercise: Sandpaper & Softness

- Hand out small pieces of sandpaper and instruct to mindfully touch the sandpaper:
- Observe and describe quietly for approximately one minute
- Share observations:
- What do you notice about the sandpaper? What was it like touching it?
- Did you notice anything else? Did it affect the way it made you feel? How?
- Hand out small pieces of soft fabric and instruct to mindfully touch the fabric: -
- Observe and describe quietly for approximately one minute
- Share observations:
- What do you notice about the fabric? What was it like touching it?
- Did you notice anything else? Did it affect the way it made you feel? How?
- **Rationale:**
- Focusing and being mindful can enhance experiences and highlight differences. Notice how different tactile experiences can affect how you feel.
- The more information you have about what you notice and how you react, the more choices you'll have for how to cope.
- Touching the soft fabric can also be a way to use touch to self-soothe.

Module #13 Trauma Informed Consequences (TICs)

Activities

1. Introduction
2. Content- Trauma Informed Consequences
3. Activity
4. Discussion
5. Summary

Handouts/Supplies

- Handout 13.1 Trauma Informed Consequences
- Handout 13.2 Trauma Informed Consequences- Putting Theory into Practice

Objectives

-
- Participants will understand the difference between punishment and consequences
 - Participants will identify barriers for implementing trauma-informed consequences at their agency
 - Participants will understand the role of critical thinking in the implementation of TICs

Introduction

In our work, we have to respond in the moment to all sorts of challenging situations. We want to spend some time thinking together about how our improved understanding of trauma and its impact on human behavior influences the way that we consequence youth when they don't follow rules.

Content

PPT #4

PowerPoint presentation based on the Trauma Informed Consequences Document

Activity

Break up the group, if more than 6 to 8 individuals.

We are going to challenge you to think creatively about consequences for common challenging behaviors at homeless youth serving agencies. Each group is going to get one or two challenging behaviors to work with.

- Resident curses at staff
- Youth caught writing racist graffiti on the bathroom wall
- Youth has a crush on his/her case manager and follows them around
- Youth acts out in group and storms out
- Youth enters agency clearly drunk or high

Your job is to identify a punishment for each of these behaviors (using the definition of punishment that we reviewed) and the thinking behind the punishment. After you think of a punishment, we would like you to think about a trauma-informed consequence and the thinking behind the consequence. After you are finished, we are going to ask the groups to report back and share what you came up with.

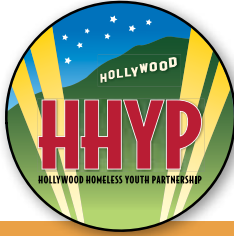
Discussion Questions

1. What was harder, coming up with a punishment or a trauma informed consequence?
 2. How did you determine if a response was a punishment or not?
 3. What was the most challenging part of this exercise?
 4. What challenging behaviors are particular triggers for you or your agency? Why do you think that is so?
 5. Are there some behaviors (against the rules) that you routinely ignore or overlook? What is that about?
 6. How do agency policies impact on your ability to implement trauma informed consequences?
-

Summary

All of us are working to create order out of the chaos in our work environment. We have to remember, however, that it is a normal part of adolescence to test limits. In addition, many of the youth that we see do not have the self-regulation skills necessary to control their impulses and stay out of trouble. Our job is to help youth acquire the skills to regulate their behaviors and learn how to be successful in our agencies.

Handout 13.1 Trauma Informed Consequences



HOLLYWOOD HOMELESS YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

Trauma Informed Consequences for Homeless Youth

Prepared by the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership

Homeless youth-serving agencies including drop-in centers, emergency shelters, transitional living, and supportive housing programs work hard to maintain safe and supportive environments for young people. While safety is always a primary concern, rules and consequences must take into account the following factors: normal adolescent development, the impact of trauma on development and behavior; the realities of homelessness, and the unique histories of each young person we encounter. In our efforts to make agency rules and consequences more trauma-informed, we have found it useful to clearly understand the differences between punishment and consequences and acknowledge the tension between maintaining consistency and providing individualized, trauma-informed responses.



What is the difference between punishment and consequences?

Punishment

- Punishment is used to enforce obedience to a specific authority.
- Punishment is usually used to assert power and control and often leaves a young person feeling helpless, powerless, and shamed.

Consequences

- Consequences are intentionally designed to teach, change, or shape behavior.
- Logical consequences are clearly connected to the behavior; given with empathy and in a respectful tone, and are reasonable based on the behavior.

What is the tension between consistency and individualized responses?

Consistency

- We want to create rules and consequences that apply to everyone, understanding that predictability and consistency can help a youth feel safe.

Individualized Response

- We recognize that some youth are more highly impacted by past traumatic experiences and there may be compelling reasons to tailor consequences for the individual. We must make sure that our consequences are consistent with the needs and level of functioning of youth, while also holding them accountable for their actions.

What do we know about adolescent development and homeless youth that supports trauma-informed consequences?

- The adolescent brain is acutely sensitive to positive reward and relatively insensitive to negative consequences¹.
- Disrupting service delivery (exiting youth from programs or restricting participation) as a consequence may lead to more negative outcomes than positive.

continued

Handout 13.1 Trauma Informed Consequences



Trauma Informed Consequences for Homeless Youth

- If concerns about safety requires us to ask a youth to leave our agency or restrict their access to specific services, maintaining contact with that individual can “open the door” to important learning opportunities and engagement.
- Some youth will repeatedly test limits and challenge staff with their behaviors until they feel more connected and trusting of staff.

Characteristics of Trauma Informed Consequences

- Trauma informed consequences (TICs) slowly shape youths' behavior by helping them recognize the impact of their behaviors on themselves and their community.
- TICs build youth's capacity to manage strong emotions, and increase their confidence in what they are able to do or accomplish.
- TICs minimize disruptions to attachment (i.e. connections to caring adults).
- TICs attempt to retain youth in services, in spite of problematic behavior.
- TICs support youths' access to basic services, such as housing and food.
- TICs take into account the severity of the infraction and respond with thoughtful and appropriate actions that help the youth with their specific needs.
- TICs consider the function of the problematic behavior and help youth develop more effective strategies for getting their needs met.
- TICs take into account trauma triggers and past traumatic experiences.
- TICs take the long view and understand that change is slow and incremental.
- TICs invest great energy, creativity, and resources upfront in order to support long term success in helping youth.

What are the challenges of implementing trauma-informed consequences?

- TICs may require a paradigm shift in the way staff understand and respond to challenging, negative, and disruptive behavior.
- TICs require more planning, patience, and creativity by service providers.
- TICs are best implemented in a calm and thoughtful manner, and so require time for discussion and processing with youth and staff members.
- Changing agency policy and practice to incorporate TICs is challenging for staff and supervisors.
- Providers must balance what is best for the individual young person with the needs of other youth and the agency as a whole.
- Agencies must provide adequate supervision and support to staff learning and implementing TICs.

In summary, following the ARC model², when imposing a consequence we can ask ourselves how this consequence *and the way in which it is discussed with the youth* enhance the following:

- a) The youth's attachment or relationship with me, the team, and the entire program;
- b) The youth's ability to self-regulate, i.e. practice self-control, self-restraint, or self-discipline in the future; and
- c) The youth's internal competencies such as judgment, decision-making, insight, reality testing and problem solving.

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The Community Trauma Treatment Center for Runaway and Homeless Youth
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¹Casey, B.J., Jones, R.M., & Hare, T.A. (2008). The Adolescent Brain. *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.* 1124: 111–126.

²Kinniburgh, K., Blaustein, M., Spinazzola, J., & van der Kolk, B. (2005). Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency: A comprehensive intervention framework for children with complex trauma. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 424 - 430.

Handout 13.2 Trauma Informed Consequences — Putting Theory into Practice



HOLLYWOOD HOMELESS YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

Trauma Informed Consequences (TICs) for Youth Experiencing Homelessness:

Putting Theory into Practice

Agencies serving youth that are experiencing homelessness work hard to maintain safe and supportive environments for young people. Young people seeking services frequently present with multiple problems, including relationship difficulties, a lack of sense of self, memory impairment, lack of emotional control, intellectual challenges, and low self esteem. Often these problems are a result of earlier traumatic experiences suffered as children at home or in institutional settings. In dealing with traumatized children, the best practice is to use an individualized approach. Consequences for challenging behavior must address the needs of the individual. Being flexible and using critical thinking is essential in working with traumatized individuals. Careful observation of youth's behavior is necessary in order to understand what is motivating the behavior. Putting the behavior in context and factoring in the young person's trauma history before judging and reacting to the youth and the behavior ensures that your response is trauma-informed.

Staff working with youth should ask themselves the following questions as they try to respond to challenging behaviors with trauma-informed consequences:

1. What is the purpose of enforcing the rules? Is it to discipline/teach the youth how to manage emotions, or to enforce the rules for the "rule's sake?"
2. Is this youth intentionally pushing my buttons? Why would he/she want this type of attention from me? Keep in mind that for many youth negative attention is preferable to no attention at all.
3. How much of my response is because I feel personally hurt, offended, disrespected, helpless and frightened, or need to prove that I am in control?



4. What assumptions am I making about this young person's behavior? Could there be another explanation?
5. What options do I have to respond to this behavior? How does the young person expect me to respond?
6. Which option most closely fits my intent to maintain safety while building the young person's capacity to manage intense emotions and learn more effective behavior? Which option is least disruptive to service delivery?

FAQs about TICs

Why does it seem like some youth are asking to be discharged from services by repeatedly breaking the rules even when they know the consequences?

Many youth come to us with multiple experiences of rejection and abandonment by family and other caregivers. Due to these past experiences, they come to us with the expectation that we will also reject them and, in turn, abandon them. In order to protect themselves, consciously or not, they act provocatively to speed up the rejection that they are convinced is coming anyway.

Handout 13.2 Trauma Informed Consequences — Putting Theory into Practice

If we don't exit/punish youth when they break the rules, aren't we enabling them?

No. When we exit a youth that is highly impacted by past trauma, what are we really teaching them? Although we may believe that we are teaching them that they can't write on walls or they can't treat us with disrespect, mostly we are just confirming a young person's belief that they are unlovable and undeserving of our attention and support. We are not suggesting that agencies and staff ignore inappropriate behavior. Instead, we are asking staff to work with young people to identify the behavior that was problematic, put it in the context of trauma, and to help the young person find different ways to express their anger, frustration, or sadness. We want youth to know that we can see far beyond the problem behavior, and see the youth's capabilities and potential.



Punishment vs. Trauma-Informed Consequences

The examples below are representative of how to view an incident from both a punishment and a consequence/trauma-informed perspective, and are designed to assist staff and program managers recognize how staff interpretation of youth behavior strongly influences responses.

Punishment

- Punishment is used to enforce obedience to a specific authority and it uses words that escalate conflict.
- Punishment is usually used to assert power and control and often leaves a young person feeling helpless, powerless, and ashamed.
- Punishment is for the benefit of the punisher and not for the individual whose behavior needs to be corrected.

Trauma-Informed Consequences (TICs)

- TICs are intentionally designed to teach, change or shape behavior, and offer options within firm limits.
- TICs are logical consequences that are clearly connected to the behavior, given with empathy and in a respectful tone.
- TICs are reasonable, and use words that encourage thinking, and preserve connections between people.

Incident #1

Youth is verbally aggressive towards a staff member.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: Youth is being disrespectful. Youth doesn't appreciate the services we are offering. I need to set a firm example that we don't allow this type of verbal abuse.

Reaction: Staff threatens to exit youth if behavior continues.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: What is going on in the environment that is setting this youth off? I need to let this youth know it is inappropriate to verbally abuse staff and, at the same time, help him develop more constructive self-regulation skills.

Response: Youth is asked to cool off in a safe place. Staff person processes the experience with the young person when it is deemed appropriate (it would not be wise to press the issue if the youth is still visibly agitated). Staff person shares with youth their observation regarding the interaction and asks for feedback. Staff explores with youth alternative/pro-social ways of communicating feelings.

Handout 13.2 Trauma Informed Consequences — Putting Theory into Practice

Incident #2

Youth comes to agency but doesn't do anything, just sits on the couch and dozes.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: This guy is lazy and is taking advantage of services. He should be working on his GED or looking for a job. We're here to help youth, not just let them sit around and do nothing.

Reaction: Staff members don't invest time in this young person.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: This young man is very tired. I know we told him about the services that we have here. What could be interfering with his ability to focus? Lots of youth are worried about failing so they don't even want to try. How can we engage him?

Response: Staff member approaches the youth and asks if he needs anything. Staff member tries to engage youth in pro-social activity (game, group) to try to further engage him in services. Even if the youth is generally unresponsive, the staff member gently continues to try to engage him periodically and spends time sitting with him as much as the youth can tolerate.

Incident #3

Youth has a crush on his/her case manager and follows this staff member around.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: This is very awkward. I don't want to hurt this young person's feeling but I don't want to give them the wrong idea. It is probably better if he works with someone else.

Reaction: Youth is given a new case manager.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: This young person is trying to connect with me. I might be one of few people in his life who sincerely tried to help him. This is very awkward but with some supervision and support, I think I can help this young person.

Response: Case manager gets supervision and support in talking to the youth about the crush and working to reinforce appropriate boundaries and expectations.

Incident #4

Youth acts out in group and storms out.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: This young person is disrespecting the group and disrespecting me. I can't create a cohesive group when she feels free to leave whenever she feels like it. It's not fair to the other group members.

Reaction: Youth receives a warning that he will be discharged from the group if she does that ever again.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: Did something in the group trigger this young woman or bring up uncomfortable feelings or memories? What else I could do to help her feel safe in group?

Response: If two staff members are leading the group, one of the staff members leaves the group to check in with the young person and see if it is possible for her to rejoin the group. If this is not possible, the group leader talks to the youth after the group to find out what happened. He lets the youth know that she can leave the group if she is feeling upset or anxious but she is always welcome to rejoin the group. The staff member asks the youth if she wants to talk to someone about any feelings she might be experiencing in the group.

Incident #5

Youth caught writing racist graffiti on the bathroom wall.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: Youth is defacing our property. If we don't come down hard on this youth, other youth will think that it is OK to use racist language and to destroy agency property.

Reaction: Youth is immediately exited.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: I need to explore why this young person was writing racist graffiti on the walls. Was he reacting to something? What kind of attention is he seeking?

Response: A staff member talks to the young person about the incident, explaining the rules about graffiti and "hate" language and explores why the youth wrote on the wall. The young person is assigned to clean or repaint the wall. Staff helps him/her explore alternative ways to express his feelings.

Handout 13.2 Trauma Informed Consequences — Putting Theory into Practice

Incident #6

Youth enters agency clearly drunk or high.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: This young person knows that she is not allowed to come to the agency under the influence. This is totally disruptive to youth and staff. She needs to learn that this is just not allowed.

Reaction: Youth is exited from program and referred to detox.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: This is disruptive to other youth and staff. However, if I send her back outside, she is really vulnerable to being victimized. We need to find a safe place for this young person to sober up. She needs further assessment regarding her substance use.

Response: Youth is asked to move to safe place within the agency where she can sober up and be safe. When she is more coherent, a staff person talks to her about the circumstances of her using. The youth is reminded that we are concerned about keeping her safe and the agency's policies about being drunk or high. The youth is encouraged to speak to a substance abuse counselor who can talk to her about substance use.

Incident #7

A room search at the shelter leads to the discovery of a knife under a youth's mattress.

Punishment

Staff Interpretation: This youth is dangerous. She knows weapons are not allowed. This isn't safe for the other youth at the shelter.

Reaction: Youth is exited immediately.

Consequences (TICs)

Staff Reflection and Interpretation: It isn't safe to have knives at the shelter. Why does she feel that she needs a knife even though she knows she could get exited from the program? Do we have enough staff at night to make sure that she feels safe here?

Response: A staff person pulls the young woman aside and tells her that they found the knife under her mattress. They ask her if anything has happened that has made her feel unsafe in the shelter, at school, or in the neighborhood. They let her know that she can't have a knife at the shelter and that they have confiscated it but they want to help her feel safe. They help her identify ways that they could help her feel more safe.

SUMMARY

Working from a trauma informed perspective and implementing TICs demands much thought, patience and perseverance on our part. The youth entrusted in our care deserve this best practice care. We have the responsibility to create environments that afford these youth both opportunities and options to heal from past traumas and learn more effective and pro-social coping styles in order to become successful and productive members of our society.



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The Community Trauma Treatment Center for Runaway and Homeless Youth SAMHSA Grant #SM57247

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Module # 14 Helping or Harming

Activities

1. Introduction
2. Content- Trauma Informed Consequences
3. Activity-Role Play
4. Discussion
5. Summary

Handouts/Supplies

- Flip chart prepared in advance with characteristics of abusive relationships
- Handout 14.1 Helping or Harming Worksheet

Objectives

- Participants will understand the importance of creating and sustaining a trusting relationship between youth and providers
- Participants will identify the key characteristics of abusive relationships and how some of these characteristics can be present at service agencies
- Participants will be introduced to the concept of normative abuse

Introduction

This session is designed to include a role play. For the best results, try to identify 2 staff in advance that are willing and able to role play and provide them with the basic scenario.

As we increase our awareness about the impact of trauma and abuse on the lives of runaway and homeless youth, it is important for us to examine how we approach our relationships with young people. Developing positive supportive relationships with homeless youth is the key to helping youth off the streets. Unfortunately, sometimes in our best efforts to provide support and help, we inadvertently mimic the characteristics of abusive relationships.

Content- Characteristics of Abusive Relationships²

On the flip chart (or in your handout) are key characteristics of abusive relationships. Let us review each of these to make sure that they make sense to you.

- Betrayal occurs at the hands of a trusted caregiver or supporter
- Hierarchical boundaries are violated and then re-imposed at the whim of the person with more control/power
- Secret knowledge, secret information, and secret relationships are maintained and even encouraged
- The voice of the youth is unheard, denied, or invalidated

² Adapted from "Using Trauma Theory to Design Service Systems, Maxine Harris", Roger D Fallot Editors

-
- The young person feels powerless to alter or leave the relationship
 - Reality is reconstructed to represent the values and beliefs of the person with more control/power. Events are reinterpreted and renamed to protect the guilty
-

Activity-Role Play

I have asked a couple of people to illustrate how these issues could get played out at homeless youth agencies. However, instead of asking these individuals to play their thoughtful, responsible, highly trained selves, we have asked them to do it “wrong.” During the role plays, I want you to think about what is going on in between the staff person and the young person and identify which of these issues is playing out.

Scenario

Shelter: youth advocate and youth

You are a youth advocate at a shelter and you strongly suspect that one of your residents used substances today. He/she has already received two warnings about substance use and was told that he/she would be sanctioned (exited, put on probation, terminated, depending on the agency) if he/she came in drunk or high again. This youth has a terrible trauma history but is really a good kid. The youth knows you suspect something and comes to you and tells you that he/she will be honest with you if you promise not to sanction him/her.

Discussion Questions

Role Play Debriefing Questions

- Which of the characteristics of abusive relationships did you observe in this role play?
- Did the way the role-play unfold feel realistic? What felt real, what didn't?
- Have you ever witnessed or experienced a similar situation (even if you handled it differently)? What was challenging for you to figure out?

General Questions

- How might these characteristics of abusive relationships come up in environments that are designed to help youth?
 - Betrayal occurs at the hands of a trusted caregiver (child abuse report)
 - Hierarchical boundaries are violated and then re-imposed (provide youth with your cell phone number)
 - Secret knowledge, secret information, and secret
-

relationships are maintained and even encouraged
(ask youth not to tell anyone that they have your
personal cell phone number)

- The voice of the youth is unheard, denied, or
invalidated (youth input isn't solicited)
- The young person feels powerless to alter or leave the
relationship (If a youth doesn't like his/her case
manager, they can't switch)
- Reality is reconstructed to represent the values and
beliefs of the person with more control/power. (staff
never admit that they made a mistake)

Summary

- What protections do we have in place to protect youth and staff?

Relationships with positive and caring adults are critically important
to youth. We need to be very careful that in our efforts to support a
young person, we aren't mimicking any of the characteristics of
abusive relationships.

Handout 14.1 Helping or Harming

Examining Relationship Dynamics from a Trauma Informed Perspective

| Characteristics of Abusive Relationships | Helping Relationships Gone Awry |
|--|--|
| Betrayal occurs at the hands of a trusted caregiver or supporter | Youth feel betrayed by the organization, program or staff member |
| Hierarchical boundaries are violated and then reimposed at the whim of the abuser | Professional relationships that are inconsistent, unclear, or confusing |
| Secret knowledge, secret information, and secret relationships are maintained and even encouraged | Creating relationships that allow for and maintain secrets |
| The voice of the victim is unheard, denied, or invalidated | Youth feel there is no opportunity to be heard nor are their perspectives taken into account |
| The victim feels powerless to alter or leave the relationship | Youth feel powerless to alter or leave the relationship/the agency |
| Reality is reconstructed to represent the values and beliefs of the abuser. Events are reinterpreted and renamed to protect the guilty | Reconstructing reality to match the needs and values of the provider |

Module #15

Promoting Resilience and Post Traumatic Growth

Activities

1. Introduction
2. Content- Resiliency
3. Activity-Work Sheet
4. Content – Post Traumatic Growth
5. Discussion
6. Summary

Handouts/Supplies

- Handout 15.1 Resilience in Me, Resilience in Youth Worksheet

Objectives

- Participants will understand the framework of Resiliency and Posttraumatic Growth
- Participants will identify ways to foster resiliency and posttraumatic growth in their work with youth.

Introduction

As we learn more about trauma, it is important to realize that many of us make positive changes in our lives after a traumatic experience. We wanted to introduce you to the term post-traumatic growth and talk about ways to build resilience in the young people that we work with.

Content- Resiliency

In past modules, we have been discussing trauma and the impact of trauma as well as what makes the youth we work with especially vulnerable to trauma. While we can't always protect youth from traumatic experiences, we can promote resilience. Resilience is the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and negative life events. This is not to say that resilience makes an individual invulnerable to stress and trauma; instead, it is made up of factors that help youth become "resistant" to the draining effects of stress and enables young people to thrive in the face of adversity. Examples of resilience features could include personality traits, social skills, and coping responses. Factors can be internal characteristics such as individual talents, energies strengths, constructive interests; or external influences like family support, adult role models outside the family, high expectations within the community, and the availability of creative activities.

Research has identified strategies to help develop positive and resilient traits in youth, including:

- Establishing supportive relationships with young people and encouraging positive peer relationships.
 - Promoting competencies, encouraging mastery of skills.
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- Supporting appropriate interpersonal skills.
- Promoting affect regulation and helping youth practice coping skills such as self-soothing or distraction.
- Supporting autonomous decision-making and independent functioning.
- Fostering spirituality, exploring beliefs, attitudes and faith communities.
- Emphasizing youth's ability to make changes in their own lives.
- Nurturing a clear and positive identity, encouraging exploration of identity and assist in integrating different parts of self.
- Fostering belief in the future, setting goals and envisioning future plans.
- Recognizing positive behavior, praising healthy behavioral changes.
- Providing opportunities for pro-social involvement, creating time or space where youth can positively interact, support community, or improve the environment.
- Establishing pro-social norms, not tolerating destructive behavior and engaging youth to normalize positive interactions and healthy coping.

Activity

Many people (though certainly not all) that choose to do youth work have also experienced challenges in their lives. Many of us had someone (parent, teacher, relative, or counselor) or some institution (school, church, or park) in our life that helped build resilience in us. Please take a few moments to look at the worksheet and think about who or what promoted resilience in you. At the same time, please think about how you promote resilience in these areas with the young people that you work with.

Discussion

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1. What was your experience in completing this worksheet?
 2. Did anyone think of a person or an institution that helped you that you hadn't recognized? Or, someone that stood in your way?
 3. Did anyone think of new ideas for promoting resiliency in the youth that you work with? What ideas did you have?

Content- Post Traumatic Growth

No matter how resilient we are and how many skills we have, we can still be impacted by traumatic events. While many of the aftereffects of trauma are negative (PTSD, etc), researchers have found that between 30%-90% of people affected by a serious crisis describe some type of posttraumatic growth. Posttraumatic growth includes changes in one's perception of self, the improvement and

deepening of one's relationships with others, a heightened compassion for others, and an increased ability for expressing emotions. This doesn't mean that the pain and/or fear from the trauma go away. However, it does mean that individuals are able to find meaning in the trauma or to learn more about themselves,

Since the youth that we work with are so highly impacted by trauma, it seems like we should know how to help youth use their traumatic experiences to grow.

Does anyone have any thoughts about how we help young people to do this? (Provide time for folks to give some thought and share their ideas.)

Of course, we can't make someone use their past traumatic experiences in a positive way. However, we do have some ideas about how to help young people gain perspective on their experiences.

1. **Creating a safe environment:** Since feelings of extreme danger and vulnerability are intrinsic to most traumatic experiences, helping youth feel safe is necessary before they can begin to process the experience.
2. **Listening, Without Trying to Solve:** There is always the urge to say something to make things "better;" try not to give in to such a temptation. Youth many need to feel angry or scared and express a variety of emotions before they can begin to make sense of an experience. Sometimes, our efforts to make youth feel better come from our own need to make these intense feelings more tolerable for us.
3. **Recognizing and highlighting growth or changed perspective when you see it:** As you listen to a young person talk about their experiences, you may notice the development of insight. Take a moment to comment on the change to the young person.
4. **Referring youth to counseling staff, if appropriate:** Many youth don't want to take advantage of mental health services but it can be useful for youth in making sense out of their life experiences.

There is a tendency for individuals to say that a bad experience caused the growth. It may be more helpful to reframe and say that the bad experience or trauma didn't cause the growth but created the opportunity.

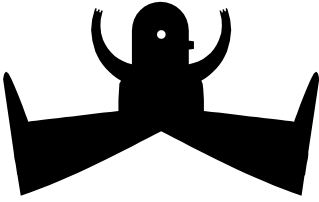
Discussion Questions

1. What examples of post-traumatic growth have you seen or heard about? (having cancer/HIV etc was the best thing that ever happened to me).
2. How do you or your agency provide a sense of safety for your clients?
3. What do you do to focus on *listening* instead of intervening right away?

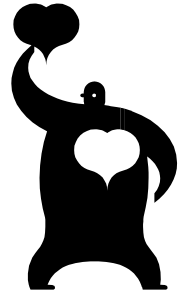
Summary

A long time ago, some service providers would refer to the homeless youth that they worked with as “train wrecks”. By this, they were referring to youth that had been so highly impacted by trauma that service providers were limited to picking up the pieces. More and more we are trying to recognize that we can build resilience and support post-traumatic growth even in youth that have experienced early and ongoing traumatic events.

Handout 15.1



Resiliency in ME, Resiliency in YOU!



Instructions: Under “Self”, write down a person, place, event, or activity that helped you achieve these skills. Under “Others”, write down how you support youth in this area. If you can’t think of anything, please leave it blank.

- Promoting bonding, establishing supportive relationships and encouraging positive peer relationships.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Promoting competencies, encouraging mastery of skills and development of hobbies or activities.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Promoting affect regulation, practice of coping skills such as self-soothing or distraction.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Encouraging self-determination, supporting autonomous decision-making and independent functioning.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Nurturing a clear and positive identity, encouraging exploration of identity and assist in integrating different parts of self.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Fostering belief in the future, setting goals and envisioning future plans.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Recognizing positive behavior, praising healthy behavioral changes.

Self: _____ Others: _____

- Providing opportunities for pro-social involvement, creating time or space where youth can positive interact, support community, or improve environment.

Self: _____ Others: _____

References and Resources

10 Reasons for Integrating Trauma-Informed Approaches in Programs for Runaway and Homeless Youth (www.hhyp.org)

The ARC Framework for Runaway and Homeless Youth Serving Agencies (www.hhyp.org)

Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency: A comprehensive framework for intervention with complexly traumatized youth. *A Treatment manual*. Kinniburgh, K. & Blaustein, M. (www.traumacenter.org/products/prod_overview.php)

Calhoun, L. G., Tedeschi, R. G. (1999). *Facilitating Post Traumatic Growth. A Clinician's Guide*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Calhoun, L. G., Tedeschi, R. G., Editors (2006). *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth. Research and Practice*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents: White Paper from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Complex Trauma Task Force (http://www.nctsnet.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/edu_materials/ComplexTrauma_All.pdf)

Connect with Kids: The Teenage Brain-DVD (<http://www.connectwithkids.com/products/teenagebrain.shtml>)

E-Learning Modules for Direct Care Staff Working with Homeless Youth (www.hhyp.elearning.networkofcare.org)

NCTSN Culture and Trauma Brief: Trauma among Homeless Youth (www.hhyp.org)

NCTSN Culture and Trauma Brief: Trauma among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth (http://www.nctsnet.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/culture_and_trauma_brief_LGBTQ_youth.pdf)

NCTSN.org

Psychological First Aid for Youth Experiencing Homelessness (www.hhyp.org)

SPARCS: Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress –Group Trauma Treatment Curriculum (Mandy Habib, Psy.D. mhabib@nshs.edu)

Trauma Informed Consequences for Homeless Youth (www.hhyp.org)

Trauma Informed Consequences for Homeless Youth – Putting Theory into Practice (www.hhyp.org)

Using Trauma Theory to Design Service Systems, Maxine Harris, Roger D Fallot Editors (Amazon)