

Trauma, The Brain, & The Role in Domestic Violence

Terms to Know

Trauma: Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's well-being (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014b).

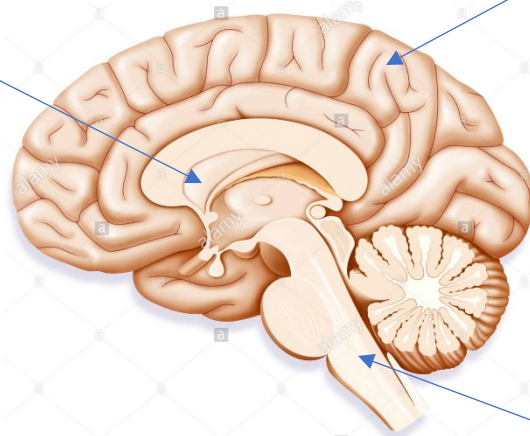
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts related to their experience that last long after the event has ended. Individuals diagnosed with PTSD may experience intrusive thoughts, avoidance behaviors, negative thoughts and feelings, and reactive symptoms (The American Psychiatric Association, 2017).

Grounding: A technique to keep someone in the present. Grounding techniques help reorient a person to the here-and-now and in reality. Can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or anxiety.

Trauma and the Brain

**The Emotional Brain
(Limbic System)**
Houses memory,
feelings, values, beliefs

**The Thinking Brain
(Cortex and Pre-Frontal
Cortex)**
Houses reasoning and logic



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**The Instinctive Brain
(Brain Stem)**
Houses unconscious body
regulations

Ways to Explain Trauma to a Survivor

The Linen Closet

- Our bodies store memories like a closet.
- When an individual has experienced trauma, they stuff the memories in the closet and shut the door.
- The treatment of trauma involves taking the memories out of the closet, examining them carefully, folding them neatly, and putting them back in the right place.

Film Projector

- Memories are like films that play in our minds.
- With normal memories, we can choose which films we play and when they play. We have total control.
- Having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is like having someone else in charge of controlling our films. They choose the films we watch and when we watch them.
- Treatment of PTSD involves taking back control of the projection room. It will involve watching the traumatic films again, but in a safe way that they survivor controls.

Grounding Techniques

- *Tapping*
 - [Tapping 101](#)
- *Relaxed Breathing*
 - Inhale for 4 seconds, pause, exhale for 4 seconds. Repeat until relaxed.
- *Smells*
 - Use relaxing essential oils or scents that have a positive association
- *5-4-3-2-1*
 - 5 things you see
 - 4 things you feel
 - 3 things you hear
 - 2 deep breaths
 - State 1 thing you are grateful for
- *Rainbow Game*
 - Find items in the room for each color of the rainbow (ROYGBIV)

Helpful Resources

- [HELPS Screening Tool](#)
 - Helps screen for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- [Exploring the Impact of Trauma on Adolescent Brains](#)
 - Traumatic Brain Injury Webinar