



# ASSISTING CLIENTS WITH COMPLEX PTSD

Interventions

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# Complex PTSD

## Symptom Clusters



Re-experiencing  
Avoidance/Numbing  
Hyperarousal

• ~~~

- ▶ Affective dysregulation
- ▶ Impaired attention and consciousness
- ▶ Impairment in interpersonal functioning
- ▶ Somatization &/or medical problems
- ▶ Compromised systems of meaning



# Phasic Treatment



- PHASE I
  - Stabilizing safety
  - Psychoeducation
    - Effects of trauma
    - Responses as adaptations
    - Cumulative nature
    - Treatment process
    - Develop therapeutic alliance
  - Reducing symptom acuity
- PHASE II
  - Review and reconstruction of trauma memories
- PHASE III
  - Engagement in community life



# Phasic Treatment

## PHASE I



## SAFETY: Theme of Phase I

What does safety mean?



Feeling Safe versus Being Safe

Very Unsafe 1-----Very Safe 10		
	Perceived Safety	Actual Safety
Stress Responses	2	9
Dissociation	9	2

Vermilyea (2000)



# Phasic Treatment

## PHASE I



## SAFTEY: Theme of Phase I

### *Survival Mode*

- Need to react
- No time to think

### *Recovery Mode*

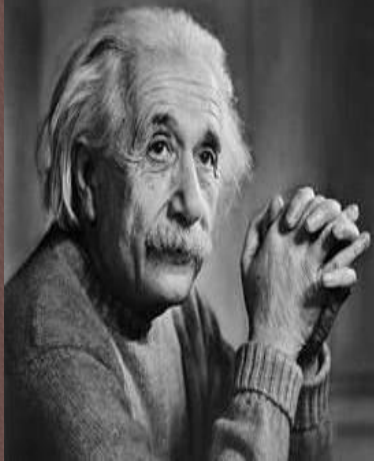
- Need to respond
- Must Reflect & Consider



# Psychoeducation

If you can't explain it **simply**, you don't understand it well enough.

– Albert Einstein



- Ongoing process
- Facilitates transparency
- Facilitates collaboration
- Reinforces differences in therapeutic relationship
  - OK to ask “Why?”
  - OK to expect explanation
  - OK to expect thoughtfulness
  - OK to question the rationale
  - OK to disagree



# Grounding



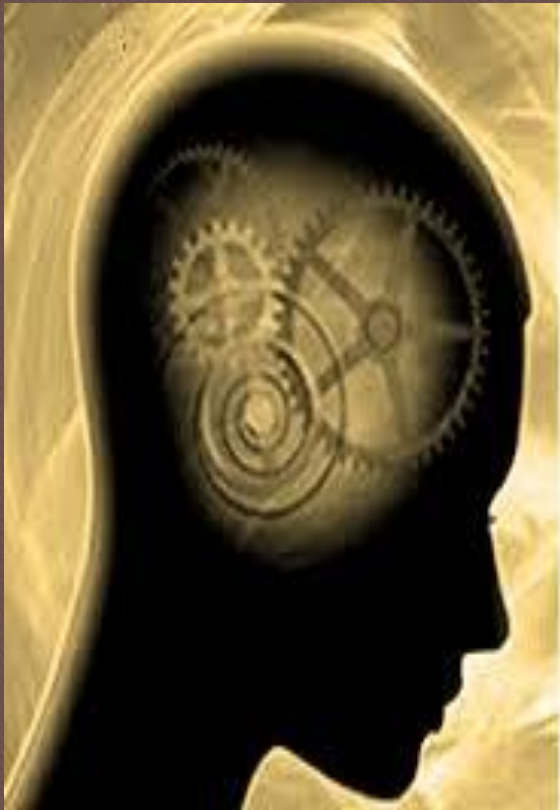
# Using the 5 Senses

SIGHT	SOUND	TOUCH	SMELL	TASTE
Look around the room	Notice sounds in the room	Pillow	Lotions	Tea
Look at a specific object	(e.g. fan)	Rock	Scented candles	Gum
Notice a specific features (e.g. How many blue things?)	Listen to soft music	Frozen orange	Essential oils	Mints
	Nature sounds	Pets	Clean laundry	Ginger candy



# Grounding

## Mentally



- Orienting Self to Present
  - “I am safe.”
  - “Today is Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013”
  - “I’m at my therapist’s office.”
- Observation Games
  - How many windows in this room?
  - How many brown things are there?
  - How many circular things?
  - What’s the distance between me and the bookshelf?
  - What’s the length of the table top?



# Orienting to Present

## Comparisons



## Separating Past and Present

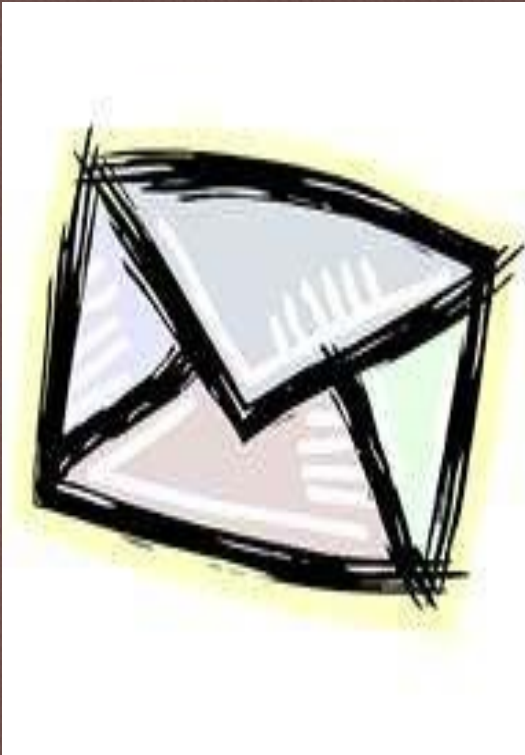
	<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>DIFFERENCES</b>
In You	Feel scared Feel alone Could get disappointed	Adult Have help More able to handle it
In the Environment	Wish it's different Cramped	Pictures on wall Lots of people around
In the Situation	Feel attacked Feel trapped	I made the decision to be here Not trapped
In Others	Have power over me Couldn't disagree	People listen Can find out the reason why



# Containment Skills

## Physical

- temporarily put experiences aside, rather than allowing them to remain unconscious





# Containment Skills

## Using Imagery



## Removing Yourself from the Situation

### Safe Places





# Containment Skills

## Using Imagery



## Removing the Distressing Material





# Containment Skills

## Journaling



- Contains experiences
- Facilitates Other Treatment Activities
- Grounding
- Developing awareness
- Exploration
- Pro's versus Con's



# Containment Skills

## Journaling



### **Level 1:** surface, factual

- Grounding
- Managing time loss
- Increase awareness of day to day events

### **Level 2:** present thoughts, feelings, impulses

- Therapy assignments
- Containment
- Self soothing

### **Level 3:** present-focused writing related to trauma material





# Cognitive Restructuring

Challenging  
Trauma Based  
Distortions

- Systematically identifying and challenging cognitive distortions and replacing them with more positive and accurate thoughts.
- Can be simple consideration of evidence for and against the thought.
- Can be a more involved process...



*"Just because we think it doesn't make it true."*



# Assessing Thoughts: Accurate?

DATE /TIME	SITUATION	AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS	EMOTIONS	RATIONAL RESPONSE	OUTCOME
	<p>-At the shelter. No money in my pocket.</p> <p>-Thinking about some people I used to hang with.</p> <p>-Start craving cocaine.</p>	<p>“There is nothing to do.” (85%)</p> <p>“I can’t stand this boredom.” (80%)</p>	<p>Bored (90%)</p> <p>Anxious (95%)</p>	<p>“Actually, there are plenty of things I could do; for example go to a meeting, write in my journal.”</p> <p>“It is not true that there is nothing to do but the pain of boredom makes it hard to see other things I could do.”</p>	<p>Belief in automatic thoughts (10%)</p> <p>Bored (30%)</p> <p>Anxious (20%)</p>

Adapted from Beck, et al (1993)



# Assessing Thoughts: Functional?

Helpful Thinking	Harmful Thinking
<p data-bbox="98 325 397 375"><u>Constructive</u></p> <p data-bbox="98 401 523 451">Puts you together</p> <p data-bbox="98 476 401 526">“I can learn.”</p> <p data-bbox="98 632 355 682"><u>Necessary</u></p> <p data-bbox="98 708 852 758">Helps you do what you need to.</p> <p data-bbox="98 783 900 891">“To find out if I am HIV +, I need a blood test.”</p> <p data-bbox="98 996 287 1046"><u>Positive</u></p> <p data-bbox="98 1072 624 1122">Makes you feel better.</p> <p data-bbox="98 1148 913 1255">“I can focus on what is good in my life or what I can do.”</p>	<p data-bbox="987 325 1253 375"><u>Destructive</u></p> <p data-bbox="987 401 1740 451">Tears you apart &amp; destroys you.</p> <p data-bbox="987 476 1541 526">“I don’t know anything.”</p> <p data-bbox="987 632 1300 682"><u>Unnecessary</u></p> <p data-bbox="987 708 1624 758">Does not change anything.</p> <p data-bbox="987 783 1454 833">“What if I’m HIV +?”</p> <p data-bbox="987 939 1199 989"><u>Negative</u></p> <p data-bbox="987 1015 1518 1065">Makes you feel worse.</p> <p data-bbox="987 1090 1831 1255">“There’s so many things wrong with my life, and there’s nothing that I do about it.”</p>



# Label Dysfunctional Thinking Patterns

- Overgeneralizations “She cut me off when I was talking. No one wants to listen to what I have to say.”
- Personalizations Taking responsibility for negative events, beyond your control. “I ruined the evening because I chose the restaurant with the bad service.”
- Dichotomous (All or Nothing) Thinking “If I can’t make money like I used to, what’s the point in living.”





# Label Dysfunctional Thinking Patterns

- Mind Reading “The counselor doesn’t like me,... he ignored my question in group.”
- Negative Future Telling Thinking that you can see how things will be in the future and its bad.
- Negative Mental Filter Focusing solely on the negative and ignoring the positive.





# Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills



- Mindfulness
- Affect Regulation
- Distress Tolerance
- Interpersonal Effectiveness



## Identifying and Managing Triggers



*“Small things set me off, and before I know it, I’m thinking of suicide.”*

*“When I see someone light up, the world narrows and all I can feel is the need to get high.”*

Najavits (2002)



# Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

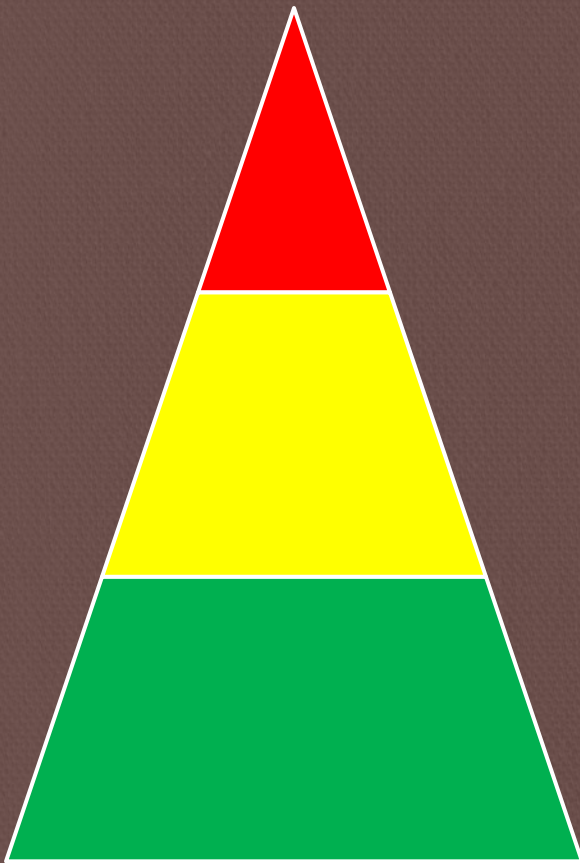
## Behavior Chain Analysis



1. Describe the specific **TARGET EVENT**
2. Identify the specific **PRECIPITATING EVENTS**
3. Explain in general the **VULNERABILITY FACTORS** influencing the event
4. Describe the **CHAIN OF EVENTS** leading to the **TARGET EVENT**
5. Identify the **CONSEQUENCES** of the event
6. Describe in detail alternative **SOLUTIONS**
7. Outline in detail **PREVENTION STRATEGIES**
8. Identify **REPAIR** options



# Crisis Continuum



	LEVEL OF DISTRESS				
	1	2	3	4	5
Thoughts					
Feelings					
Behaviors					
Sensations					

	Symptom Management/Coping SKILLS			
	Thoughts	Feelings	Impulses	Sensations
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				



## Between Trigger and Reaction



*“Between stimulus and response  
there is a space. In that space is  
our power to choose our  
response. In our response lies  
our growth and our freedom.”*

-Victor Frankl (Man's Search for Meaning)



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# THANK YOU



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