

Trauma Matters

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Who are the Women?

- Most marginalized, vulnerable women
- Economically disadvantaged
- Women of color overly represented
- Families with domestic violence and addiction problems
- Minimal education and work experience
- Histories of substance misuse
- Physical and mental health problems
- High rates of physical and sexual abuse

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Women in the CJ System

Compared with men, they –

- Are typically primary caregivers for minor children
- Have more limited education and employment histories
- Commit fewer violent crimes
- Higher rates of abuse and trauma
- Respond differently to treatment and CJ supervision

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Who Are the Girls?

- Families struggling with poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse.
- Low rates of serious and violent crime.
- Higher risk for status offenses – promiscuity, truancy, running away.
- High incidence of physical and sexual abuse.
- High incidence of substance misuse.
- Run away to survive abuse.

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Who Are the Girls? (cont.)

- Girls' rate of involvement in juvenile justice is increasing.
- Victims of trafficking are often arrested.
- Overrepresentation of girls of color.
- Overrepresentation of LGBTQ girls.
- Disproportionately victims of sexual violence.

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Gender-Responsive Treatment

Environment	Understanding	Strengths & Challenges
Creating an environment through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – site selection – staff selection – program development – content – material 	Reflects an understanding of the lived experiences of women and girls (now expanded)	Addresses their strengths and challenges

Source: Covington, S.S., & Bloom, B.E. (2006). Gender-responsive treatment and services in correctional settings. In E. Leeder (Ed.), *Inside and out: Women, prison, and therapy*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth.

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Toxic Stress, Trauma, and Children

- Stress of adversity (relentless stress) is toxic to the development of the brain
- Important consideration with children
 - Emotions – dysregulation
 - Behavior – unmanageable
 - Relationships – lack of connection, trust

Impact on Children

- Attachment—relationships
- Regulation—feelings and behavior
- Competencies—learning

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What is Trauma?

Trauma occurs when an external event overwhelms a person's physical and psychological coping mechanisms or strategies.

- It is a normal reaction to an abnormal or extreme situation.
- Type 1 (single) and Type 2 (complex)

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Historical Trauma

Historical or cultural trauma is massive group trauma that occurs across generations. It is intentional subjugation of a population that results in psychological and physiological harm in the first generation, which is passed to subsequent generations through in-utero exposure to stress, maladaptive parenting, and vicarious trauma.

Examples include the displacement of indigenous or Aboriginal peoples, enslavement, genocide and massacres, and forced internment in prison-like camps. In the U.S., this has affected African American, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Native Alaskan people as well as Japanese families sent to internment camps during World War II.

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Why is Understanding Trauma Important?

Abuse and trauma impact:

- Thinking (cognition)
- Feeling (affect)
- Behavior (including interactions with others)

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Gender and Abuse

Childhood

- Girls and boys at equal risk from family members and people they know

Adolescence

- Young men at risk from people who dislike or hate them. Boys at greater risk if they are gay, young men of color, gang members, or transitioning.
- Young women at risk from lovers or partners – people to whom they are saying, "I love you."

Adulthood

- Men at risk from combat or being victims of crime
- Women at risk from those they love
- LGBTQI and gender nonconforming people are at the highest risk.

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Girls, Trauma, & Juvenile Justice

- 31% sexual abuse (boys 7%)
- 45% complex trauma (boys 24%)

Sexual abuse to prison pipeline for girls
Disproportionally affects girls of color

Saari, M. S., Epstein, R., Rosenthal, L., & Vafa, Y. (2015). *The sexual abuse to prison pipeline: The girls' story*.

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Process of Trauma

```

    graph LR
      A[Traumatic Event] --> B[Response to Trauma]
      B --> C[Sensitized Nervous System]
      C --> D[Psychological and Physical Distress]
  
```

Traumatic Event
Overwhelms the physical and psychological coping skills

Response to Trauma
Fight, Flight or Freeze
Altered state of consciousness, Body sensations, Numbing, Hypervigilance, Hyper-arousal, Collapse

Sensitized Nervous System
Changes in the Brain
Brain-Body Connection

Psychological and Physical Distress
Current stressors, Reminders of trauma (triggers/activators), Sensations, Images, Behavior, Emotions, Memory

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Possible Triggers for Women in the Criminal Justice System

- Restraint
- Handcuffs
- Isolation
- Searches (pat & cavity)
- Loud noises
- Yelling
- Smell of disinfectant

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Process of Trauma

```

    graph LR
      A[Traumatic Event] --> B[Response to Trauma]
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      C --> D[Psychological and Physical Distress]
  
```

Emotional and/or Physical Responses

- Retreat**
Isolation
Dissociation
Depression
Anxiety
- Harmful Behavior to Self**
Substance use disorders
Eating disorders
Deliberate self-harm
Suicidal actions
- Harmful Behavior to Others**
Aggression
Violence
Rage
Threats
- Physical Health Issues**
Lung disease
Heart disease
Autoimmune disorders
Obesity

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Trauma's Impact on the Brain & Body

Woman experiences trauma

↓

Brain and body become overwhelmed; nervous system is unable to return to equilibrium

↓

Trauma goes untreated; woman stays in "stress response" mode

↓

Cues continue to trigger trauma (e.g. loud voices, sirens, searches, cell extractions)

↓

Woman reacts to trauma cues from a state of fear

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ACE Study (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

About	Action	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original study in 1998 • 17,000 adults in San Diego, CA • 10 questions • First 10 years – largely ignored • Past 10 years – embraced 	<p>Before age 18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurrent and severe emotional abuse • Recurrent and severe physical abuse • Contact sexual abuse • Physical neglect • Emotional neglect 	<p>Growing up in a household with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both biological parents not being present • A mother being treated violently • An alcoholic or drug-using family member • A mentally ill, chronically depressed, or institutionalized family member • A family member being imprisoned

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Women in Prison Childhood Traumatic Events

4
or more

A score of 4 or more "yes" answers indicated higher rates of physical and mental health problems.

7
or more

A score of 7 or more "yes" answers indicated 980% more risk of mental health problems.

(Messina & Grella, 2006) 19

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Impact of ACEs for Incarcerated Women is Strong & Cumulative

4
or more

- > Sex work
- > Substance misuse
- > Aggressive behavior
- > Eating disorders
- > Sexually transmitted infections
- > Hepatitis and TB
- > Gynecological problems

(Messina & Grella, 2006) 20

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Definitions: Three Levels of Trauma Work

1. **Trauma-informed** services include things we all *need to know*.
2. **Trauma-responsive** services include what we *need to do* (policies, practices, environment = culture) when we work with trauma survivors.
3. **Trauma-specific** what services we *need to provide*

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Rationale

Results of becoming trauma informed and trauma responsive:

- ✓ Organizations and facilities become safer
- ✓ Staff and those receiving services *feel* safer
- ✓ Staff jobs become easier
- ✓ Programming becomes more effective

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Benefits of Becoming Trauma Informed

(Framingham Institution for Women)
(Massachusetts Intensive Treatment Unit)

- Phased System of Services (included use of trained peers)
 - One-to-one
 - 15 minute watch
 - Join community for meals, exercise, activities
 - Program in gen. pop. and return to unit

By The Numbers:

- 15% ↓ in all self-injurious behavior
- 62% ↓ prison resident-on-staff assaults
- 54% ↓ prison resident-on-prison resident assaults
- 60% ↓ suicide attempts


(Innovators: Lynn Bissonnette, Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Framingham, National Resource Center for Justice Involved Women.) © S. Covington, 2021

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Results of *Healing Trauma: A Brief Intervention for Women*

Significant Positive Post-Intervention Changes

- ↻ Anxiety
- ↻ Depression
- ↻ PTSD
- ↻ Serious Mental Illness
- ↻ Aggression
- ↻ Social Connectedness
- ↻ Emotion Regulation




3,500 participants and 1,000+ in research

Messina and Zwart, 2020 © S. Covington, 2021 24

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Beyond Violence: Significant Positive Changes for Treatment Group Compared with Control Group on 82% of Outcomes



Decrease

- Depression
- PTSD
- Anxiety
- Emotional Dysregulation
- Expressive Anger
- Aggression/Hostility
- Physical Aggression
- Hostility
- Indirect Aggression

Improved Mental Health for BV Group over Control Group

Less Anger for BV Group

Less Aggression/Hostility for BV Group

Messina & Calhoun, 2020

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Beyond Violence One Year Post Release (RCT)

- Less recidivism
- Less relapse

	Arrest within the First Year	Positive Drug Screen
Beyond Violence Program	15%	25%
TAU (Assaultive Offender Program)	47%	47%

(Dr. Sheryl Kubiak, MDCC Research Results 2015)


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Helping Women Recover and Beyond Trauma: Significant Positive Differences in Post-release Outcomes for the GRT Group Compared with the TC Group

Findings show:

- The odds of the GRT participants being returned to prison were decreased by about two thirds (67%) compared with the TC participants.
- A greater reduction in drug use for the GRT group across time compared to the standard TC group



Messina et al., 2010

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Working Towards Justice & Liberation

Equality




The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is equal treatment.

Equity



Individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game, thus producing equity.

Justice



All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

... and only when the fence (the barrier) is gone, is there liberation.

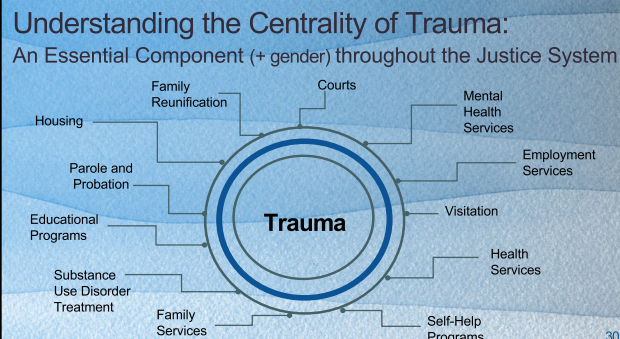
Posted on January 9, 2015 by Healthy Baby Network

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Understanding the Centrality of Trauma: An Essential Component (+ gender) throughout the Justice System



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