An Integrated Approach to Complex Trauma

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Complex trauma
- Onset, duration, frequency, and accumulation
- Relationality
- The role of early neglect
- Revictimization
  - Vicious circles
- Memory recruitment and complexity: What is a trauma memory?

Impacts of trauma
- Chronic posttraumatic stress
- Negative schema
  - Self versus others
    - Relational schema
- Self-capacity disturbance
  - Identity
  - Relationship
  - Affect regulation
- The avoidance triad: Substance abuse, dissociation, and tension-reduction

The therapeutic relationship
- The primary finding of treatment outcome studies
  - General and specific factors
- The therapeutic relationship as antidote to trauma-related isolation
- Introspection in the context of a hearing other
- Relational triggers for early implicit attachment schema
- Relational processing
- The vehicle for compassion
  - Physiologic effects: Activation of attachment circuitry and modulation of distress

Reconsidering trauma – cognitive aspects of trauma therapy
- Cognitive reconsideration versus the hunt for thinking errors
- Detailed exploration of details of trauma, focusing on thoughts, attributions, inferences
- Hearing one’s own words: Time travel
  - Unexamined beliefs
  - Epiphanies
- Self-generated normalizing and reframing
- Insight and the development of a coherent, nonpathologizing narrative

Reconsidering trauma – cognitive aspects of trauma therapy
- Mindfulness
  - Nonjudgmental self-observation and awareness
  - Metacognitive awareness
    - De-identification: Just thoughts
      - Dependent arising of thoughts: “The past talking”
    - Letting go
      - Versus suppression
      - The white bear
Empirically-based mindfulness-related therapies

- Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn)
- Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal, et al)
- Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention (MBRP; Marlatt & Gordon, 1985)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT; Linehan)

Trigger identification and intervention

- Teaches a version of metacognitive awareness
- Triggers versus perceptions
- The trigger grid
  - What are triggers?
  - Have you been triggered?
  - What are your triggers?
  - How do you know you have been triggered?
  - What could you say/do?

Development of affect regulation

- Grounding
- Relaxation
- Progressive
- Breath training
- Trigger identification and centering
- Labeling and discrimination of emotional states
- Emotional detective work

Mindfulness as affect regulation

- "Just feelings" – reduced identification
- Acceptance of feelings without needing to act
- "Inviting pain to tea"
- Learning how to "let go" of emotional processes (versus suppression)
- Learning to sit with emotional pain

Emotional processing

- Titrated exposure and the therapeutic window – broadening the paradigm
- Targets, implicit activations, and parallel processing
- The components of trauma processing
  - Exposure
  - Activation
  - Disparity
  - Counterconditioning
  - Resolution
- The therapeutic relationship and activation of relational gestalts

Suggested readings