Traumatic Stress:
The Effects of Overwhelming Experience On the Mind and Body

Topic 9: Worksheets

“Out of clutter, find simplicity.”
~ Albert Einstein

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Topic 1: Getting Ready
Putting on the Brakes

Examples:

Pay attention to your body sensations.

Focus on your breathing.

Focus on what you see and hear around you, including the therapist.

Talk about what you see and hear around you; describe it.

Check whether the therapist is sitting too close.

Talk about something that makes you happy.

Look at a photo of someone you love and trust.

Hug a pillow.

What works for you?
Topic 2: What is Traumatic Stress?
Contributing Factors

Make an X where you would put yourself on each line for these Contributing Factors.

High ⇐ Severity/Quantity ⇐ Low

Younger ⇐ Age ⇐ Older

Little/None ⇐ Social Support ⇐ A Lot

Interpersonal ⇐ Trauma Type ⇐ Impersonal

Anxious ⇐ Temperament ⇐ Calm

More likely to develop disorder

Less likely to develop disorder

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Topic 2: What is Traumatic Stress?  
One-Time Traumatic Stress Examples

Which examples of One-Time Traumatic Stress have you experienced (if any)? When?

☐ Car accident or near miss

☐ Attack by an animal

☐ Being raped, mugged, beaten up, or threatened

☐ Natural or man-made disaster

☐ Fire

☐ Single act of terrorism

☐ The death or serious illness of someone close to you

☐ Serious medical procedure or life-threatening illness

☐ Seeing action as a soldier, police, firefighter, EMT

☐ Other: ____________________________________

☐ Other: ____________________________________
Topic 2: What is Traumatic Stress?
One-Time Traumatic Stress Symptoms

Which symptoms of One-Time Traumatic Stress have you experienced recently (if any)?

- **Recurrent re-experiencing of the trauma (one or more):**
  - Images, thoughts, or perceptions recalling the event
  - Nightmares/distressing dreams of the event
  - Flashbacks, as if re-living the event
  - Emotional distress in reaction to triggers
  - Physical distress in reaction to triggers

- **Avoidance of reminders of the trauma (one or both):**
  - Efforts to avoid talking or thinking about the event
  - Efforts to avoid activities, people, places that remind

- **Changes in thoughts and feelings (two or more):**
  - Unable to recall aspects of the event
  - Negative beliefs about self, others, the world
  - Blaming self or others for the event
  - Ongoing negative emotions (fear, anger, shame, etc.)
  - Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
  - Lower motivation for significant activities
  - Inability to experience positive emotions

- **Increased arousal (two or more):**
  - Irritability or outbursts of anger
  - Reckless or self-destructive behavior
  - Exaggerated alertness
  - Startle response
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Trouble falling or staying asleep
Topic 2: What is Traumatic Stress?  
Ongoing Traumatic Stress Examples

Which examples of Ongoing Traumatic Stress have you experienced (if any)? When?

- Ongoing abuse, especially by someone you know/trust:
  - Sexual
  - Physical
  - Verbal
  - Emotional

- Substance abuse/mental illness in the family
  - chaos
  - neglect
  - fear-based environment

- Too little attention during childhood
  - Physical or emotional neglect
  - Lack of support or belief in what child says
  - Denial of child’s reality

- Too much attention during childhood
  - Control-freak parent
  - Denial of child’s reality

- Ongoing threat of terrorism
  - e.g., al Qaeda, alcoholic father, spouse abuser

- Imprisonment or being held against one’s will
  - e.g., jail/prison, kidnapping, domestic violence

- Other: ____________________________________
- Other: ____________________________________
Topic 2: What is Traumatic Stress? Ongoing Traumatic Stress Symptoms Part 1

Which symptoms of Ongoing Traumatic Stress have you experienced recently (if any)?

- **Alterations in emotional regulation**, such as:
  - persistent sadness
  - chronic suicidal thoughts
  - explosive or inhibited anger
  - compulsive or inhibited sexuality

- **Alterations in consciousness**, such as:
  - forgetting traumatic events
  - reliving traumatic events or pre-occupation
  - having episodes in which one feels detached from one's mental processes or body

- **Alterations in self-perception**, such as:
  - a sense of helplessness, shame, guilt, or stigma
  - a sense of being completely different than other human beings
Which symptoms of Ongoing Traumatic Stress have you experienced recently (if any)?

- **Alterations in the perception of the abuser**, such as:
  - attributing total power to the abuser
  - becoming preoccupied with the abuser:
    - addiction to abuser
    - preoccupation with thoughts of revenge

- **Alterations in relations with others**, such as:
  - isolation and withdrawal
  - distrust of others
  - disrupted intimate relationships
  - repeated search for a rescuer
  - repeated abusive relationships

- **Alterations in one's system of meanings**, such as:
  - a loss of sustaining faith/purpose
  - a sense of hopelessness and despair
Topic 3: Surviving Trauma
How Did You Survive?

Trauma:

Which survival modes did your brain use?

Relational Defenses
☐ Attachment to Caregivers
☐ Social Engagement

Mobilizing Defenses
☐ Flight
☐ Fight

Immobilizing Defenses
☐ Fright (Submissive Behavior)
☐ Freeze (Paralyzed)
☐ Faint (Total Shutdown)
Topic 4: Remembering Trauma
What are Your Triggers?

What Gets Triggered (body memory, mental image, thoughts, emotions, etc.)?

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Topic 5: Effects of Early Trauma
What Happened to You?

Input: Trauma/Abuse
☐ Lack of attention/caring
☐ Lack of structure/consistency
☐ Lack of acceptance/respect
☐ Lack of learning opportunities
☐ Poor nutrition
☐ Physical abuse
☐ Sexual abuse
☐ Emotional abuse
☐ Other: ______________

Output: Coping “Skills”
☐ People-pleasing
☐ Perfectionism
☐ Avoidance
☐ Anger, chaos, loss of control
☐ Dissociation (space out)
☐ Addictive behaviors
☐ Self-mutilation/cutting
☐ Other: ______________

Output: Unhealthy Behaviors
☐ Attraction to abusive others
☐ Discomfort with non-abuse
☐ “I hate you, don’t leave me”
☐ “I feel crazy”
☐ Developmental delays
☐ Loss of sense of self
☐ Other: ______________
Topic 6: Dissociation: What are Your Parts?

Write in your Apparently Normal Parts; then circle all the Traumatized Emotional Parts that apply.

ANPs

EPs

Fight = Angry

Flight = Avoidant

Submission = Codependency, Depression

Freeze = Fear, Panic, Anxiety, etc.

Pain or Shame = Suicidal

Body Memories = Pain, Illness, etc.

Others: ________________________