Trauma Avoidance

Four Common Misunderstandings in Trauma Treatment Land

With Steve Sawyer LCSW CSAC
1. Trauma Clients are Fragile

This is a story about FOCUSING on the RESILIENCE of our Clients
Capsules by Dr Robert Scarer

Unprocessed traumas are held in capsule form in the brain (Robert Scaer, MD)

A Brainspot is seen as an eye position that correlates with a physiological capsule that holds traumatic experience in memory form
“The Medicine is in Close Proximity”

Anything AVOIDED only gets louder

Client Stories about Repression and Avoidance
2. Dissociation should be stopped...

Dissociation, Misunderstandings on Going Away from or Going To Somewhere

a. “Get in your Body”
b. Re-Member concepts

Flashbacks Must be Stopped: Think of Something Else
3. Fireflys: M. 16 Grounding is good, Imagining Safety Works

HRV and PTSD Flashback

Grounding should Stabilize?

Not if you’re Pretending

Flashback of Drug Circles and Roads

Assessing Interceptive Capability TCTSY

Imagine Bottom Up approach over Top Down

Defining grounded, Building Islands
The Healthy Attachment Cycle

Need → Arousal → Attuned Caregiver Response → Decreased Arousal → Trust

The Unhealthy Attachment Cycle

Need → Arousal → Escape → Decreased Arousal → Trust
## Case Example

### Table: Relationship between age of experience of childhood sexual abuse and onset of depression.

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Presented by: Steve Sawyer, LCSW, CSAC
The essential resource is the survival instinct which is deeply subcortical
4. Resourced?: Are we avoiding where the solution is?

A power meeting with Stephan Porges

Going towards the Pain

The Ultimate Goal

List 10 things that make you want to Live?
Resource or not to Resource: That is the Question

The Spider Web by Steve Sawyer LCSW

The Spider’s Web

Steve Sawyer DTFBSP 2019

Steve Sawyer DTFBSP 2019
The Spider's Web

The Experiment

Presented by: Steve Sawyer, LCSW, CSAC
5. Yoga will calm you Down

M. Yoga class will Calm you Down

15 Year Old Female
1st Placement
“I F...... Hate Yoga Class
Building in the Flight Response
Clinical Implications of Neuroscience Research in PTSD

Bessel A. Van der Kolk
Boston University School of Medicine, The Trauma Center, 1269 Beacon Street, Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

ABSTRACT: The research showing how exposure to extreme stress affects brain function is making important contributions to understanding the nature of traumatic stress. This includes the notion that traumatized individuals are vulnerable to sensory information with subcortically initiated responses that are irrelevant, and often harmful, in the present. Reminders of traumatic experiences activate brain regions that support intense emotions, and decrease activation in the central nervous system (CNS) regions involved in (a) the integration of sensory input with motor output, (b) the modulation of physiological arousal, and (c) the capacity to communicate experience in words. Failures of attention and memory in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) interfere with the capacity to engage in the present; traumatized individuals “lose their way in the world.” This article discusses the implications of this research by suggesting that effective treatment needs to involve (1) learning to tolerate feelings and sensations by increasing the capacity for interoception, (2) learning to modulate arousal, and (3) learning that after confrontation with physical helplessness it is essential to engage in taking effective action.

KEYWORDS: PTSD; affect regulation; neuroimaging; meditation; yoga; HRV; introspection; movement; action; medial prefrontal cortex; autonomic nervous system

The discovery that sensory input can automatically stimulate hormonal secretions and influence the activation of brain regions involved in attention and memory once again confronts psychology with the limitations of conscious control over our actions and emotions. This is particularly relevant for understanding and treating traumatized individuals. The fact that reminders of the past automatically activate certain neurobiological responses explains why trauma survivors are vulnerable to start with irrational—subcortically initiated—emotions. This article discusses the implications of this research by suggesting that effective treatment needs to involve (1) learning to tolerate feelings and sensations by increasing the capacity for interoception, (2) learning to modulate arousal, and (3) learning that after confrontation with physical helplessness it is essential to engage in taking effective action.

Effectiveness of an Extended Yoga Treatment for Women with Chronic Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Masayuki Naka, Toshihiko Yeomans, PhD, MD; Regina Mustier, ALM; Jennifer Turner, MA, E-RYT; Michael Susik, PhD; David Emerson, E-RYT, and Bessel van der Kolk, MD

The Trauma Center, Boston University School of Medicine, 1269 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02446

ABSTRACT: Yoga has been found to be an effective posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment for a variety of trauma survivors, including females with chronic PTSD. This study sought to determine the overall results of a treatment protocol examined in a recent randomized controlled trial (RCT) with a shorter duration and without assignment or monitoring of home practice.

Background: Yoga has been found to be an effective posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment for a variety of trauma survivors, including females with chronic PTSD. The study sought to determine the overall results of a treatment protocol examined in a recent randomized controlled trial (RCT) with a shorter duration and without assignment or monitoring of home practice.

Methods: The authors examined a 36-week trauma-sensitive yoga treatment in a non-randomized, prospective trial of traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) complex PTSD, obsessive disorders, and other related emotional and behavioral problems.

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6. Trauma Discharge is Good...

Get it out of his system? Never going to Wind down

The Past is speaking in Behavior vs Trauma Discharge

When Staff become the punching bag

Entrenchment: Neurons that fire together wire together

Rescuing Clients to the Present
7. Self Regulation is Always Helpful

Self Regulation for Avoidance

Therapist building flight Responses

“Take Space”

The Wisdom of Trauma: Gabor Mate Field Visit
"Often it isn't the initiating trauma that creates seemingly insurmountable pain, but the lack of support after."

- S. Kelley Harrell

The Unhealthy Attachment Cycle

Need → Arousal → Trust

Decreased Arousal
1. To Access Deeply Embedded Capsules, you have to touch the Stove.
2. Dissociation can be an access point to Re-Member.
3. Resourcing can support OR hinder the process of access/healing.
4. Self Regulation can be an Avoidance Strategy.
5. Trauma Discharge is a capsule speaking, but is not likely to eliminate it.
6. A key element of lasting Trauma relief resides in Aloneness.