



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

NCTSN

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

Advanced Training in  
Common Trauma Informed Practice Elements:  
Twelve Strategies for Working with Children and  
Families Impacted by Traumatic Experiences.

# Acknowledgements

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# Conceptualizing the Problem



- Increasingly large numbers of clients are affected by trauma
- This is complicated by
  - Challenges in identifying appropriate treatments
  - Difficulty accessing training for implementation of evidence-based trauma treatments



# What makes treating childhood trauma difficult?

Challenges in Identifying Appropriate Treatments and  
Difficulty Accessing Training for Implementing Evidence-Based Trauma Treatments



# The Problem with Evidence-Based Interventions

- Past several decades have resulted in an explosion of evidence-based (empirically supported) treatment interventions (EBIs)
- It has been challenging to integrate these approaches into practice
  - Efficacy versus effectiveness
  - Fidelity to the model in natural settings
  - Inconsistencies in research
- EBIs for children, adolescents, and families surviving trauma have been disseminated nationally through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network but are not universally available
- Adult trauma treatments are less widely available
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are less likely to have access to available EBIs for traumatic stress because fewer BIPOC have training to implement these interventions

# Common Trauma Informed Practice Elements

A Potential Solution



# A Potential Solution

- Model to allow the treatment intervention literature to be ‘factored and distilled’ to create a synopsis of evidence-based treatment elements to be matched to individual clients
- This lead the NCTSN to develop the *Core Concepts* curriculum
  - Provides a foundation in trauma knowledge to assist with case conceptualizations, formulations and assessment

<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/core-curriculum-childhood-trauma>



# Common Trauma Informed Practice Elements

Practical Skills for Working with Families and Children  
who have Survived Childhood Trauma



# What are Common Trauma Informed Practice Elements?

- In 2010, a research team from the National Center for Social Work Trauma Education and Workforce Development created a manual to code promising practices and empirically-supported treatments specifically related to trauma interventions for children and families
- This coding manual was used to code 26 empirically-supported treatment manuals to identify common:
  - Intervention Objectives: specific therapeutic outcomes the interventionist intends to achieve through implementing a given set of practice elements in a given setting
  - Practice Elements: observable, concrete therapeutic procedures the interventionist implements with the client or on behalf of the client with the intention of achieving one or more of the intervention objectives

# What did they find?

- 35 intervention objectives and 59 practice elements were identified
- 9 common domains of empirically supported trauma treatments were identified
  1. Trauma Assessment
  2. Safety
  3. Engagement/General Assessment
  4. Attachment/Strengthening Relationships
  5. Core Treatment Interventions
  6. Attention to Social Context
  7. Trauma Processing
  8. Consolidation/Post Trauma Growth
  9. Interventionist Self Care



# Common Trauma Informed Treatment Elements

1. Psychoeducation about trauma and its impact
2. Relaxation or stress reduction strategies
3. Affect/emotional regulation
4. Termination rituals/interventions
5. Homework
6. Cognitive regulation/restructuring interventions
7. Non-verbal interventions
8. Assess trauma history/symptoms/reactions
9. Interventions to process/integrate traumatic memories/experiences
10. Behavior regulation interventions
11. Interventions to improve family communication/interaction/relationships
12. Safety actions, planning or safety promoting interventions



## 2) Safety

Activities undertaken with or on behalf of the client to reduce the potential of harm to the child, self-harm, or harm to others, and to build stability within the social environment

### Intervention Objectives

1. Promote Safety
2. Build Routines and Rituals
3. Stabilization

### Practice Elements

1. Safety Planning
2. Interventions to Build Routines and Rituals
3. Safety Promotion Interventions
4. Safety Actions

# Training Sequence



# Prerequisite:

## 4.5 Credit Asynchronous Online Course

- Core Components and Skills for Trauma Informed Practice: A Program to Provide Evidence-Based Trauma Training for Mental Health Professionals Working with Trauma
- Anti-racist/Anti-Oppressive Approach
- Includes 3 cases that cover 12 Practice Elements
- Discussions/Quizzes
  
- Trailer

# Advanced Training: 3 courses, 12 CEUs

## The Case of Emma Grace (4.0 CEUs):

1. Identify three specific ways in which a young child's biological, emotional, social, and cognitive development may be affected by a traumatic experience.
2. Appreciate two impacts of client and therapist positionality on the therapeutic alliance.
3. Identify and appropriately apply trauma assessment, psychoeducation, safety planning, and family interventions with young children and caregivers.
4. Incorporate an understanding of how oppression and discrimination affect children and families in relationship to trauma.

# Advanced Training: 3 courses, 12 CEUs

## The Case of Jamal (4.0 CEUs):

1. Identify at least three secondary adversities characteristic of trauma exposure in childhood
2. Identify how a triggering experience can impact a school-age child who has experienced trauma
3. Identify two cultural factors and processes which can influence children's and families' experiences of trauma
4. Understand and apply the practice elements of relaxation, affect regulation, non-verbal interventions, and homework with at least one client



# Advanced Training: 3 courses, 12 CEUs

## The Case of Diego (4.0 CEUs):

1. Identify and describe at least three domains of impairment exhibited by adolescents who have experienced trauma
2. Identify at least one technique for addressing cognitive distortions and apply the cognitive regulation/restructuring intervention element
3. Identify how underlying goals/ values that are important to adolescents can be used to influence beneficial choices and apply one behavioral regulation intervention practice element
4. 4. Identify at least three components of trauma processing and apply with one client

## Discussion/Questions

Trauma is not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathic witness.

- Peter A. Levine



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Thank you!

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# 1) Trauma Assessment

Specific activities undertaken to assess the presence and impact of trauma

## Intervention Objectives

1. Gather Information
2. Identify Grief and Loss

## Practice Elements

1. Assess Trauma/Symptoms/Reactions
2. Assess Presence of Trauma Reminders, Triggers, Stressors

## 2) Safety

Activities undertaken with or on behalf of the client to reduce the potential of harm to the child, self-harm, or harm to others, and to build stability within the social environment

### Intervention Objectives

1. Promote Safety
2. Build Routines and Rituals
3. Stabilization

### Practice Elements

1. Safety Planning
2. Interventions to Build Routines and Rituals
3. Safety Promotion Interventions
4. Safety Actions

# 3) Engagement/General Assessment

Includes general assessment (non-trauma specific) as well as interventions to build a working alliance, increase motivation, identify obstacles and provide psychoeducation to the child and family

## Intervention Objectives

1. Develop Alliance/Engagement
2. Explain Phases of Intervention
3. Treatment/Intervention Planning
4. Promote Understanding of Dimensions Important to Treatment
5. Evaluate Treatment Model or Intervention
6. Identify Obstacles to Intervention/Treatment
7. Increase Motivation

## Practice Elements

1. Psychoeducation about Trauma and its Impact
2. Interventions to Carry Out Treatment Planning
3. Interventions to Promote Therapeutic Working Alliance/Engagement
4. Assess Individual/Family
5. Psychoeducation that is Trauma Specific
6. Generalized Assessment Instruments
7. Assess Eligibility for Intervention/Treatment
8. Assess Culture and Religion

# 4) Attachment/Strengthening Relationships

Activities undertaken to strengthen parent-child, caregiver-child and/or family relationships by enhancing attunement, communication and problem solving capacities

## Intervention Objectives

1. Build Problem-Solving Skills
2. Improve Parental/Caregiver Functioning or Competence
3. Improve Family Communications
4. Improve Family Interactions/Relationships
5. Foster Attachment
6. Improve Family Structure

## Practice Elements

1. Validation Interventions
2. Therapeutic Interventions to Improve Parental Functioning
3. Interventions to Improve Family Interactions and Relationships
4. Attachment Promoting Interventions
5. Developmental Guidance
6. Parent Skills Training/Development
7. Interventions to Strengthen Family Structure
8. Interventions for Circular Causality



# 5) Core Treatment Interventions

Interventions to reduce symptom distress and strengthen affective, cognitive and behavioral coping strategies within the context of the client's culture. Generally undertaken prior to trauma processing.

## Intervention Objectives

1. Enhance Affect/Emotional Regulation
2. Enhance Cognitive Restructuring/Regulation
3. Enhance Behavioral Regulation
4. Enhance Capacity for Physiological Regulation
5. Incorporate Cultural Sensitivity and Spirituality
6. Acknowledge the Child's Reality

## Practice Elements

1. Feelings Identification
2. Affect/Emotion Regulation
3. Communicating Emotions
4. Interventions to Improve Family Communications
5. Behavioral Regulation Interventions
6. Cognitive Regulation/Restructuring Interventions
7. Problems Solving Interventions
8. Social Skills Development
9. Homework
10. Mindfulness
11. Relapse Prevention
12. Relaxation/Struss Reduction
13. Attend to Latent Content
14. Non-Verbal Interventions
15. Interventions to Incorporate Cultural Sensitivity and Spirituality

## 6) Attention to the Social Context

Activities undertaken with other service providers for collaborative treatment planning, advocacy or case management in an effort to address environmental adversities

### Intervention Objectives

1. Promote Supportive Networks
2. Address Adversities in the Social Environment

### Practice Elements

1. Activities to Promote Supportive Networks
2. Case Management
3. Assess Social Environment
4. Advocacy
5. Crisis Management
6. Collaborative Intervention Service Planning

# 7) Trauma Processing

Activities specific to processing and integrating traumatic experience

## Intervention Objectives

1. Promote Understanding of Connection Between Trauma and Current Experience
2. Process Trauma Memories/Integrate Trauma Experiences

## Practice Elements

1. Trauma-Specific Interventions/Tools
2. Narrative Story Building
3. Interventions to Process/Integrate Traumatic Memories/Experiences

# 8) Consolidation/Post Traumatic Growth

Future-oriented interventions subsequent to trauma processing focused on making meaning of the traumatic experience and promoting adaptive functioning

## Intervention Objectives

1. Promote Post Traumatic Growth
2. Build Integrated Sense of Self
3. Promote Adaptive Functioning
4. Make Meaning of Experience
5. Build Family Identity
6. Promote Therapeutic Termination

## Practice Elements

1. Termination Rituals/Interventions
2. Interventions to Promote Adaptive Functioning
3. Build Interpersonal Competencies
4. Interventions to Build Family Identity
5. Interventions to Build an Integrated Sense of Self
6. Build Cohesion
7. Meaning Making Activities
8. Strategies to Promote Post-Traumatic Growth
9. Intervention for Grief/Loss

## 9) Interventionist Self Care

Interventions that the interventionist engages in to anticipate and manage vicarious trauma or secondary traumatic stress

### Intervention Objectives

1. Attend to Self Care

### Practice Elements

1. Interventions to Promote Self Care