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Building Resiliency in our Staff: a debriefing model for addressing moral injury

INTRODUCTION TO STAR-T RESILIENCE MODEL

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Today's objectives

- Discuss the importance of addressing staff compassion fatigue, burnout and moral injury
- Provide an introduction to the STAR-T model
- Begin/continue your organizations plan for supporting staff when they have deep impacts from their outreach work

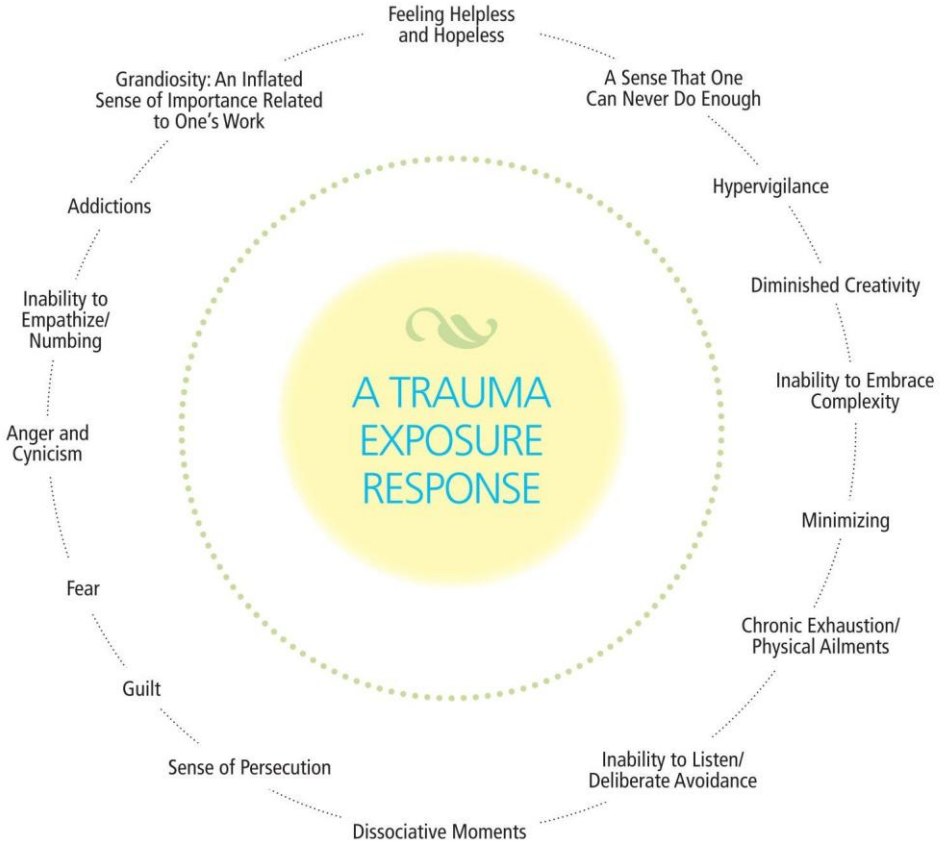
Staff Wellness

- Staff are our number one resource investment, and they are reporting high levels of stress.

- This manifests itself in irritability, fatigue, distracted, anger, sadness, difficulty sleeping, missed work, avoidant behaviors, substance use, depression, PTSD and other symptoms

- In one study, Shiff and Lane found rates of 33% of staff reporting high levels of traumatic stress from work by Front line Homeless Services providers PTSD Symptoms, Vicarious Traumatization, and Burnout in Front Line Workers in the Homeless Sector. Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff & Annette M. Lane. 16 March 2017 / Accepted: 12 December 2018 / Published online: 25 January 2019

Trauma Stewardship – Trauma Exposure



Lets talk about some definitions

- **Compassion Fatigue**
- **Burnout**
- **Moral Injury**

Similar but Different

- **Compassion fatigue** – repeated exposure to repeated exposure to participants trauma, leading to exhaustion and lack of empathy.

- **Burnout** - Tends to focus on within or on an internal experience and skills of our staff.

- **Moral Injury** - describes the challenge of simultaneously knowing what care patients need but being unable to provide it due to constraints that are beyond our control.

Try not to spead the Wildfire

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Spread Wildflowers instead.

Organizational response responsibility

- We have to go beyond just pushing off to EAP or telling staff to "take a day off? ---- or offering a Pizza Party?

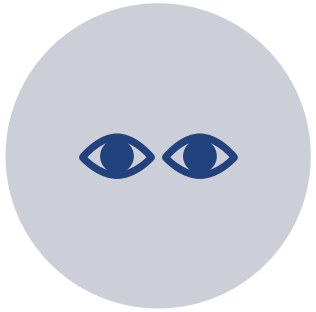
- But how?

Supporting Staff Wellness

- The usual (pto, breaks, good pay etc)….But need to go more indepth:

- Support to set boundaries (on work, on self, with others)
- Everyday and Crisis Self Care supports
- Good Supervision (difference between managing and supervising)
- Team Culture and sharing of responsibilities
- Connecting with Others
- And when needed formal Debriefings

People Want to be:



SEEN & HEARD

CONNECTED TO OTHERS

SAFE

HAVE CHOICES

Arrival Exercise

Two Types of Debriefings

- Critical Incident Stress Management (debriefing)

- STAR - T

STAR-t Model goes beyond CISD

- CCC was trained by Andy and Jen in this model. For more go to: https://www.activateresiliency.com/

- Star-t is about co-regulation and connection…. A way to better notice and name how we are experiencing and digesting an event.

Resilience and Trauma

STAR-T

- STAR-T invites organizations to reimagine how they respond to stress and trauma—not as isolated events but as collective, systemic process.

STAR-T uses Secondary Trauma

- . The STAR-T model uses the term Secondary trauma to capture that some workers are overwhelmed by some direct tasks / actions from the work (such as collecting evidence or hearing stories) and from indirect exposure to how staff talk about these topics in meetings… which leads to a “Secondhand trauma” exposure and build up

- But this cumulative exposures that staff have (and are impacted by) leads us (leaders) to learn from past extensive work on the neurobiology of trauma to come up with unique and novel ways of help to identify, name and regulate with staff.
- STAR-T allows the organization and staff to name, notice and hopefully negate the intensity of work traumas.

What is it really?

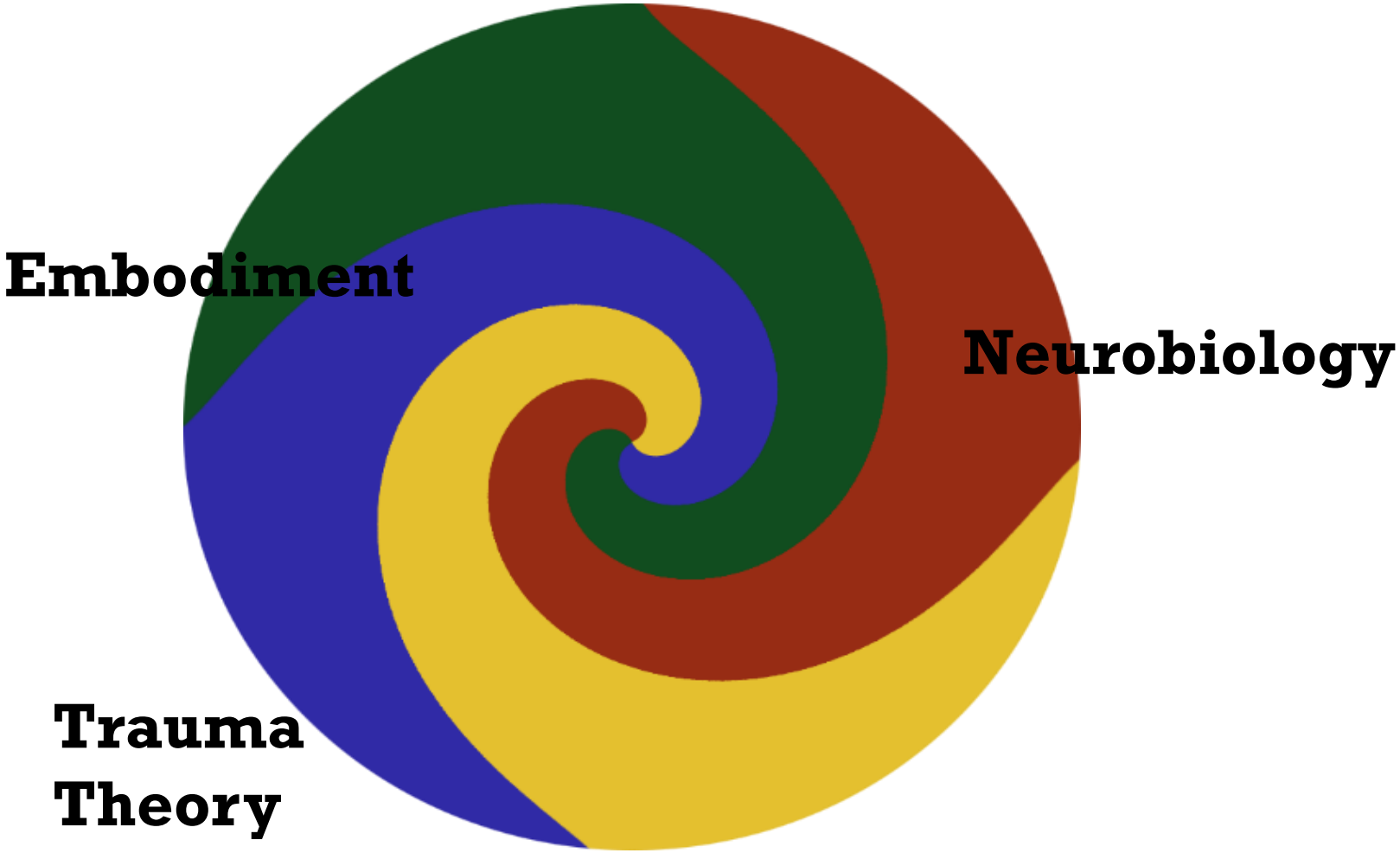
- **Skills training offered/ daily practices**:
  - Dropping in
  - Tracking
  - Morning grounding exercises
  - Finding an anchor
  - Tracking/ observing/ noticing
  - Transition rituals
  - More…
- **Formal Debriefings**
  - Episodic/ as needed
  - Group
  - Facilitated group
  - Mutliple teams
  - Staff and participants

When might you offer a debriefing

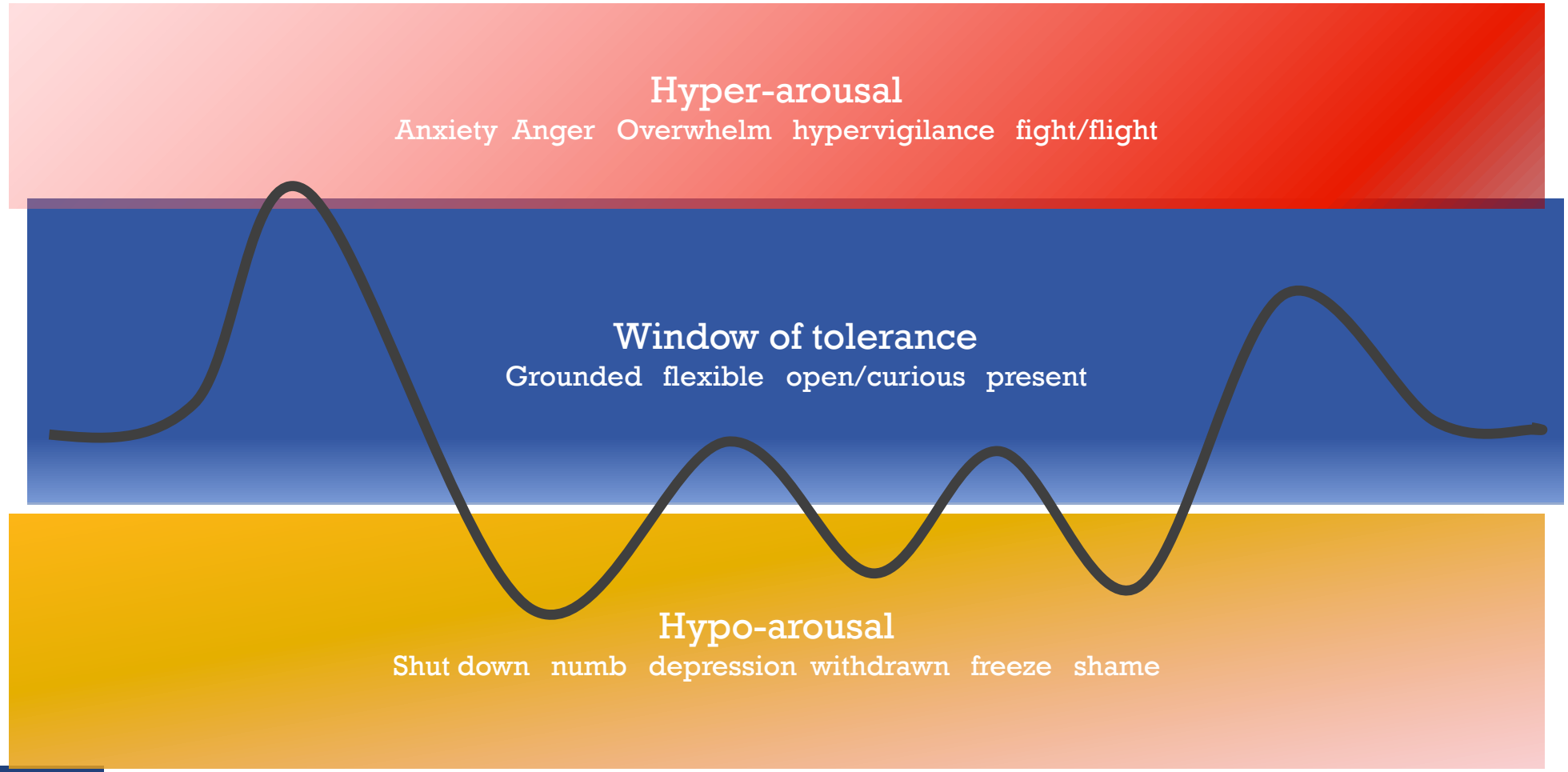
- When police, security or others have to get involved
- Violence is witness or threatened
- Responded to an Overdose
- Death of a client
- Death of a co-worker
- Someone is evicted or exited from a program
- For Cumulative toll of recent losses
- When the community is impacted….

- When the staff ask for it or when you notice it is needed.

Integration of these Theories into a Hybrid Intervention



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



What is involved with a debriefing?

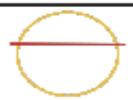
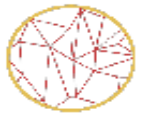
- Protected time for the team to come together 60-90
- Time to focus on how the staff are doing, what they need to finish their shift or show up for next shift.
- Most impactful when offered with 72 hours
- It is not therapy or counseling, but co-regulation and connection
- Offered per event, sometimes more than once.
- Often best to be offered by outside team members (trained in the model)
- An investment in your team

- It is not a time to process improve or problem solve.

The Star-T Debriefing Steps

Steps of a Secondary Trauma Informed Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

90 minutes CISD

STEPS	ACTIONS	IMAGE
GATHERING 3 – 5 minutes	Circle of chairs Arrival or Conscious beginning Addressing the body Conscious engagement (eye contact)	
NAMING THE PTE 2 minutes	State succinctly the trauma we are here to address	
CONNECTING 10 minutes	One word noticing or movement Resonating Response Metaphor of the Drumhead Notice Activation or Collapse Bottom up processing (movement and sounds)	
NOTICING 10 minutes	What did you notice? Distinguish between responses: Thinking, Feeling, Sensation Track for the ability to create five or six response across the circle, and some responses that are responses to responses	
ENGAGING THE PTE 30 – 40 minutes	As we are aware now of how trauma enters our system when we are in such close proximity to traumatic events, lets share together how you are being impacted by this traumatic event. Speaking, Expressing, Using a variety of ways of activating the drumhead or communicating. Facilitator reaches for resonant or mirrored response in others Pays attention to regulatory qualities and regulates the group through body awareness Tracks sensation as much as story or emotion	
TRACKING THE RESPONSE 10 minutes	So, I noticed that (personalized responses), what did you notice? As we have made contact with this material, are we accurate in what we are noticing? Does it make it more intense or less intense when we notice?	
CLOSING 5 – 7 minutes	Standing in a circle together. Conscious re-grounding in the body Conscious eye contact Naming what each person needs	
FOLLOW-UP	Pay attention to high risk folks both hyper and hypo aroused Identify ways to do follow up on these responses	

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CCC Implementation of Star-T

- Trained around 25 staff (14 still active now)
- Investment in training and time (for debriefers and participants)
- Team meets monthly to discuss and practice
- Renewed training annually- adding more to team.. Starting a CCC mentorship for debriefers
- Offered 55 internally and 7 to external partners as of April 2026.
- Skills used in Huddles and “seed” planting

Ending Exercise

- What is the one thing you need from today?
- Can you do this?

- What is something that your team or organization needs after today?
- Can you do this?

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Questions or Reflections

- What questions do you have?

- What was helpful about today?
- What was difficult about today?
- What will you take away from today?

- Thank you for being here… for caring for your staff… who care for our community.

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