

Reconsidering Trauma: Treatment Advances, Relational Issues and Mindfulness

John Briere, Ph.D.

Department of Psychiatry

Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California

USC Adolescent Trauma Training Center

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Johnbriere.com

Complex trauma

- Onset, duration, frequency, and accumulation
- Relationality
- The role of early neglect
- Revictimization

Impacts of trauma

- Complex Trauma/Complex PTSD
 - Disturbance of Self-Organization
 - Identity/self-esteem
 - Relationship
 - Emotional regulation
- The avoidance triad: Substance abuse, dissociation, and distress reduction behaviors (DRBs)
 - DRBs
 - Self-injury, compulsive sexual behavior, impulsive suicidality, bingeing/purging

The therapeutic relationship

- Relational processing
 - Triggers for early implicit attachment schema
 - Activation of schema and source attribution errors
 - Disparity/New information/Inhibitory learning

Mindfulness and compassion

- Moment-by-moment nonjudgmental attention to internal/external experience
- Openness to/acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and memories: “Inviting your pain to tea”
- Observation without attachment
 - *Metacognitive awareness*: “Just” thoughts and feelings
- Therapist compassion
 - Awareness of suffering, non-egocentric desire to assist, and non-power-laden intervention
 - Physiologic effects: Activation of attachment circuitry and modulation of distress

Development of emotional regulation capacity

- Grounding
- Relaxation/breath training
- Labeling and discrimination of emotional states
- Trigger Management

Trigger Management

- Teaches a version of metacognitive awareness
- 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?
 - Grounding, metacognitive self-talk
 - Delaying and reducing DRBs
 - Urge/emotion “surfing”
- ReGAIN

ReGAIN

- Adapted from RAIN (McDonald, Kornfield, Brach)
- Recognize you are are triggered
- Ground yourself
- Acept experience but don't act (pause the process)
- Investigate activation, link it to past
- Non-identify with source attribution errors
 - Just because I think/feel what I am thinking/feeling doesn't mean it's true

Modified emotional processing

- Titrated exposure
 - Multiple targets and associations
 - Client controls content and intensity of memory access and processing
 - Shorter exposures
 - Interspersion

Suggested readings

Briere, J. (2019). *Treating Risky and Compulsive Behavior in Trauma Survivors*. NY: Guilford.

Briere, J. (2012). Working with trauma: Mindfulness and compassion. In C.K. Germer & R.D. Siegel (Eds.), *Compassion and wisdom in psychotherapy* (pp. 265-279). New York: Guilford.

Briere, J., & Scott, C. (in press). *Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation, and treatment, 3rd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Follette, V., Briere, J., Rozelle, D., Hopper, J., & Rome, D. (Eds.) (2015). *Mindfulness-oriented interventions for trauma: Integrating contemplative practices*. NY: Guilford.