



# Working with People Who Experience Domestic Violence: Trauma Informed Response



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- Define trauma.
- Describe how experiences impact people who experience domestic violence (DV) trauma, memory, reactions and behavior.
- Identify secondary victimization of people who experience DV in the criminal justice process.
- Synthesize the outcome of a trauma informed response related to trauma and procedural justice.
- Create an Action Plan related to a trauma informed response in local area.



*Learning Objectives*

# What is Trauma?

## Trauma is a pervasive problem.

It results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.

<https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma/#:~:text=Trauma%20is%20a%20pervasive%20problem,%2For%20spiritual%20well%2Dbeing>



- A traumatic experience typically overwhelms an individual:
  - Emotionally,
  - Mentally,
  - And physically.

Information taken from Victim Reactions to Traumatic Events Handout, developed by the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, Trauma Brochure by the Klinic Community Health Centre, and Trauma-Informed Care:: Best Practices and Protocols from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network at [www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org)



- These events can cause feelings of:
  - Terror,
  - Intense fear,
  - Horror,
  - Helplessness,
  - And physical stress reactions.

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The ways in which we cope with stressful events are ineffective in the face of traumatic experiences.

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Trauma has no boundaries with regard to age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.



How someone  
responds to a  
traumatic  
experience is  
personal.

# Examples of Traumatic Events



WITNESSING  
DEATH OR  
INJURY



PHYSICAL  
ASSAULT



COMBAT



SEXUAL  
ASSAULT



ACCIDENTS



NATURAL  
DISASTER



CHILD  
SEXUAL  
ABUSE

There are three common “clusters” of the body and brain’s response to trauma:



- Hyperarousal
- Intrusion or re-experiencing events
- Constriction or avoidance reactions

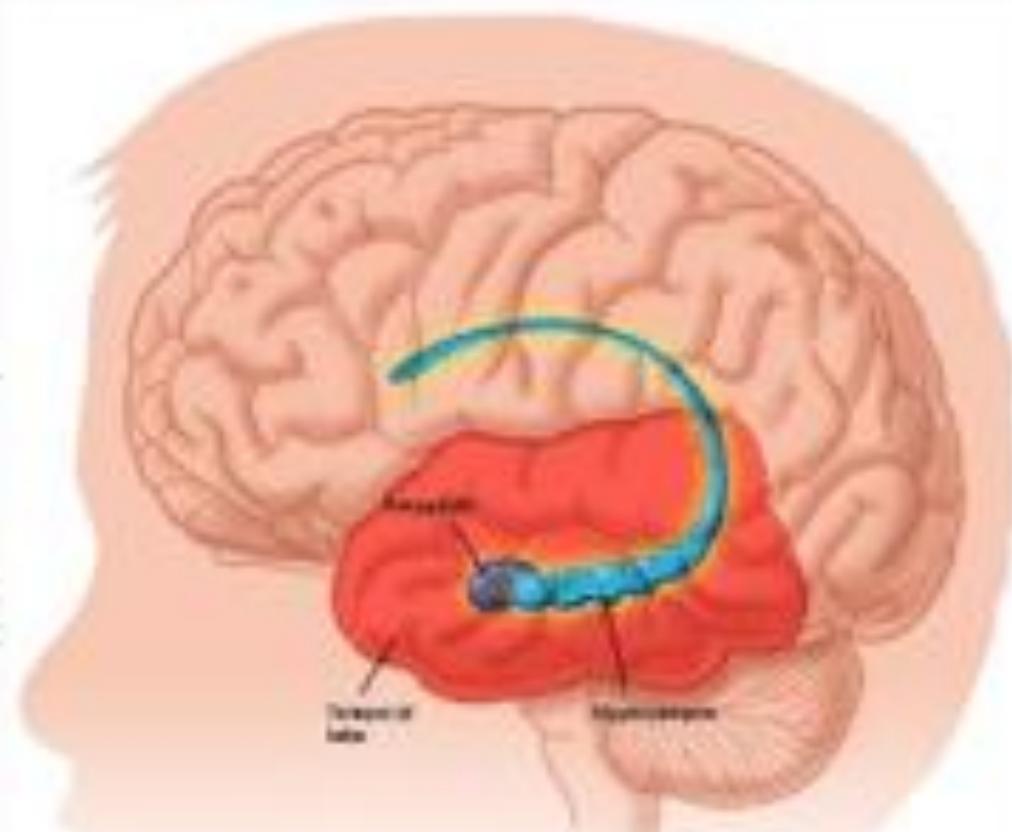
# Trauma and the Brain

**Amygdala** - The brains emotional computer and alarm system

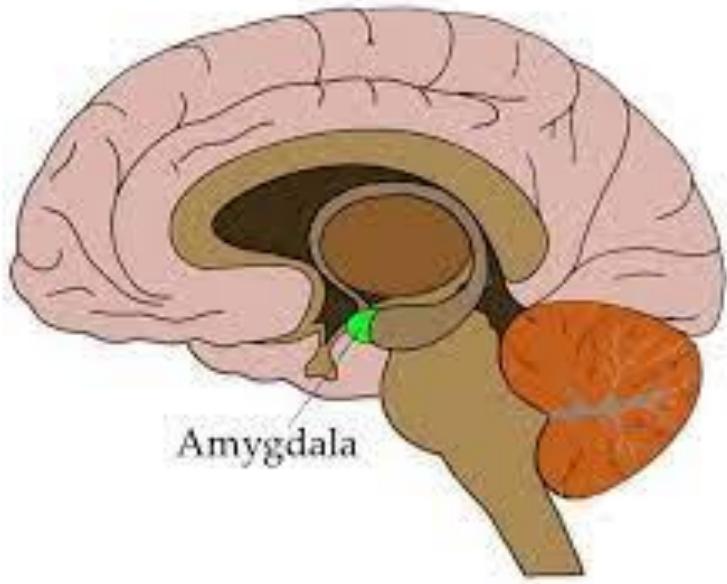
**Hippocampus** - Brains storage for our most recent conscious memories

**Thalamus** - Translates sights, sounds, smells into the language of the brain

**Prefrontal cortex**- Where information is used to make decisions about cognitive and emotional responses



# Amygdala



- Emotional response center of the brain that helps people perceive and control their emotions
  - Plays a role in emotional memories and fear response.
  - When someone experiences a traumatic event, their amygdala often becomes more active than it normally would.



# Fight



# Freeze



# Flight



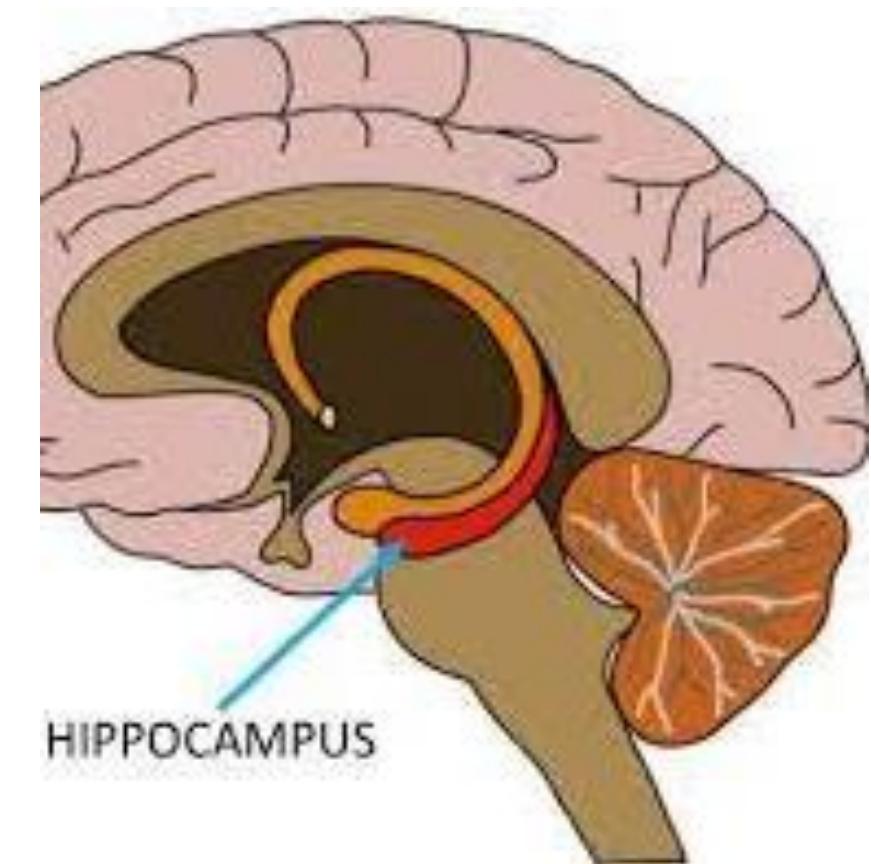
# Fawn



# Hippocampus

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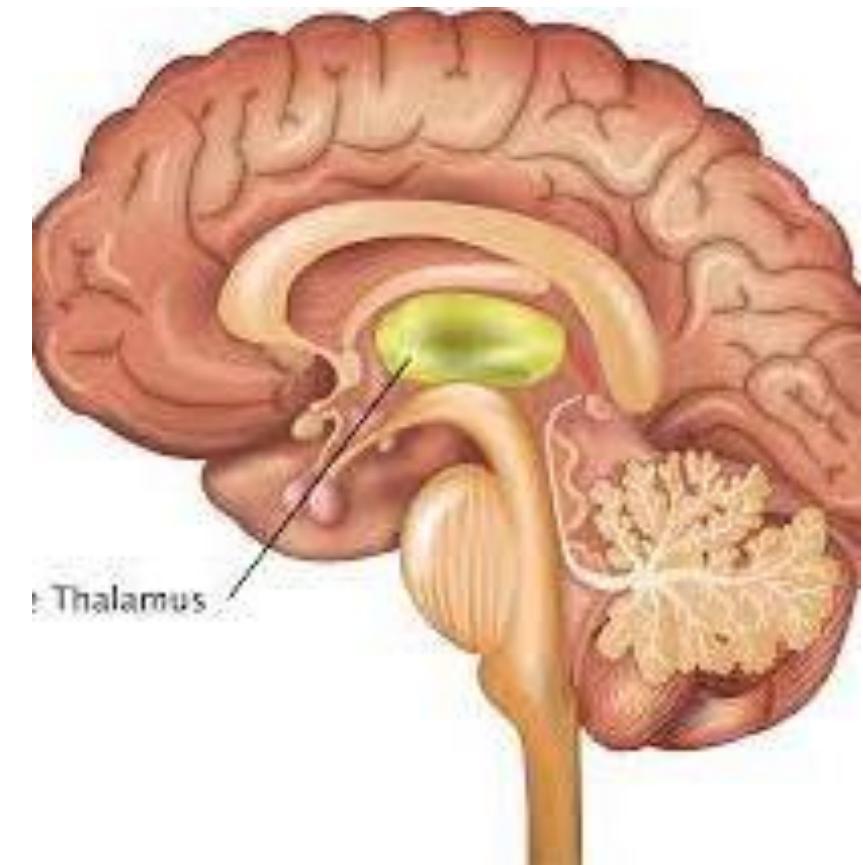
- Hippocampus is a complex brain structure embedded deep into temporal lobe. It has a major **role in learning and memory**.
- Trauma = dysfunctional emotional memory processing in that leads to symptoms like hyper-arousal or avoidance.



# Thalamus

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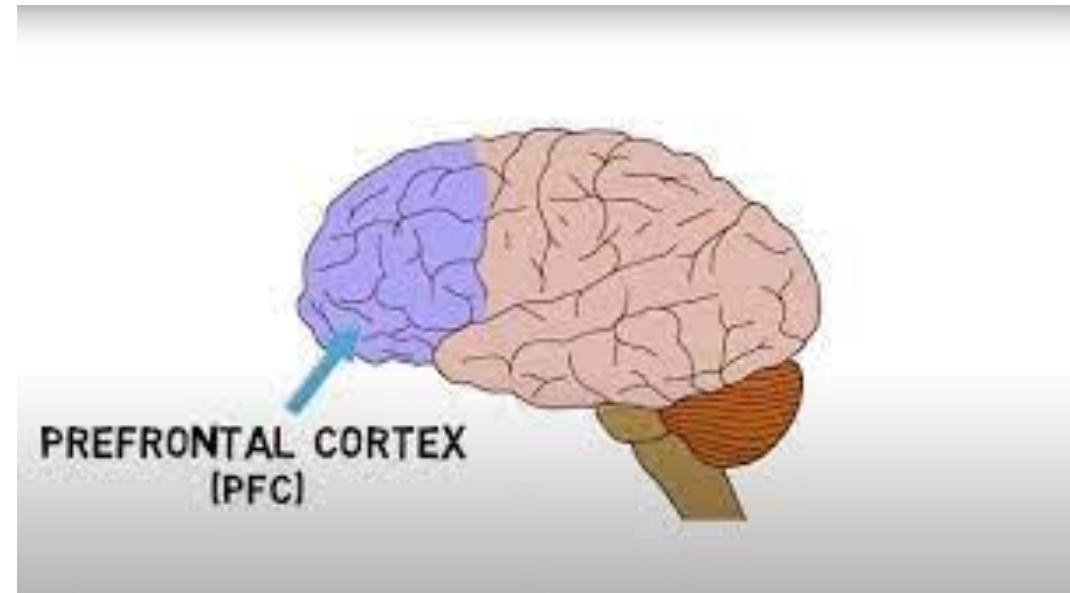
- The thalamus serves a unique role, ranging from **relaying sensory and motor signals, as well as regulation of consciousness and alertness**.
- Trauma and thalamus = less activation in the thalamus in response to script-driven imagery and suggested that this may be related to dissociation induced by trauma recall.



# Prefrontal Cortex



- Regulates negative emotions such as fear that occur when confronted with specific stimuli.
- This explains why people suffering from PTSD tend to exhibit fear, anxiety, and extreme stress responses even when faced with stimuli not connected—or only remotely connected—to their experiences from the past.



# Trauma and the Brain

<https://vimeo.com/126501517>





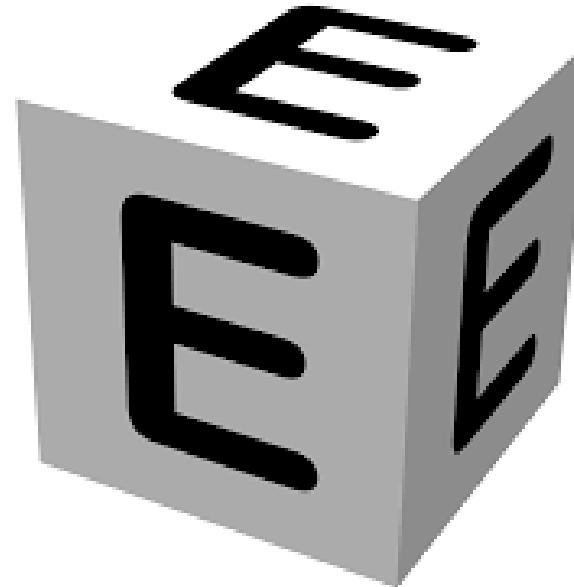
Traumatic reactions  
are **NORMAL**  
responses to  
**ABNORMAL**  
situations.

Normal reactions are sometimes unhealthy.

# The Three “E’s” of Trauma:



- Events
- Experience
- Effects



# Events

- Events and circumstances may include the actual or extreme threat of physical or psychological harm.



# Experience

- The individual's experience of these events or circumstances helps to determine whether it is a traumatic event.
- A particular event may be experienced as traumatic for one individual and not for another.



# Effects

- May occur immediately or may have delayed onset.
- Can be short or long term.
- In some situations, the individual may not recognize the connection between the traumatic events and the effects.



# Common Trauma Reactions



Emotional



Cognitive



Physical



Interpersonal



Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory.

[http://www.ncdsv.org/images/odvn\\_trauma-informedcarebestpracticesandprotocols.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/odvn_trauma-informedcarebestpracticesandprotocols.pdf)

# Secondary Victimization: The Criminal Justice Process



Occurs not as a direct result of the criminal act but through the response of institutions and individuals to the victim



Both the criminal justice and victim services systems can inadvertently re-traumatize and cause someone to:

- Feeling a lack of control
- Experiencing unexpected change
- Feeling threatened or attacked
- Feeling vulnerable or frightened
- Feeling shame



# ACTIVITY Part 1: Secondary Victimization in the Criminal Justice System



# Trauma Informed Response



A trauma-informed approach is based on the recognition that many behaviors and responses expressed by people who experience harm are directly related to traumatic experiences.





# Trauma Informed Response



- Realizing the prevalence of trauma.
- Recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce.
- Responding by putting this knowledge into practice.

Developing a trauma-informed approach requires change at multiple levels of an organization and systematic alignment with the six key principles.



Using a trauma-informed approach also helps produce better case results for law enforcement and prosecutors.



# Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview

## FETI

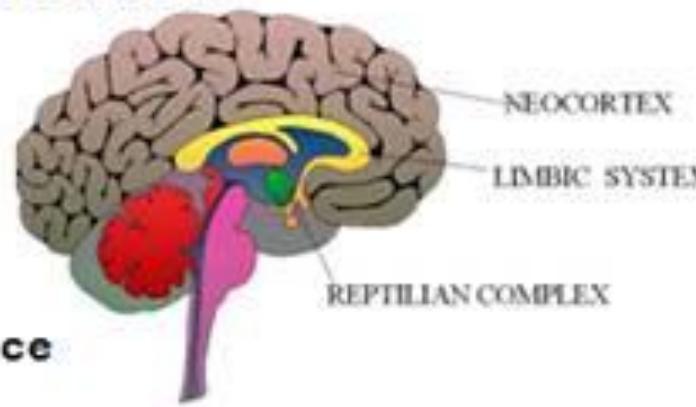


- Provides interviewers with a science-informed interviewing framework that:
  - maximizes opportunities for information collection
  - and accurately documents the participant's experience in a neutral, equitable, and fair manner.

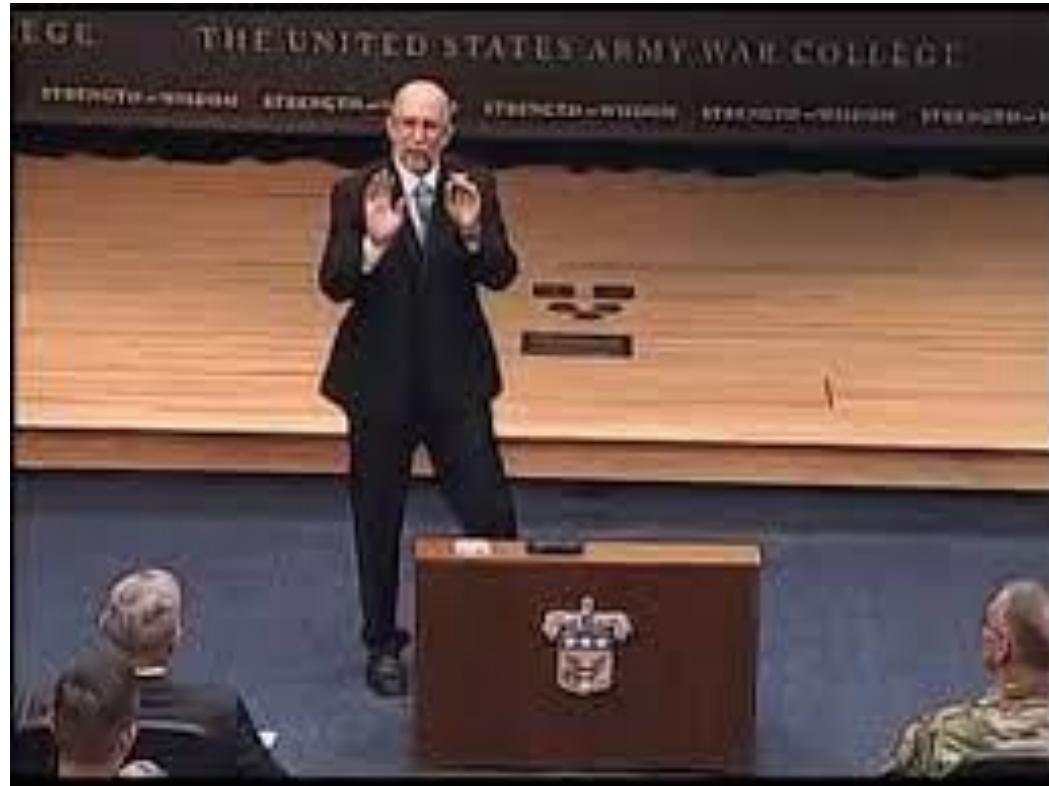
# A Paradigm Shift... Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview



- Acknowledge their trauma/pain/difficult situation
  - What are you **able** to tell me about your **experience**?
    - Tell me more about ... or that...
  - What was your thought process during this experience?
  - What were your reactions to this experience
    - Physically
    - Emotionally
  - What are you **able** to remember about...the 5 senses
  - What was the most difficult part of this experience for you?
  - Clarify other information and details...after you **facilitate** all you can about the "**experience**"



# Russell Strand



[Video: https://vimeo.com/249563924](https://vimeo.com/249563924)

“How can I create a situation in which the person experiencing harm feels safe, makes his or her own choices, and feels understood?”



# Building and Utilizing a Trauma-Informed Lens



- Review agency policies and procedures to identify and remove any that are potentially unsafe and harmful to people who experience domestic violence.
- Provide education and training of staff, including those working directly with people who experience domestic violence as well as other providers in relevant systems of care.

# Building and Utilizing a Trauma-Informed Lens



- Screen for trauma in multiple settings.
- Ensure safety and meet basic service needs.
- Provide access to trauma-specific treatment services.

# Building and Utilizing a Trauma-Informed Lens



- Understand the role that culture plays in resiliency and the importance of community resources as potentially mediating the trauma experience.
- Make peer models and supports available.
- Engage survivors in programming.
- Develop alternatives to traditional therapies.

# Action Plan



- Which of the efforts is most urgent?
- Which of the efforts seems achievable in the short-term?
- Which of the efforts will lead you closer to the goal of becoming more trauma-informed?
- Who can be involved to help make our collaborative be more involved?
- What is something I can do in the next two weeks to work toward the goal of becoming more trauma-informed?

# Questions

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# Resources

