

Supervising for Justice

*Anti-Oppressive Practices for
Supervision*

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Learning Objectives

1. Define anti-oppressive practice
2. Learn how historical and structural oppression is connected to present-day trauma
3. Identify trauma reactions in staff you supervise
4. Identify anti-oppressive strategies you can implement as supervisors
5. Develop skills to respond when your staff are demonstrating trauma reactions related to oppression

AGENDA

1. Introduction to Anti-Oppressive Practices
2. Overview of Trauma & Oppression
3. Anti-Oppressive Practices

Agreements

1. Stay engaged through discomfort
2. Speak your own truth, from the “I”
3. Recognize the importance of impact, not just intentions
4. Expect and accept non-closure

Comfort Zone vs. Learning Edge



Common Reactions to Conversations about Power & Oppression

Reflection on your personal default reactions

Courageous Conversation COMPASS



Courageous Conversations About Race, Singleton & Linton, 2005

[P]ersonal experiences are inextricably linked to and determined by social, cultural, political and economic relationships within specific geographical and historical situations.

Audre Lorde

Introduction to Anti-Oppressive Practice

Social Identities: Social group membership



What identities are salient for you in your role as a supervisor?

What identities do you think might be most salient for staff you supervise?

What power dynamics have come up for you in supervising staff?

Anti-Oppressive Practice: *a working definition*

An approach to social work that:

- ▶ acknowledges and critically reflects on positional power and social identities
- ▶ recognizes the impact of systems of oppression in people's lives
- ▶ creates opportunities for client self-determination about services and interventions they receive
- ▶ works to change oppressive practices, institutions, and systems

Anti-Oppressive Practice: Supervisors

For **supervisors** AOP can also include:

- ▶ considering how power dynamics and identity influence individual and programmatic work
- ▶ actively sharing power with staff and clients
- ▶ specifically using one's formal role and authority to change oppressive program/organizational policies and practices

Overview of Trauma & Oppression

What is Trauma?

- ▶ Trauma is a normal response to events experienced at threatening, terrifying, and/or overwhelming. Not everyone will experience the same event as traumatic
- ▶ Traumatic events exceed the person's and/or communities' coping abilities and resources
- ▶ Trauma reshapes a person's worldview and affects multiple aspects of life, including health, self-worth, behavior, relationships, and functioning

Complexities of Trauma

Types of Trauma

Singular Trauma
Complex Trauma
Intergenerational Trauma
Historical Trauma
Community Trauma
Oppression-based Trauma
Vicarious Trauma

Interpersonal Causes of Trauma

Childhood Abuse
Childhood Neglect
Verbal/Emotional Abuse
Intimate Partner Violence
Sexual Violence
Gun Violence

Structural Oppression & Trauma

Racism
Sexism
Poverty
Homophobia
Transphobia
Ableism
All other -isms

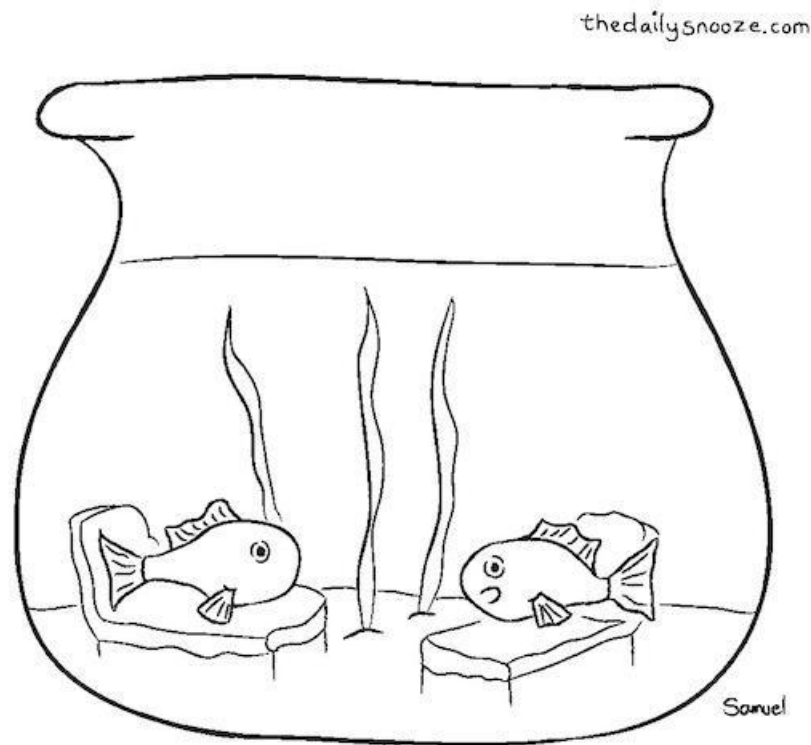
Race-based Traumatic Stress

Racial trauma may result from racial harassment, witnessing racial violence, or experiencing institutional racism.

(Bryant-Davis, & Ocampo, 2006; Comas-Díaz, 2016)

- *The trauma may result in experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, feelings of humiliation, poor concentration, or irritability.*

Vicarious Trauma



"I forget which one of us is the therapist."

Vicarious Trauma mimics the symptoms of PTSD and occurs in workers who are exposed to repeated stories of trauma.

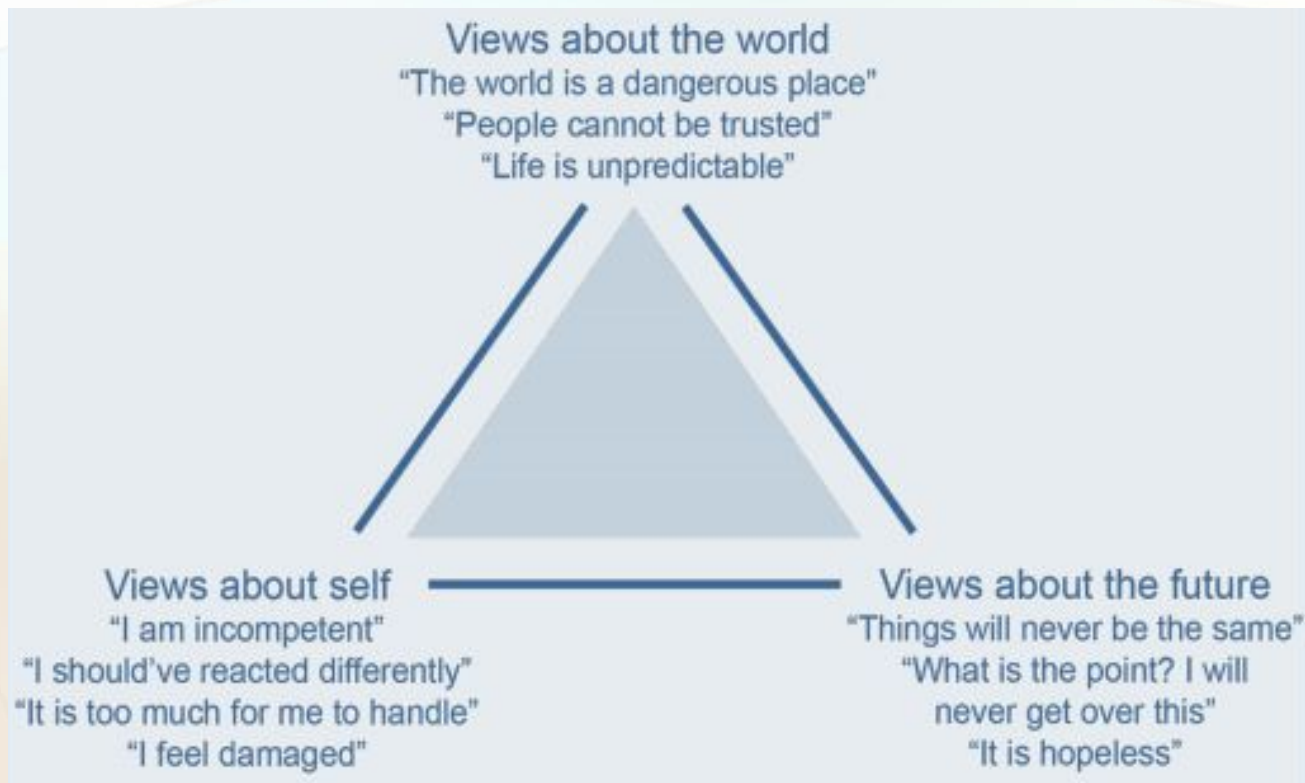
It can cause "changes in memory and perception; alterations in their sense of self-efficacy; a depletion of personal resources; and disruption in perceptions of safety, trust, and independence."

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

Cognitive Triad of Traumatic Stress



Supervisors can watch for these signs

TABLE 2 – Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress on Professional Functioning

Performance of Job Tasks	Morale	Interpersonal	Behavioural
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease in quality• Decrease in quantity• Low motivation• Avoidance of job tasks• Increase in mistakes• Setting perfectionist standards• Obsession about detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease in confidence• Loss of interest• Dissatisfaction• Negative attitude• Apathy• Demoralization• Lack of appreciation• Detachment• Feelings of incompleteness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal from colleagues• Impatience• Decrease in quality of relationship• Poor communication• Subsume own needs• Staff conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absenteeism• Exhaustion• Faulty judgement• Irritability• Tardiness• Irresponsibility• Overwork• Frequent job changes

(Yassen, 1995)



Trauma Exposure Response

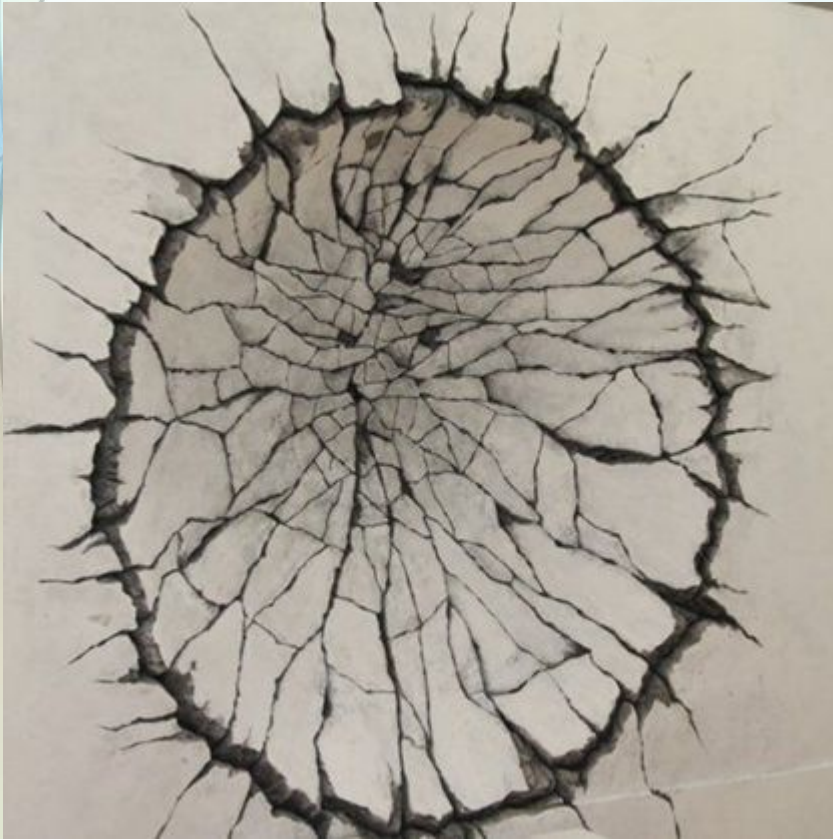
A trauma exposure response may be defined as the transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet.

Vicarious Trauma: Causes

Bell, Kulkarni, & Dalton (2003) have identified the following key factors for developing secondary trauma:

- ▶ *Experience & Education level*
- ▶ *Traumatized Caseload*
- ▶ *Lack of Community/Isolation at Work*
- ▶ *Lack of Supervision*
- ▶ *Organizational Culture—safety, workload, time off, etc.*

The Impact of Oppression



How does trauma from systems of oppression show up in your supervision work?

Anti-Oppressive Practices

Levels of Intervention



SAMHSA Guiding Principles of Trauma Informed Care

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration & mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, & choice
6. Cultural, Historical, & Identity-related issues

Supervisor Strategies: Cultural, Historical, and Identity Related Issues

Coping with Racial Trauma (Hardy, 2013)

1. Affirmation and Acknowledgement
2. Create Space for Race
3. Racial Storytelling
4. Validation
5. The Process of Naming
6. Externalize Devaluation
7. Counteract Devaluation
8. Rechanneling Rage

Supervisor Practices: Supportive

- ▶ Incorporate discussions of oppression, privilege, and identity into supervision
- ▶ Monitor staff well-being, with an eye toward current events
- ▶ Encourage individual and team level self-care
- ▶ Cultivate healthy team dynamics



Supervisor Practices: Power Dynamics

- ▶ Clear roles, structures, and decision-making authority
- ▶ Explicit expectations
- ▶ Direct communication
- ▶ Meaningful opportunities for staff input and voice



Organizational Culture

- ▶ Recognize & respond to trauma, including collective/community trauma
- ▶ Create safety practices & protocols
- ▶ Culture of celebration, support, & connection
- ▶ Provide structure for regular supervision & ongoing education
- ▶ Create space for changing oppressive systems



PUTTING IT TO WORK

What would you do?

Analysis

- 1. Think of a supervision situation in your current work where social identity issues and structural trauma may be present*
- 2. What systems or systemic issues are present?*
- 3. Who else is involved? What are their roles and identities?*

What would you do?

Practice

- 1. What anti-oppressive practices or strategies could guide your work with this situation?*
 - ▶ This may include specific aspects of the SAMHSA framework and the Ken Hardy strategies*
- 2. How would you feel?*
- 3. How would you begin the conversation?*

Taking this back

What can you share with your workplaces?

Who can support you in continuing this learning?

What are opportunities for peer support and supervision?

*Let's be gentle with ourselves
and each other and fierce
as we fight oppression.*

Dean Spade



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Citations

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