

What is trauma and why it matters?

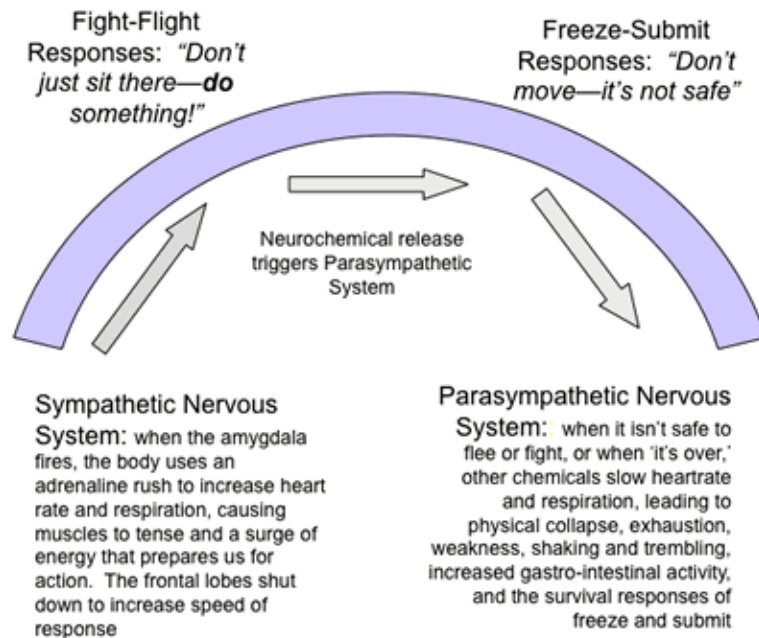
Joy von Steiger, PhD

What is trauma?

Trauma is the result of an event, series of events or sets circumstances experienced by a person that has the potential to affect them physically or emotionally; in the event of a life threatening event might affect them cognitively, physically, socially, emotionally or spiritually.

-SAMHSA, 2014

How the Nervous System Helps Us Defend Ourselves



We remember trauma less in words and more with our feelings and our bodies

[van der Kolk & Fislser, 1995]

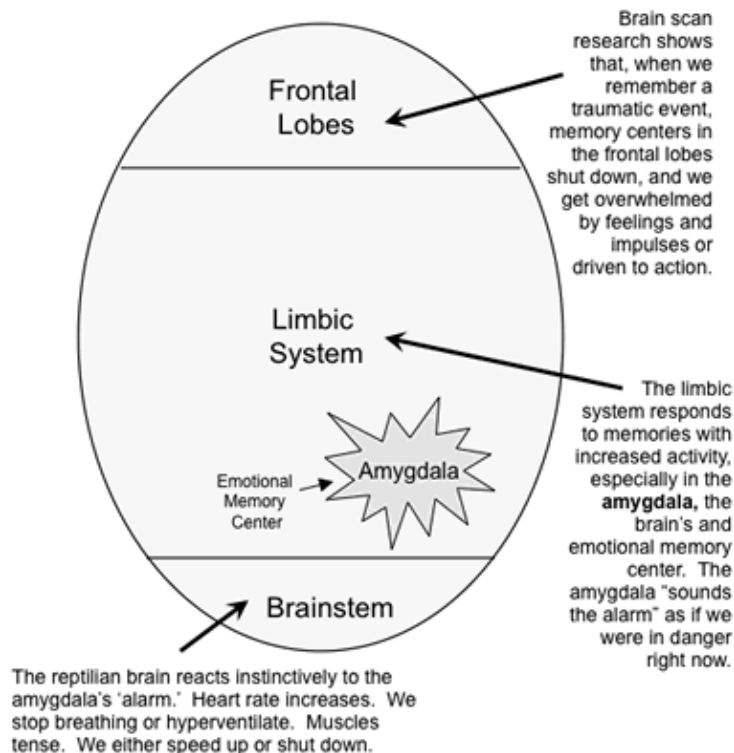
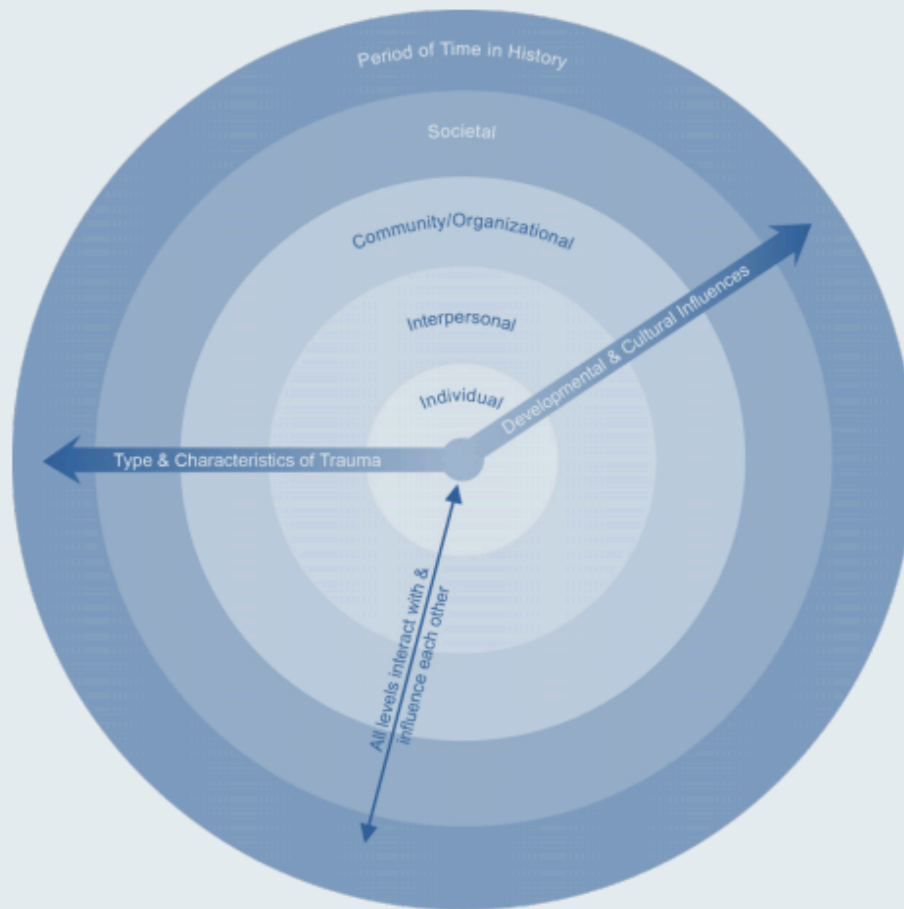


Exhibit 1.1-2: A Social-Ecological Model for Understanding Trauma and Its Effects



Social-Ecological Model: Level of Influence

Psychological First Aid

- Human compassionate non-intrusive connection
- Establish safety and reduce distress
- Provide a calming and orienting presence
- Ask people what they need
- Connect people to supports
- Support adaptive coping which is different for everyone
- Do not ask people to process the trauma
- Take care of yourself and remember that you too need support

Macro and Micro Traumatic Events

- 66-85% of college students report being exposed to a lifetime traumatic event (Read, Ouimette, White, Colder and Farrow, 2011)
- 18-24 yr old females experience highest rate of sexual assault than other age groups (Sinozich and Langton, 2014)
- Up to 50% of college students experience traumatic event in first year of school
- Students with prior trauma are more susceptible to effects of subsequent trauma

Recognizing Trauma in the classroom

- Difficulty focusing or attending
- Missing multiple classes
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Afraid of trying new things
- Anxiety about deadlines, exams or presentations
- Anger or dissociation when stressed
- Withdrawal or isolation

What is trauma informed pedagogy?

- Empower students to make choices and care for themselves
- Express unconditional positive regard from first meeting onward
- Maintain high expectations
- Make observations and ask questions rather than make assumptions
- Help students develop positive relationships
- Be trustworthy, reliable, and clear about expectations
- Have clear boundaries
- Do not expect students to talk about trauma past or present
- Maintain structure of classroom and allow students to choose when exceptions are made

The importance of self reflection and self care

- Being open to another's suffering takes courage
- Be aware of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or retraumatization
- Be aware of when your own trauma is surfacing
- Mindfulness can not only help your students but help you to stay present and calm
- Don't worry alone
- Rely on community to support one another while being cognizant of student confidentiality

Compassion Fatigue

- Difficulty talking about feelings
- Jumpiness, irritability, blaming
- Worrying you're not doing enough
- Trouble sleeping and/or nightmares
- Change in eating patterns
- Reduced satisfaction in pleasurable activities and/or work
- Feeling hopeless about work
- Intrusive thoughts of traumatic experiences or student's stories