Trauma-Informed Coaching

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Who is Row New York?

“Through the discipline of rowing and rigorous academic support, Row New York transforms the lives of New Yorkers, regardless of background or ability.”
Who is Row New York?

We offer rowing, academic support, college readiness, and social support to middle and high schoolers from all five boroughs.
Who is Row New York

Adaptive rowing for children and adults with cognitive, physical, and developmental disability.
Who is Row New York?

Rowing for Veterans with or without disability.
Trauma-Informed Coaching

Why are we doing this?

- To give coaches further understanding of trauma, and its implications in working with athletes with disabilities.
- To give coaches more tools to have successful relationships with their athletes.
Trauma-Informed Coaching

Why are we doing this?

Veterans
- 2014 Army STARRS report revealed that 25% of Army soldiers tested positive for mental disorder of some kind.

Children and Adults with Disabilities
- One in three children with intellectual or developmental disability has experienced abuse (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000).
What is Trauma?

“Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.” (APA)
Types of Trauma

There’s are more types than PTSD

- PTS(D)
- Complex or Developmental
- Intergenerational and Inherited
- Structural
- Vicarious
Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)

PTS
- Many organizations prefer PTS over PTSD because PTS is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.
- Was defined during the treatment of Vietnam veterans.
  - Previously diagnosis of addiction, personality or emotional disorders, etc., until psychotherapists realized that those were symptoms of PTSD
- Is both the psychological and physiological response.
Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)

- According to American Psychiatric Association/DSM IV
  - “Diagnosis criteria identify the trigger of PTSD as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.”
Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)

- One or multiple specific events which:
  - Directly happened to an individual
  - Was witnessed by an individual
  - Happened to a close friend of family member
  - Experienced firsthand
  - Repeated exposure to extreme details of traumatic events (not through media, pictures, television or movies unless work-related).
Complex Trauma

- Happens during times of development.
- Is the result of exposure to multiple events or ongoing circumstances, when children are dependent on caregivers.
- Result of intentional or unintentional neglect or abuse.
- Defined after the ACES Study
Complex Trauma

- ACES = Adverse Childhood Experience
- 17,337 people
- Used to assess cumulative childhood stress
  - ⅔ of study participants revealed at least one ACE
Complex Trauma

- The more ACES reported the likelihood of other negative experiences, including early death, rises.
  - Heart disease, diabetes, cancer
  - STDs, addiction, substance abuse, early sexual activity, early drug use, unintended pregnancy
  - Poor work performance, financial stress, risk of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, poor academic performance
Intergenerational and Inherited Trauma

Intergenerational Trauma

- Trauma transferred from one generation to another within the same family.
  - Transferred either through DNA or child-rearing practices.
    - 2015 study by Dr Yahuda at Mt. Sinai with Holocaust survivors and their children found the same changes in the region of a gene associated with the regulation of stress hormones, and not found in the control group.
Structural Trauma

- Trauma caused by systems of inequality and poverty
- Historical trauma
  - There’s some good news though!
Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious Trauma

- “An occupational challenge for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence.” (Office for Victims of Crime)

- Work-related

- Different from burnout
How Trauma Affects Us

Trauma triggers both a physiological and psychological response

- Both happen, but may not be recognized during or after the experience.

The “Trauma Response”

- Similar to, but different from, a stress response
- “What happens when a person’s body and mind are so used to trauma that they do not react “normally” to everyday stimuli, and your conscious brain cannot control these impulses.” (Feet On The Ground)
How Trauma Affects Us

- Effective action vs immobilization
  - The body does not act “typically”
  - May exhibit physical or emotional reactions
  - Stimulates both Sympathetic Nervous System Response/Hyperarousal and Parasympathetic Nervous System
## How Trauma Affects Us

**Physical Trauma Response**

**Porges 3 Levels of Safety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fight</td>
<td>Irritability, anger, aggression, reactive violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight</td>
<td>Pulling away, closing off, isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeze</td>
<td>Non-reactive, unemotional, numbness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRIUNE BRAIN THEORY

Neocortex: Intellectual Tasks

Limbic System: Emotions

Reptilian Brain: Self Preservation Aggression
Schema Explaining How Parasympathetic and Sympathetic Nervous Systems Regulate Functioning Organs
How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance

**HYPERAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely anxious, angry, or even out of control. Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm you, and you might want to fight or run away.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel agitated. You may feel anxious, revved up, or angry. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**
This is where things feel just right, where you are best able to cope with the punches life throws at you. You’re calm but not tired. You’re alert but not anxious.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel like you’re shutting down. You may feel a little spacy, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**HYPOAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely zoned-out and numb, both emotionally and physically. Time can go missing. It might feel like you’re completely frozen. It’s not something you choose – your body takes over.

Stress and Trauma Can Shrink Your Window of Tolerance.

This means that it may be harder to stay calm and focused. When you’re outside your window of tolerance, you may be more easily thrown off balance.

Your Work with Your Practitioner Can Help to Enlarge Your Window of Tolerance.

They can help you stay calm, focused, and alert even when something happens that would usually throw you off balance.
A Trauma Exposure Response

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.
Recognizing a Trauma Response

What does it look like?

- It’s different for different athletes

… So how do we know if a participant is experiencing a trauma response?

- By knowing our surroundings
- By knowing our athletes
Triggers

May be obvious, such as
- Loud noises
- Sudden/Unexpected movements
- Overwhelming or intense stimuli
- Sexual language or postures
- Unexpected events
- Loss of (or perceived loss of) control of body or self
- Someone else being triggered
- Anything remotely similar to or related to the original trauma experience(s)
- Teacher/Coach mirroring trauma relationship
Triggers (con’t)

- Being touched, at all
- Feelings of helplessness
- Being told what to do
- Being watched or looked at
- Too much eye contact
- Not being “seen” or understood
- Feeling the need to please
- Unsolicited hugs
- Aggressive language or postures
Triggers

Could be less obvious
- Straps and rope-like things
- Feelings of unworthiness or shame
- An injury or mark
- Excessive happiness
- Doing something “wrong”
- Survivor’s own body or trauma response
- Music
- Controlled breathing (restriction of breath)
- Weather/environment/time of day
Tools & Tips to De-Escalate

How to help a participant who may be experiencing a trauma-response

- Panic attacks, emotional outbursts, shutting down, flooding

1. Give them a safe space
2. Be flexible
3. Ask what they need
4. Offer comfort
5. Offer grounding
Language

Using Invitational Language

- “I invite you…” “If you would like to…” “When you’re ready…”
- Give your participants agency

Using Inclusive Language

- We/Us/The Team
Language

Use and Encourage Non-Violent Communication

- Avoid blame by attaching what happened, how it made you/group feel, to an unmet need.
  - “When __________ happened I felt __________ because ____________.”
- Explain how actions or words affect the group and why
Language

Avoiding triggering by

- Use anatomical language
- Avoiding aggressive tone
- Avoiding loaded words
- Language which may reenact trauma
Language

Avoiding triggering language (con’t)

- Avoid overly-enthusiastic coaching
- Manipulative phrasing
Creating a Trauma-Informed Space

View the space through your participants’ experience

- Keep the space clean, organized, and free of clutter
- Make decisions based on their needs
- Tell your participants what’s happening around them
- Let your participants explore the space
  - Give them a tour!
  - Tell them what’s around them
Why sports?

Exercise gives you endorphins. Endorphins make you happy.
Why sports?

Benefits are both Physical & Psychological

- Breathing
  - Can be automatic and controlled
  - Connection between the decision making parts of the brain and the instinctive brain
  - May stimulate parts of the brain affected by trauma
Why sports?

- Movement
  - Creates agency, self-control, self-regulation, and ability.
  - May give participants new ownership of their body.
- Breath & Movement bridge gaps between the Reptilian, Paleomammalian, and Neomammalian Complexes of the brain.
Why sports?

- Physical challenge allows participants to choose effective action
  - Challenging the perceived Window of Tolerance & widening it.
    - Combats the physiological effects and symptoms of trauma
Why sports?

Psychosocial Benefits

- Participants benefit from constructive criticism
- Gives participants a sense of purpose and belonging
- Team environment gives social support
- Excuse to socialize
- Encourages accountability
  - Gives boundaries and expectations
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Scenarios

- Attendees split into groups and brainstorm ways to deescalate a situation their participant may face at practice or competition.
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Questions, comments, discussion.
Recommended Reading

*The Deepest Well* by Nadine Burke Harris, PhD

*The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk, PhD

*Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* Laura van Dernoot Lipsky & Connie Burk, PhD

*Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past: A Practical Guide for Understanding and Working with Traumatic Memory* by Peter Levine, PhD

*After the War Zone: A Practical Guide for Returning Troops and Their Families* by Matthew J. Friedman & Laurie B. Stone
Anderade, Samara; Pantalone, Emily. (2017) *Trauma-Informed Yoga: Building Resilience, One Breath at a Time*.


Works Cited


What is Vicarious Trauma?. Office for Victims of Crime. Retrieved on August 20, 2018 from https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/what-is-vicarious-trauma
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