Trauma-Informed Coaching

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Why this topic?

To give coaches further understanding of trauma, trauma responses, and trauma-informed approaches to coaching rowing.
What is trauma?

In general, trauma can be defined as a psychological, neurological, emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing.

- When loosely applied, this trauma definition can refer to something upsetting, such as an accident, illness or injury, losing a loved one, or a divorce.
- It can also encompass the far extreme and include experiences that are severely damaging, violating, or violent.
Types of Trauma

PTS(D)
- Was defined during the treatment of Vietnam veterans.
  - Had previously been diagnosis of alcoholism, personality or emotional disorders, etc., until psychotherapists realized that those were symptoms of PTSD
- Is both the psychological and physiological response.
- According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
  - “Diagnosis criteria identify the trigger of PTSD as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.”
Types of Trauma: PTS(D)

- 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).
Types of Trauma: Developmental or Complex Trauma

- Happens during times of mental and physical development.
- Is the result of exposure to multiple events or ongoing circumstances, often indistinguishable from one another, when children are dependent on caregivers.
- May be the result of intentional or unintentional emotional or physical neglect or abuse.
- Defined after the ACES Study
  - Adversity of Childhood Exposure Scale
  - Study done by CDC
  - 17,337 people participated in this study
  - Used to assess cumulative childhood stress

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html
Types of Trauma: Complex Trauma (Cont’d)

- Defined after the ACES Study
  - Adversity of Childhood Exposure Scale
  - 17,337 people participated in this study
  - Used to assess cumulative childhood stress
    - ⅔ of study participants revealed at least one ACE
    - The more ACES reported, the more likely the participant was to have experienced a myriad of other negative experiences.
  - This type of trauma affects the way the brain itself develops.
    - Let’s ask Oprah about it.
Types of Trauma: Intergenerational 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.
Types of Trauma: Structural Trauma or Structural Violence

“Refers to the ways that our social arrangements—governments, economies, religions, etc—put individuals and populations in harm's way.”

- Trauma caused by systems of inequality and poverty
- Links the social determinants of health, the social structures that give rise to them, and the outcomes they produce.
  - Examples:
    - Food insecurity, Food deserts, food swamps, food mirages
    - Educational disparity: Lori Loughlin vs Kelly Williams-Bolar
    - Neighborhood violence & Police brutality
Reactions to Trauma

Polyvagal Theory
Social relationships help us understand experiences and determine the evolving trauma response.
Porges’ Levels of Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Arousal, agitation, alerting</td>
</tr>
<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>
What is a Trauma Response?

*What happens when your body and mind are so used to trauma that you do not react “normally” to everyday stimuli, and your conscious brain cannot control these impulses?*

Creates a “Trauma Response”

- Similar to, but different from, a stress response
  - 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/Hypoarousal
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 spacey, 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.
What is a Trauma Response?

Common responses to or symptoms of trauma:
- Sudden or unexpected movements
- Loud noises
- Music
- Controlled breathing (restriction of breath)
- Overwhelming or intense stimuli
- Unexpected events
- Loss of (or perceived loss of) control of body or self
- Feelings of helplessness
- Being told what to do
- Teacher mirroring trauma relationship
- Being watched or looked at
- Too much eye contact
- Not being “seen” or understood
What is a Trauma Response?

Common responses to or symptoms of trauma:
- Feeling the need to please
- Being touched, at all
- Sexual language or postures
- Straps and rope-like things
- Feelings of unworthiness or shame
- Aggressive language or postures
- An injury or mark
- Excessive happiness
- Doing something “wrong”
- Survivor’s own body or trauma response
- Someone else being triggered
- Anything remotely similar to or related to the original trauma experience(s)
Benefits of Rowing for Trauma-Exposed People

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 damaged by trauma

- Movement
  - Creates agency, self-control, self-regulation, and ability.
  - Repetitive motion linked with rhythm & sound are instinctively soothing
  - Breath & Movement bridge gaps between the Reptilian, Paleomammalian, and Neomammalian Complexes of the brain.
Benefits of Rowing for Trauma-Exposed People

- Gives participants a sense of purpose and belonging*
- Allows participants to choose effective action
  - Challenges the perceived Window of Tolerance & widens it
  - Gives athletes feedback for hard work
    - Short term: They can see a good puddle after an effective stroke
    - Long term: They can track and feel their increased fitness
- Combats the physiological effects and symptoms of trauma, such as learned helplessness, depression, anxiety sensitivity and exposure, posture, and fatigue
- Encourages accountability
  - Gives boundaries and expectations
  - Allows an opportunity for positive reinforcement
Truma-Informed Guidelines

Let’s review.

Resources

“A Developmental Approach to Complex PTSD: Childhood and Adult Cumulative Trauma as Predictors for Symptom Complexity”

“Applied Principles of Neurodevelopment to Clinical Work with Maltreated and Traumatized Children” Bruce D Perry
- From Working with Traumatized Youth in Child Welfare.

“How to Help Your Clients Understand Their Window of Tolerance”
Resources

“Creating Trauma-informed Sports Programming for Traumatized Youth: Core Principles for an Adjunctive Therapeutic Approach”

“Play to the Whistle: A Pilot Investigation of a Sports-Based Intervention for Traumatized Girls in Residential Treatment”

“Effects of Exercise and Physical Activity on Anxiety”

“Army STARRS”

“Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults”
Resources

“Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults”

“The Experience of Exercise: Women Survivors of Sexual Violence”
- http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/18972

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Van Der Kolk M.D., Bessel. 2014

Trauma-Informed Yoga: Building Resilience, One Breath at a Time. Anderade, Samara; Pantalone, Emily.

Podcasts:
Trauma-Informed Education. Karen Petty
Trauma-Informed Lens Podcast. Bennett, Matthew; Mower, Curt; Yager, Jerry.