

## Social Work, Trauma, and the Arts

### Theoretical Terms

- **Allostatic load**- when your brain and body become overwhelmed as a result of chronic stress, and you experience multiple health consequences
- **Coping skill development**- having the tools you need to navigate adversity, stress, and trauma
- **Creativity and destruction**- two opposite but interrelated concepts; some propose that creativity cannot exist without some form of destruction
- **Difficulty with associative absorption**- when trauma survivors experience difficulty organizing and integrating their experiences; remember that the limbic system becomes overwhelmed during trauma. As a result, individuals have difficulty organizing and integrating the things they have been through.
- **Emotional dysregulation**- sometimes people who have been through traumatic situations have difficulty managing and expressing their feelings. They may become emotionally triggered and respond by displaying internalizing or externalizing behaviors. They may also react in ways that seem out of proportion for the stressor.
- **Emotional regulation**- having the ability to express feelings in productive, expressive ways
- **Fragmentation**- fragmentation occurs naturally in the brain and is also a common response to trauma. Trauma survivors may experience an increased sense of fragmentation which can include disorganized and chaotic thoughts and feelings.
- **Integration**- integration has a different meaning based on a therapist's clinical orientation; integration can mean that trauma survivors are able to organize their experiences and experience a cohesive sense of identity; integration can also mean that the trauma survivor is able to make connections between the different parts of themselves and acknowledge how each of these different parts has helped them to survive

- **Mimesis:** intentionally creating something to symbolize feelings and experiences; mimetic acts often do not involve words; mimetic acts can be individual or communal (like rituals)
- **Neuroplasticity:** the brain's ability to change. This includes strengthening desirable patterns and extinguishing unhealthy patterns, etc. These changes can occur throughout the lifespan.
- **Posttraumatic growth:** the idea that despite the trauma that individuals experience, some people are not only able to survive but grow and thrive
- **Relational challenges:** trauma survivors experience challenges in their relationships (including their relationships with others, society, systems, environments, and themselves)
- **Reparative experiences:** trauma often occurs within the context of relationships, and healing also occurs within the context of relationships. The relationships built with trauma survivors can mitigate some of the effects of trauma and create experiences of repair
- **Resilience:** the ability of individuals and communities to bounce back from adversity
- **Safety:** trauma survivors' basic sense of safety has already been violated; part of best practices in work with trauma survivors involves helping them to establish and maintain a sense of safety. Safety includes multiple components (physical, moral, emotional, spiritual, etc.).
- **Speechless terror:** trauma survivors often experience difficulty expressing their experiences in words; trauma survivors are often literally and figuratively "scared out of their words"
- **Strengths-based perspective:** identifying the strengths, abilities, and assets that an individual brings with them to the healing process
- **Trauma processing:** exploration of the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and bodily sensations that the person endured as a result of trauma
- **Volume control:** having the ability to turn emotions up and down (instead of on or off)