

The background features a light blue to white gradient. Scattered throughout are several realistic water droplets of various sizes, some with highlights and shadows, giving a sense of depth and texture.

SEVERE TRAUMA & STRESS RECOVERY: THE SOLUTION FOCUSED APPROACH

JOHN HENDEN

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Workshop aims

The purpose of this workshop is to provide attendees with:

- A greater understanding of this important area of work
- Increased confidence in working with this group of service users
- An appreciation of the importance for service users to move through the 3 transitional stages of survival
- A range of tools and techniques for working with trauma and/or stress

Intended learning outcomes/ workshop objectives

At the end of the workshop, attendees will be able to:

- Demonstrate an increased understanding of severe trauma and/or stress
- Describe the characteristics of the 'victimhood', 'survivor hood' and 'living life to the full
- Describe the basic SBFT tools & techniques used with this group of service users

Intended learning outcomes/ workshop objectives, *continued*

- Use a variety of specialised tools and techniques for helping survivors move further towards their thriving self
- List the main points service users have made about how best workers can be helpful
- Name the pitfalls when working with severe trauma and/or stress survivors
- Highlight the most helpful and useful questions to ask survivors
- Feel more confident in their work with a wide range of service users who have experienced severe trauma and/or stress

Some fundamental principles, assumptions & beliefs of solution focused working

- The helper-helpee relationship is paramount
- Generally, people are good at constructing solutions to most of the problems of daily living
 - “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”
 - “If it works, do more of it”
- When people get stuck, it is usually because they are continuing to do what does not work.
“So, do something different.....”

Some fundamental principles, assumptions & beliefs of solution focused working, *CONTINUED*

- Change is happening all the time
- There is no one “right way” of looking at things
- One small change in a person’s life can be amplified and can lead on to other changes being made
- No “problem” happens all the time. It is usually very helpful to find out exceptions to it or when it is less of a problem
- It is important to stay solution focused and not solution forced

Exercise (in 5s)

Create a composite list of:

- Sounds
- Sights
- Smells
- Tastes
- Bodily sensations
- Fears & anxieties

(These may act as triggers for flashbacks; the content of intrusive thoughts in the future)

Formula first session task

(adapted for severe trauma survivors)

❖ *Important to slow down pace of speech and lower voice tone, before delivery*

“Between now and when we meet, I would like you to notice what you have done/are doing already to put the memory of this incident away safely/make sense of it. Can you do this for me?”

Purpose of FFST:

- Shifts the context from a problem focus to a solution orientation
- Helps the work go more smoothly
- Helps client achieve goals more quickly

Exercise (in 5s)

What we have found useful in our 1:1 work with survivors of severe trauma and stress.

In terms of naming the issues, protecting confidentiality, what you said or did that was helpful, making it safe, etc.

The 6 main areas of concern

1. Triggers
2. Flashbacks
3. Unwelcome (unwanted or intrusive) thoughts
4. 'The lows'
5. Sleep disturbance
6. Living life to the full (thriving)

Techniques for triggers

The most effective technique:

“That was then, this is now!!...”

Diaphragmatic (7/11) breathing

- Very simple, yet very powerful technique
- Easy to learn and apply
- Good for gaining control over panic attacks
- Teach it in the session and give it as homework, to practise

Techniques for flashbacks

1. Dual awareness
2. Purposely, bring on a pleasant flashback

The 3 stages of recovery:

(With full acknowledgement to Yvonne Dolan)

1. VICTIM
2. SURVIVOR
3. THRIVER (Living life to the Full)

Presuppositional language

The use of presuppositional language as a use of indirect communication was one of Milton Erickson's major innovations.

Presuppositions are ways of talking that presume something without stating it directly: they are "implicit, unconscious suggestions."

Counsellors and therapists can use presuppositions to introduce change notions and expectations during the counselling or therapy session.

Some useful examples of pre-suppositional language are as follows:

"Which problem do you want to solve first, a or b?"

"When you have got through this time of difficulty, what other changes will you make in your life?"

"Tell me about a time when the problem was less of a problem."

Presuppositional language, *continued*

- “When you have had similar difficulties in the past, what strategy/ies did you use to solve them?”
- T: “Tell me about a time when things were better.”
- C: “There have been none.”
- T: “So, you can’t remember a time right now.”
- “Who will be the first to notice when you’ve cut back on your drinking?”
- “When you are attending school on a more regular basis, what will be the main reasons for doing so?”
- “How have you coped with things being worse?”
- “When things are better again, how might you have got that to happen?”

The (most important) Thriver Stage

- Principle focus of client
- Meaning & purpose; direction in life
- Visualisation is important (eg Letter from the future)
- More freedom than at earlier stages
- Real future possibilities & dreams can be explored
- Allows more compelling presents to be experienced
- Enjoy life to the full

Handouts:

1. The letter from the future
2. How to use the letter from the future

Unwelcome (intrusive) thoughts

- Tackle the guilt trip

Survivor guilt is a common feature:

“It was all my fault...”

“If only...”

“I feel so guilty, because he died and I survived”

There are 2 strategies:

1) “It was not your fault...”

- reality check

2) “You are not wholly to blame”

- %ages exercise:

- get a realistic %age of blame

- ‘guilt shared, is more than halved’

“Park it ...and move on”

- Powerful technique: acknowledges fully, without attempting to bury in any way
- Metaphor of parked car in layby

The “STOP!” technique + replaying the DVD later

Instructions:

- a) Rubber band around wrist
- b) Demonstrate it in front of client
- c) Pick a time in late pm/early eve
- d) Continue both parts of exercise every day until instructed otherwise

Cognitive restructuring (changing the mind set)

This approach has often been described as akin to 'nibbling around the edges' of an entrenched viewpoint.

Beating the “IF ONLY...” monster on the shoulder

Exercise (pairs or threes)

Come up with a list of

8-10 ‘choice’ ones

Write, read & burn(or shred)

(With full acknowledgement to Yvonne Dolan)

Many find this technique extremely effective in dealing with unwelcome thoughts.

The Steps:

- First, write down the details of the memory, thought, or image that troubles you.
- Now, write down any feelings you have about the memory, thought or image. If another person is involved in the memory, address these feelings to the person, where appropriate. Include anything you would wish to say or wish you could say to that person.
- Now re-read what you have written, reading it aloud. *
- Once you have done so, burn (or shred) the pages.

Dealing with 'the lows'

1. The rainy day letter
2. Make contact with a nurturing friend
3. Maintain good exercise, diet, fluid intake and sleep pattern

The solution focused feelings tank

- A very visual tool
- Especially good for healthy discharge of anger
- May be used for the whole range of negative emotions

5 Positive ways to deal with anger

- Talk with co-worker or good friend
- Write down the feelings in a diary or journal; writing 'as if' letters
- Take energetic physical exercise: punch bags/cycling/fast walking/gym workouts/swimming/etc.
- Shout it out
- Paint it or draw it (best for children?)

Permission giving statements

1. “In all the years I have been doing this work, I have heard just about everything there is to hear about what can happen to people; and, what one person/people can do to another.”
2. “You may want to tell me what happened, either now or in the future. You may want to tell someone else. Also, you don’t have to tell anyone at all. All of these are okay...”

Disclosing/divulging past traumatic incidents

Exercise (pairs)

Take it in turns to tell each other about your favourite meal

- All aspects enjoyed about it
- Take 4 minutes in which to do so, before swapping over for your partner to take their turn

How to avoid retraumatisation and re-victimisation, when service user disclose

1. Show compassion and deep empathy
2. As the service user discloses:
acknowledge, validate and normalise all feelings & sensations expressed
3. Ask strength-based questions, interrupting as appropriate whilst the client is disclosing, as follows:
 - How did you cope at the time?
 - What got you through all this?
 - What most helped?
 - How did you do that?
 - How did you know how to do that?
 - Looking back on what happened, in what ways has it made you a more determined and/or stronger person?
 - Awful though it was, which aspects of surviving it have made you a better person?

4. It is important to compliment sincerely, where appropriate, both as the service user is disclosing; and most importantly at the end of the session
5. Treat the content with care, respect and in a supportive manner
6. Value and affirm throughout, both verbally and non-verbally
7. Keep your own and your service user's eyes on the treatment goals
8. Keep to the '5 o'clock rule'

Blocks to disclosing

Over 25 possible reasons!

Sleep disturbance

Over 40 techniques in the following categories:

1. Preparing for bed
2. Getting off the sleep
3. Getting back to sleep, if awakened

Degrimming

- Use of black humour
- As & when appropriate
- If in doubt, don't
- Lightens the session + makes the work more enjoyable for both client and worker

Thriving

- Living life to the Full
- Living the life you richly deserve
- Living the Authentic Life
- Living life as Full as Possible

Meaning & purpose; and direction in life

- Letter from the future
- How to use the letter from the future

Exercise (in 5s)

What equips us to do this work?

+

How do we look after ourselves?

S F Tools & Techniques

covered

Exercise (in 5s)

How can we improve our practice further, from today?

Consider:

- techniques learned
- types of questions asked
- and fellow participants' experiences

Exercise (in 4s)

What have you found most helpful?

Scaling confidence

“On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you right now in working, generally, with survivors of severe trauma?”

WALL POSTERS . . .

Depression results from either:

A. Unexpressed negative emotion;

and/or

B. Undeclared or unresolved secrets from the past

Griffin & Tyrrell (2000)

FIGHT

FLIGHT

FREEZE

FACE!

The triple twins of SF success

1. Patience & Persistence
2. Hope & Optimism
3. Curiosity & Creativity

3 X Part ending

1. Acknowledge, Validate & Compliment
2. Bridging statement/rationale for the task
3. Task/homework/something to experiment with:
 - a) Do
 - b) Think about
 - c) Notice

Time and date of next appointment

I HEAR; AND I FORGET

I SEE; AND I REMEMBER

I DO; AND I UNDERSTAND

- Confucious

Eleanor Longden – ‘The Voices in My Head’
- Ted Talks

Hearing Voices:

- a meaningful response to life events
- reconstruct the message behind the words

For second and subsequent sessions

1. **Elicit Positive Change:** “what’s better?”
2. **Reinforce the Change:** “How did you do that?”, “How did you know how to do that?”
3. **Amplify the Change:** “What else is better?”, “What else . . .?”, “Who has noticed?”, “What have they noticed?”
4. **Build on Improvement:** “What other changes might you make as a result of this happening?”, “What will be your first small step?”, “How will you know when you’ve got where you want to be?”

Supplanting Victim-Survivor-Thriver on the 1 – 10 progress scale

1

VICTIM

5

SURVIVOR

10

THRIVER

The 6 fields of severe trauma recovery

1. Triggers
2. Flashbacks
3. Intrusive thoughts
4. 'The lows'
5. Sleep disturbance
6. Thriving/living life to the full

- VICTIM'S WORLD - Small; compact
- SURVIVOR'S WORLD - Pushing at the boundaries of their comfort zone
- THRIVER'S WORLD - The sky is the limit

Remembering . . .

“ . . . only what is necessary in order to heal and feel relief; conducted in a manner that maximises the client’s sense of comfort, security and control, while retrieving and resolving memories of the abuse, neglect and/or trauma”.

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