



Ventura College Campus-Wide Retreat: Working Through and Healing Together

Presenters:

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Robert Scholz, LMFT, LPCC

- Therapist, Clinical Supervisor and Administrator for almost 25 Years
- Author, Adjunct Professor, and Community Educator
- Expert Trainer in Trauma-Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing
- Organizational Leadership Development – Executive Coaching, Change Management, Leadership Skills Training
- Threat Management and Crisis Response Consulting
- Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Volunteer

Berenice Rosillo, LMFT

- Therapist, educator and author.
- Known for work in helping survivors of crime process their trauma, including work primarily with survivors of mass shootings.
- During the Covid 19 pandemic, facilitated support groups for the Spanish-speaking community in California.
- Adjunct Professor at UCLA and Pepperdine Graduate School of Education and Psychology currently teaching classes on Trauma in Diverse Populations and Family Counseling
- Member of the Ethics committee for the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT).



Why we are here...

- To Listen.
- To offer information about trauma and how it may relate to you and your colleagues.
- To provide structure and support to process recent events.
- Offer coping strategies of how to move through this time.
- Gain insights into what was learned through this incident so that growth and positive change can occur.

Dyad Conversation – 5 Minutes

Introduction – who you are, how long you've been at the college and a favorite book or streaming/ tv show you are watching.

In your mind, what's one thing that could happen today that would make today a success?



A Framework for Understanding Faculty and Student Concerns



Stressors

- Covid 19 pandemic
- Adjusting to living in pandemic times (rearranging family routines, fearing shortages of needed household items, babysitting issues, etc...)
- The uncertainty of coming back (or not) to in-person work
- Losing family members and/or friends to Covid-19
- Social justice movement
- Other personal losses or trauma (i.e., deaths, divorce, breakups, domestic abuse, severe car accidents etc...)
- The active shooter's threat



What Is Trauma?

- Trauma is a response, not an event.
- Not all stress is trauma.
- Occurs when an experience of powerful and dangerous events **overwhelms a person's capacity to cope.**
- Big T/ Little T

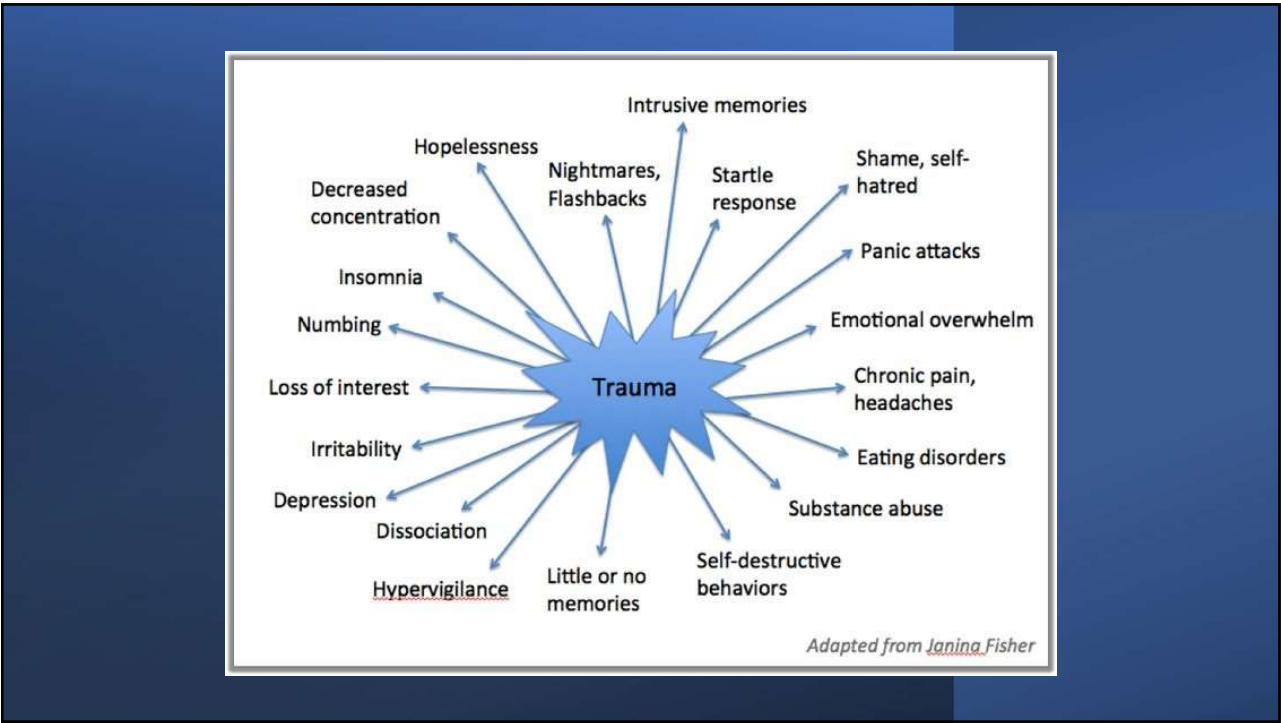
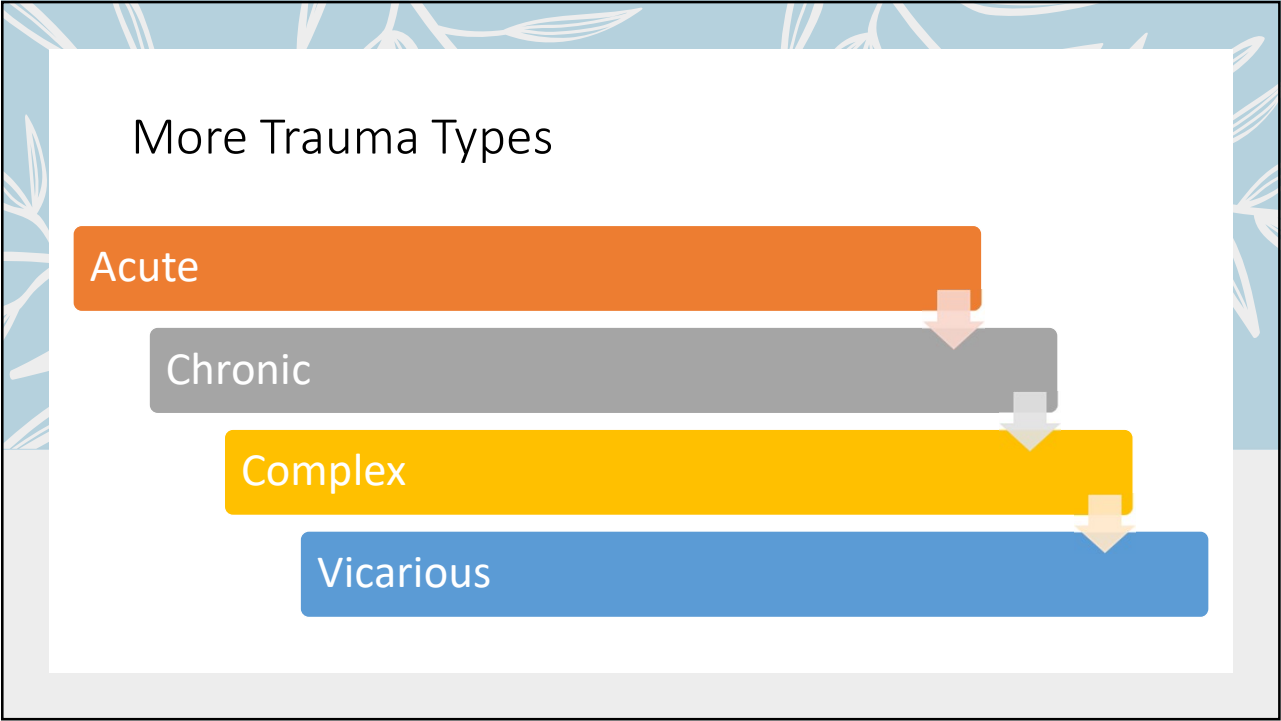
Traumas

Overt Traumas

- Childhood abuse
- Domestic violence
- Death of a loved one
- Bullying
- Victim of Crime

Covert Traumas

- Loss of feeling safe
- Unexpected transitions
- Complex family trauma
- Isolation



Mass Shootings

Increased significantly over the past 20 years

Generationally, the majority of our students have grown up in the era of mass shootings.

Prevention, Intervention and Postvention teams formed across campuses – we have a much better pulse than ever before

And yet, people feel unsafe because of the collective trauma we've experienced

With the advancement of security and response systems, we're also seeing a much larger number of false alarms – some system breakdowns and others false threats



Regardless of real or imagined threat...here's what happens.

- When a threat is perceived, our bodies are wired to respond
 - Chemicals like cortisol, adrenaline and others start increasing
- We move into in **fight-flight-freeze** depending on the circumstance, our experiences with similar events and other variables.
 - **Survival Mechanism** – works well in the face of threat, not so well in everyday life.
- The alarm bell of your brain, the amygdala uses about two-thirds of its neurons to look for bad news. It's primed to go negative.
- Once it sounds the alarm, negative events and experiences get quickly stored in memory — in contrast to positive events and experiences, which usually need to be held in awareness for a dozen or more seconds to transfer from short-term memory buffers to long-term storage.

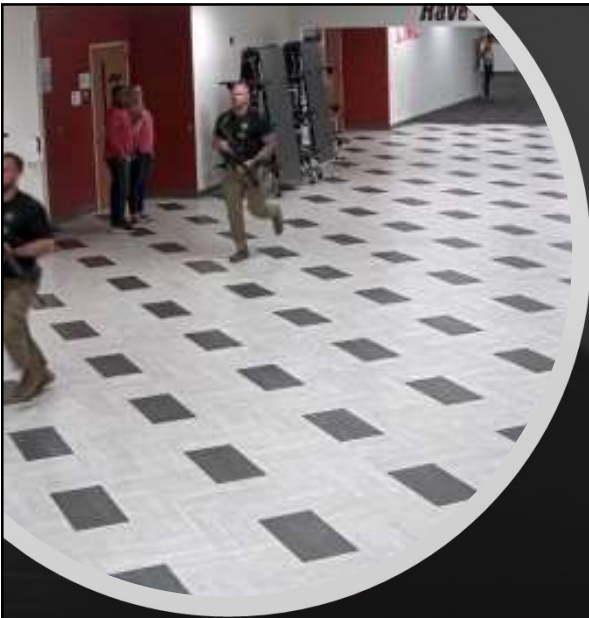
So in the aftermath of the school shooter alert...

People, including you and your colleagues, may have had trauma-related symptoms despite discovering later it was a false alarm.

The body remembers the trauma you experienced

Connects to other times in your life you experienced trauma or felt unsafe

Produces a wide range of ever-changing emotions about your relationship with your workplace.



Mass Shootings/ Mass Violence Events/ False Alarms

Some potential symptoms experienced by survivors include:

- Overwhelming anxiety, depression, emotional distress, feelings of fear and lack of safety, sleeping problems, hypervigilance, feeling numb, tense, and/or edge, survivor’s guilt, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, self-harming behaviors, use of defense mechanisms, etc.

Who is at risk for emotional distress?

- Survivors, their friends and families, first responders and recovery workers, community members, and health/ mental health professionals

Why Debrief?

Mitigate	Mitigate the impact of a traumatic incident
Assist	Assist individuals in facilitating the normal recovery process and a restoration of adaptive functions in psychologically healthy people who are distressed from a disturbing event
Identify	Identify in oneself and others those that might be struggling and could use further support.

Guidelines for Debriefing



Confidentiality



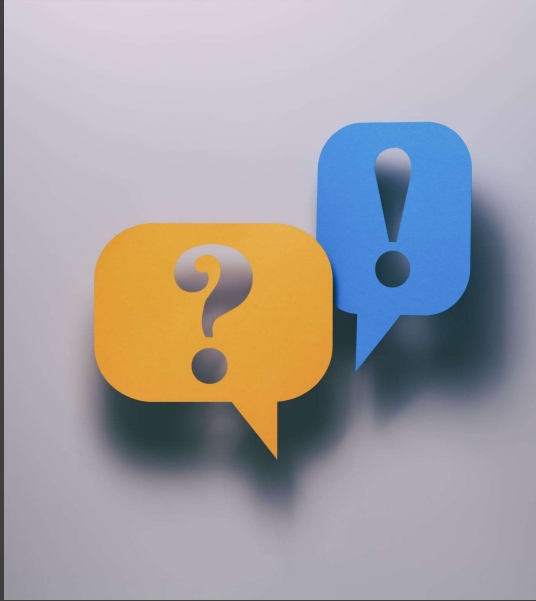
Safe and Respectful



Opportunity to process experience



Focus is not on critiquing/evaluating what happened, but rather your experience.



Debriefing Handout

- Opportunity to touch on highlights of your experiences recently or during this very challenging past 2 ½ years.
- Others in group...your only job is to listen or clarify. Not to challenge the validity of someone's statements or to give them solutions.
- Identify 1 Person willing to share some of the group findings.
- On question 5, we are wanting your feedback to assist in our ongoing work with the College. Please email responses to Robert@Roberttherapy.com



Themes of Debrief

Coping Skills

- Take a day at a time
- Allow yourself to feel (without judgement) your feelings – they often change rapidly
- Like a physical injury, most start to see some resolution of symptoms within a few weeks, but sometimes it takes longer.
 - If interfering with your functioning, well-being, safety, seek help immediately from qualified medical and/or mental health professionals.
- Seek support from friends and colleagues.
- Use situation to advocate for your needs and make suggestions to leadership.

Posttraumatic Growth

- A theory that explains a specific type of transformation that occurs in an individual that experienced trauma.
- It holds that people who endure psychological struggle following adversity, can often experience inner growth afterward.
- It includes new levels of psychological resilience, additional survival skills, greater self-knowledge and acceptance, greater appreciation for being alive, increased empathy, and a more broad and complex view of life.





Posttraumatic Growth

During Posttraumatic Growth , individuals develop new understanding of themselves, the world they live in, how to relate to other people, the kind of future they might have, and a better understanding of how to live life.



Ways to Measure Posttraumatic Growth

There are specific assessments. One of them is the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun. It looks for positive responses in five areas:

- Appreciation of life
- Relationships with others
- New possibilities in life
- Personal strength
- Spiritual change

• [Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory & Scale](https://positivepsychology.com/post-traumatic-growth/le/positivepsychology.com)<https://positivepsychology.com/post-traumatic-growth/le/positivepsychology.com>

Balance and Perspective- Taking

IN THIS LIFE
WE ARE ALL JUST WALKING
UP THE MOUNTAIN AND
WE CAN SING AS WE CLIMB
OR WE CAN COMPLAIN
ABOUT OUR SORE FEET
WHICHEVER WE CHOOSE
WE STILL GOTTA DO THE HIKE

I DECIDED
A LONG TIME AGO
SINGING MADE A LOT
MORE SENSE

Final Thoughts

- Cumulative stress/ traumas are real
- We're/ you're not alone
- Be aware of your coping style
- Be part of the change
- Look for opportunities to grow
- Seek support

Resources for Support

EAP/ Insurance
Mental Health
Services

988 – Mental
Health Crisis
Line

For emergencies
on campus, dial
911

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Feel free to reach out!