

Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making in the Post COVID-19 World

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Painted rocks sit outside Sarah McSweeney's group home in Oregon City, Ore., on Nov. 24, 2020. McSweeney's housemates painted a rock to read "The World Just Lost Some Sparkle" in pink and purple after McSweeney's death. Celeste Noche for NPR



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What to Expect

- Consider the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted individuals, and communities
- Explore the relationship between exposure to trauma and stress, and changes in decision-making
- Review ethical principles, and principles of trauma-informed practice
- Practice the application of the provided trauma-informed ethical decision-making model with the case of “Marinna”





Impact of COVID-19

- 9.7% of women, and 5.2% of men develop PTSD over the course of their lifetime (National Comorbidity Study Replication, 2005)
- Prevalence of PTSD has increased significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Panel surveys administered in the United States in June of 2020 (n=5,412) determined that **26.3% of respondents reported symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress**, and **13.3% indicated that they had increased their use of substances to cope with stressors associated with the COVID-19 crisis** (Czeisler et al., 2020)



Impact of COVID-19

- Unique stressors associated with the ongoing health crisis (Tucker & Czaplak, 2021):
 - Social and physical isolation
 - Grief and loss due to loss of work and economic resources, and cherished habits and routines
 - Families with children have experienced additional stress associated with supporting youth who are engaging in learning and school activities remotely (Bansal et al., 2020)

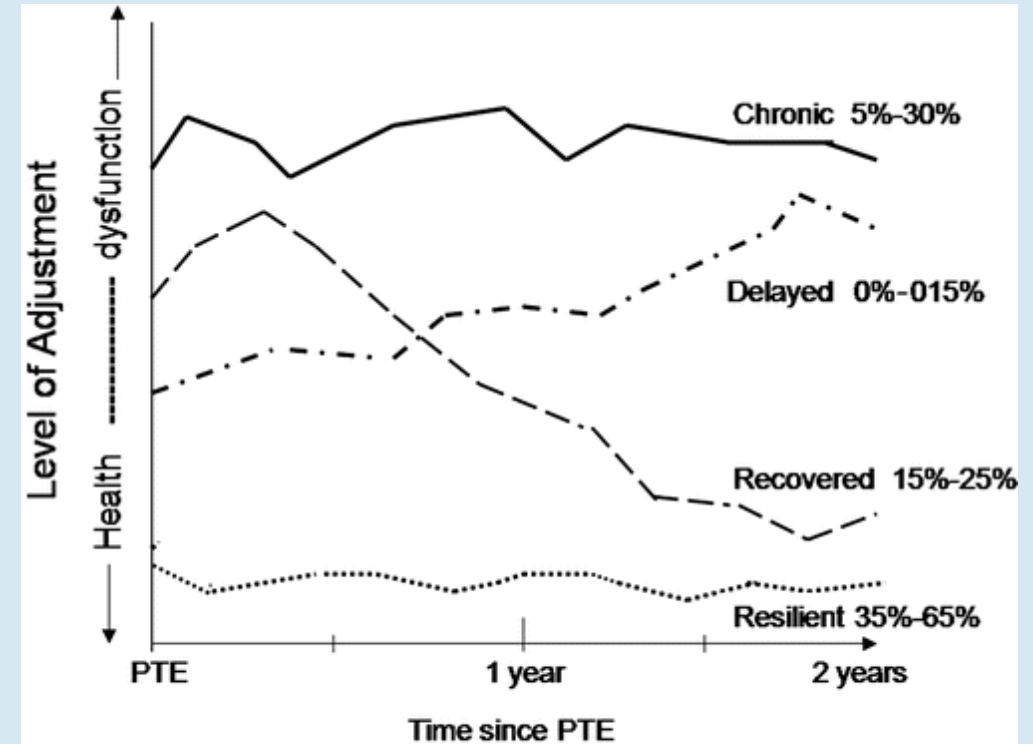
An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide, featuring vibrant blue and orange wavy, liquid-like patterns that resemble ripples or a stylized flame. The colors transition from deep blue at the top to bright orange at the bottom, with white highlights that give it a three-dimensional, shimmering appearance.


Impact of COVID-19

- Impact on persons from marginalized communities:
 - Many persons with intellectual disabilities have lost access to caregivers and in-home care (Constantino et al., 2020)
 - Persons with different verbal abilities may find the transition to telehealth challenging (Constantino et al., 2020)
 - About 30% of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States have occurred among Black people, despite the fact that Blacks comprise just 13% of the national population (Chicago Urban League, 2020)

The Impact of Trauma & Stress

- Responses to trauma and stress are diverse!
 - 35-65% exhibit **resilience** post event
 - 15-25% experience **recovery** post event
 - 5-30% experience **chronic distress** post event



 Bonanno GA, et al. 2011.
Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol. 7:511-35

(Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno et al., 2007)

The Impact of Trauma & Stress



- Exposure to trauma impacts...
 - Cognitive control
 - Emotional regulation
 - Ability to imagine future events
 - Creates unwanted memories that can be triggered or activated involuntarily when exposed to trauma cues
 - Processing of negative emotions, and ability to minimize fear

→ *How might these factors impact the individual's decision-making process?*

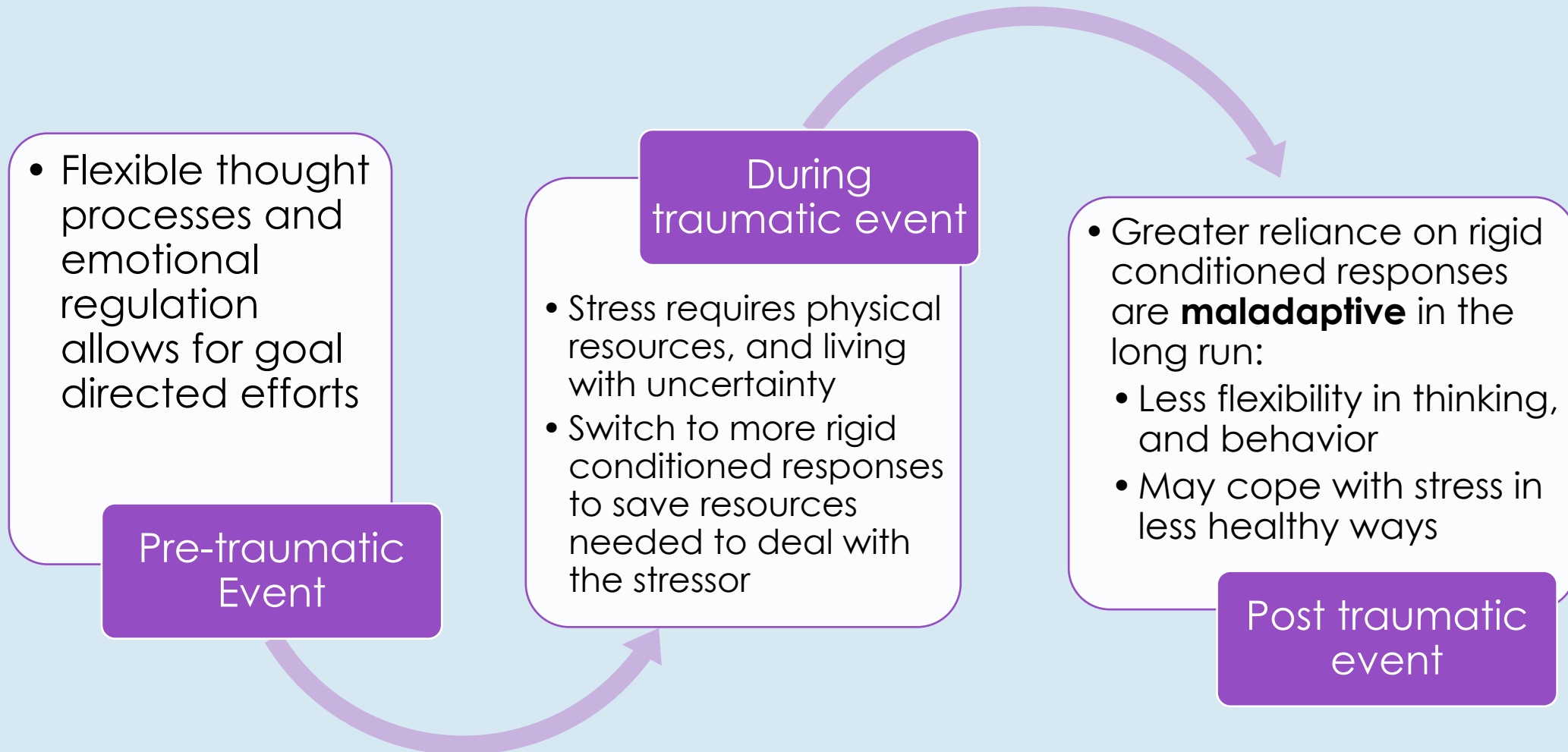


The Impact of Trauma & Stress

- Changes occur in the mind and body in response to trauma and high-stress experiences
- These changes can have long term impact on decision-making, with survivors being more likely to respond in rigid ways (e.g. “if this____, then _____”)

(Ousdal et al., 2018)

The Impact of Trauma & Stress



Where do ethics come in?



Human service professionals have an obligation to honor the experience of the persons they serve – to meet them where they are in their healing process



When working with survivors...

Ethical principles help guide our decision-making process

Personal values – one's beliefs about right and wrong – may also be considered

The Universality of Ethical Principles

→ How do these principles overlap with your professional values?

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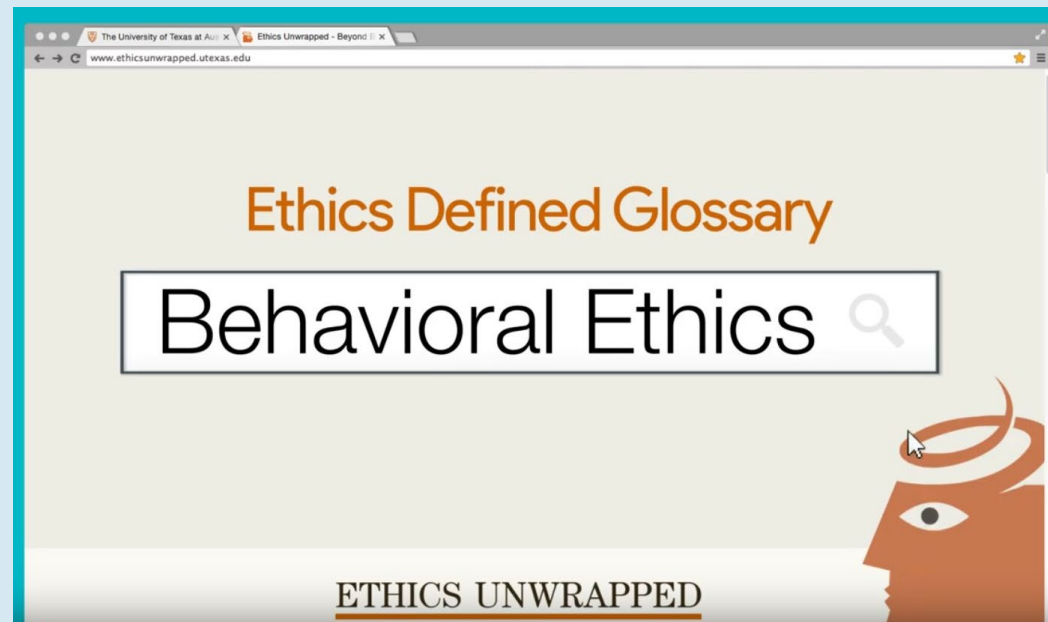
Autonomy
Nonmaleficence
Beneficence
Justice
Fidelity
Veracity

Integrity
Trust
Accountability
Transparency
Fairness
Respect
Rule of Law
Viability

2014
ACA
Code of Ethics

Behavioral Ethics: The Influence of Experience on Decision-making

- **Behavioral Ethics:** Behavioral ethics is the study of why people make the ethical and unethical decisions that they do. Its teachings arise from research in fields such as behavioral psychology, cognitive science, and evolutionary biology.



Trauma-informed Ethical Practice

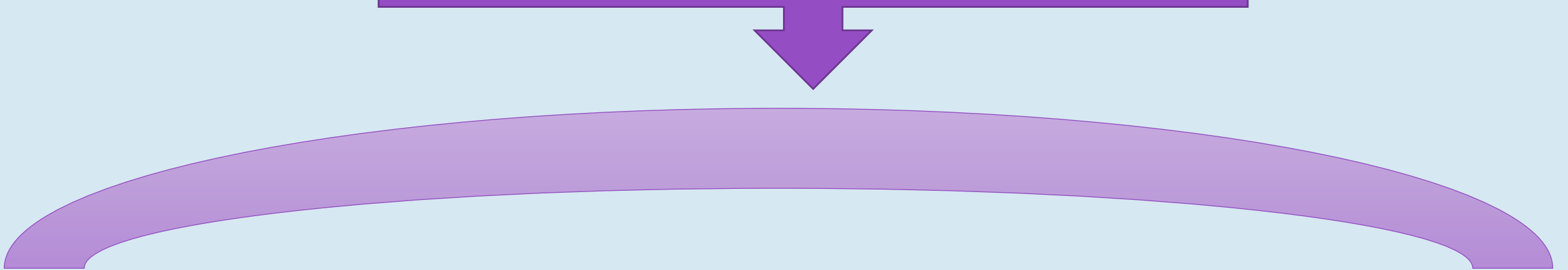
We consider the ways in which trauma and stress may impact a person's experience:

- Physiological and Neurobiological Changes
- Attachment and Developmental Considerations
- Intergenerational and Historical Trauma
- Minority Stress
- Cognitive Schema
- Protective Behaviors
- Self-Concept
- Family and Community
- Professional's Health and Wellbeing



Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making

- Consider role of ethical principles
- Explore role of principles of trauma-informed practice



1.
Recognize
a problem

2.
Define
the
problem

3.
Develop
solutions

4.
Choose a
solution

5.
Review
the
process

6.
Implement
the solution
and
evaluate
the result

7.
Continued
reflection

Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making Case Application

Instructions:

- Review the Case of “Marinna”
- You are the counselor in this scenario, and are considering your next steps



Trauma-informed Ethical Decision- making Case Application

1) Consider steps 1-3 of the decision-making model.

- Which of the principles of trauma-informed ethical practice (provided below) seem most important to consider?

Herlihy and Corey's (2014) Ethical Decision-making Model

1. Recognize a problem

2. Define the problem (collaboration with the client/stakeholder is essential at this stage)

3. Develop solutions (with client/stakeholder)

4. Choose a solution

5. Review the process

6. Implement the solution and evaluate the result (with client/stakeholder)

7. Continued reflection

Principles of Trauma-informed Ethical Practice

- Physiological and Neurobiological Changes
- Attachment and Developmental Considerations
- Intergenerational and Historical Trauma
- Minority Stress
- Cognitive Schema
- Protective Behaviors
- Self-Concept
- Family and Community
- Provider Health and Wellbeing



Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making Case Application

2) Which most significantly influences your decision-making?

- Professional ethics (e.g. ethical principles, such as autonomy, beneficence)
- Personal values

Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making

Case Application

- 3) Considering the ethical principles discussed, which principles are most applicable to this scenario?

fairness
nonmaleficence
fidelity rules of law integrity
autonomy veracity
transparency trust
justice beneficence
accountability respect

Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making Case Application

4) With all of these factors in mind, what is your chosen course of action?



Citation Information

- To cite these slides, or the handout:
 - Stark, C. & Fox, E. (2021, April 5). *Trauma-informed Ethical Decision-making in the Post COVID-19 World* [Roundtable presentation]. Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative 2020-2021 Ethics Roundtable Series, Colorado Springs, CO, United States.

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