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

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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 & Czapla, 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)
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, 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?

(Yao & Hsieh, 2019)
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

Pre-traumatic Event

- Flexible thought processes and emotional regulation allows for goal directed efforts

During traumatic event

- Stress requires physical resources, and living with uncertainty
- Switch to more rigid conditioned responses to save resources needed to deal with the stressor

Post traumatic event

- Greater reliance on rigid conditioned responses are maladaptive in the long run:
  - Less flexibility in thinking, and behavior
  - May cope with stress in less healthy ways

(Adapted from Ousdal et al., 2018, p. 332)
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?

2014 ACA Code of Ethics

Integrity
Trust
Accountability
Transparency
Fairness
Respect
Rule of Law
Viability

Autonomy
Nonmaleficence
Beneficence
Justice
Fidelity
Veracity

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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.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=ivihrQAQui0&feature=emb_logo
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**

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herlihy and Corey’s (2014) Ethical Decision-making Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recognize a problem</td>
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<td>2. Define the problem (collaboration with the client/stakeholder is essential at this stage)</td>
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<td>3. Develop solutions (with client/stakeholder)</td>
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<td>4. Choose a solution</td>
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<td>5. Review the process</td>
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<td>6. Implement the solution and evaluate the result (with client/stakeholder)</td>
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<td>7. Continued reflection</td>
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<th>Principles of Trauma-informed Ethical Practice</th>
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2) Which most significantly influences your decision-making?
   • Professional ethics (e.g. ethical principles, such as autonomy, beneficence)
   • Personal values
3) Considering the ethical principles discussed, which principles are most applicable to this scenario?
4) With all of these factors in mind, what is your chosen course of action?
To cite these slides, or the handout:

References


References

