



Refugee Services
National Partnership
for Community Training

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

Trauma, Spirituality & Faith

An Overview of the Interplay as
Survivors Risk Connection and Recovery



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Trauma: Defined by Characteristics Rather than Event



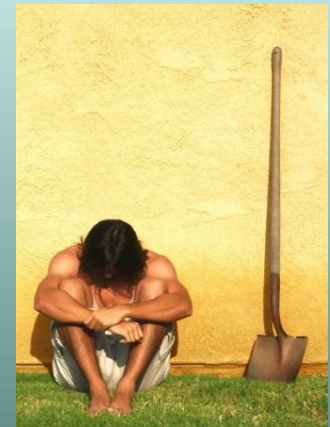
**Unable to make
sense of the
experience**

**Unable to
stay present**



**Unable to
integrate
feelings**

**Unable to
understand
what is
happening**



The Breadth of Experiences



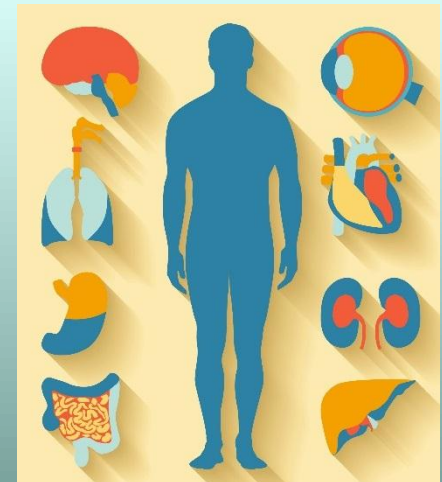
Trauma: Outcome



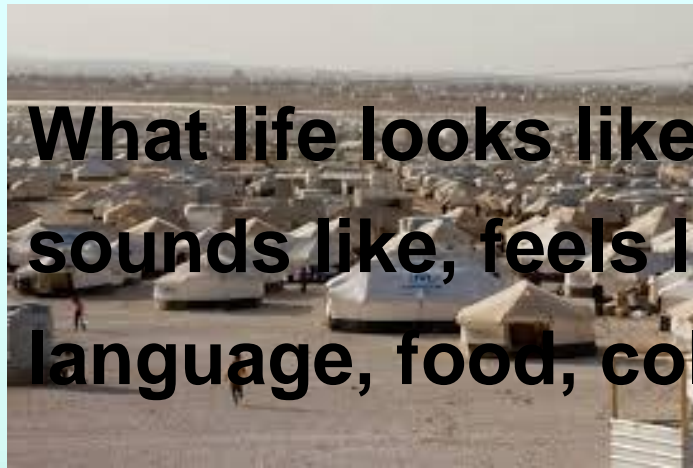
Perceived threat to sanity, life, bodily integrity

Changes in:

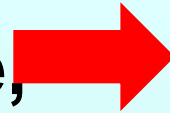
- **Body and brain**
- **Judgment**
- **Frame of reference**
- **Memory**
- **Beliefs**
- **Feelings skills (self-capacities)**



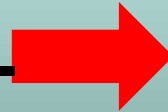
Compounding Factors



**What life looks like,
sounds like, feels like,
language, food, colors**



**Soil, activities, access
to resources, beliefs,
culture, clothes, com-
munity**



Extreme Coping Mechanisms

- All behavior has meaning in context
- Person's best effort at coping with what is overwhelming: to keep themselves safe, preserve choice, make meaning
- Often considered a “symptom” of mental disorder when context is not considered
- “How does this behavior help?”



Shifts in Focus when Receiving Care



To Reduce Crises, Strengthen Self-Capacities



Self-capacity #1:

Positive Inner Connection to Others

Recipes

Books

Photos

Ring-tones

Songs

**Chosen
Tattoos**

Places

Pets



Holidays

Scents

Dances

Scars

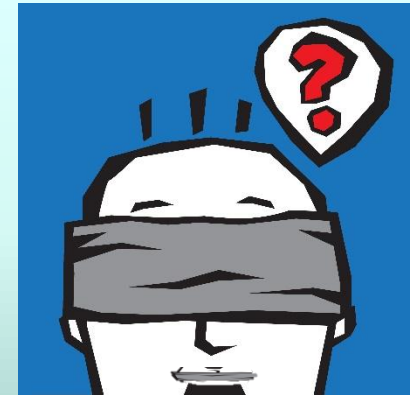
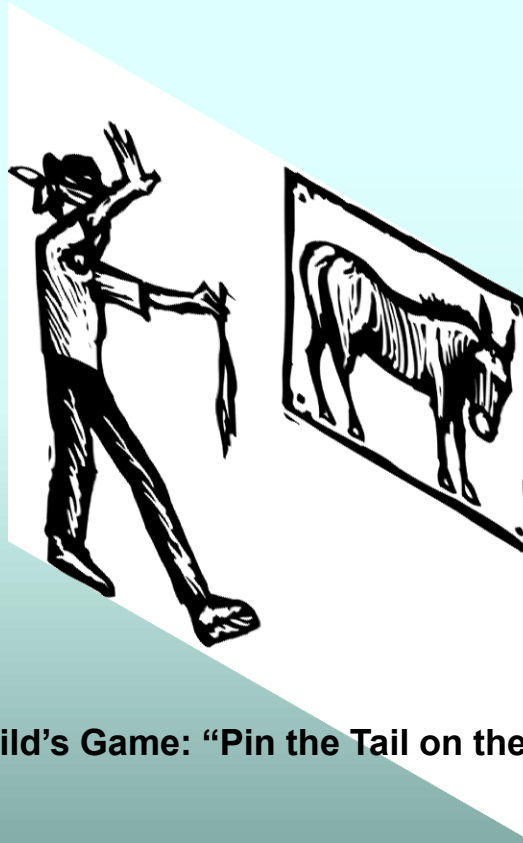
Knick-knacks or

Tchotchkes

Clothing

Jewelry

Self-capacity #2: Managing Strong Feelings



Child's Game: "Pin the Tail on the Donkey"

Self-capacity #3: Feeling Worthy of Life



RICH Relationships: Where Trauma Heals



Challenges of a Mental Health Paradigm



- **Everyday language**
- **Increased connection**
- **Feeling worthier**
- **Identity: neighbor, friend, worker, member, advocate, volunteer**

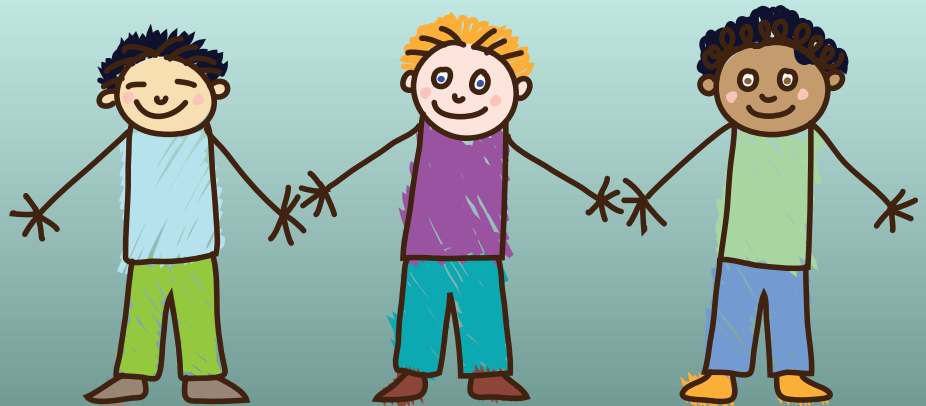


- **Psychological language**
- **Risk of stigma, isolation**
- **Self as sick**
- **Identity: victim, survivor, patient, consumer, peer, client, diagnosis**

Risking Connection®

- Trauma usually occurs in **relationship** (that is, other people are involved)
- **Healing and recovery require relationships**
- **Faith communities are in the relationship business**
- **Members of Faith communities have histories of trauma**

Relationship after trauma is difficult to risk, develop, sustain

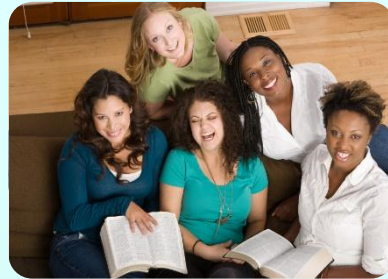
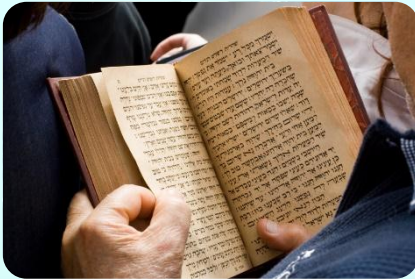


Spirituality and Faith Communities

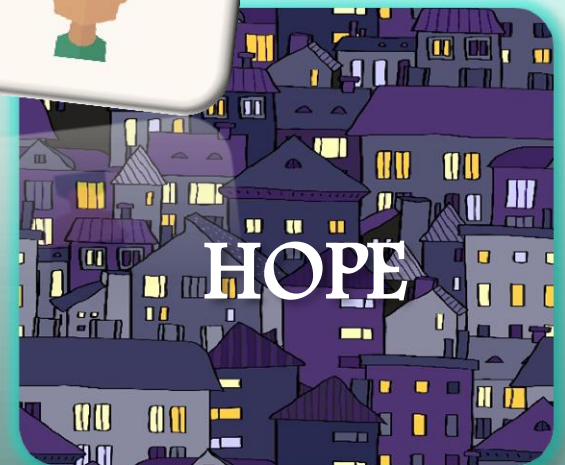
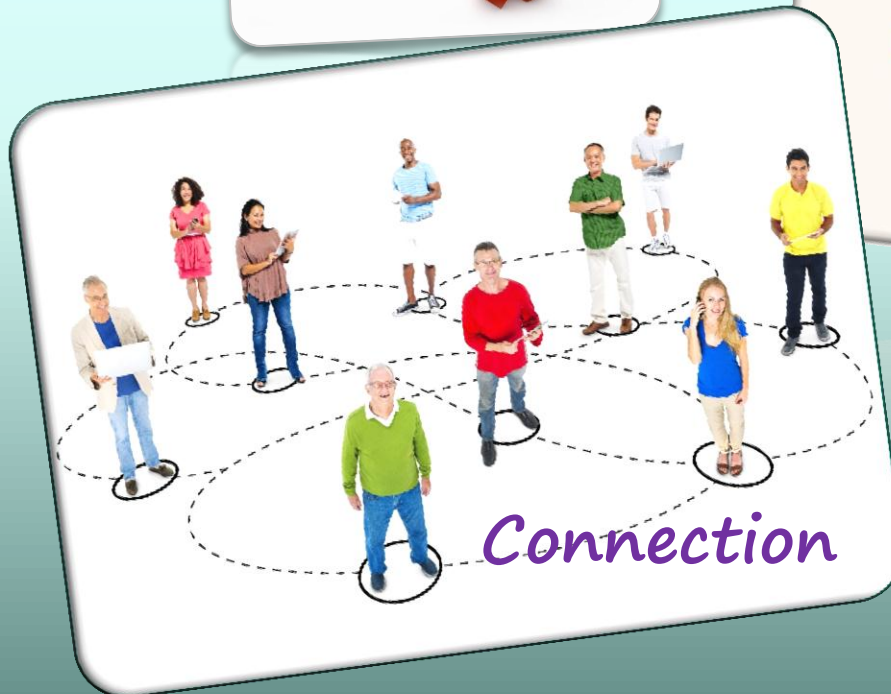
- Offer meaning beyond self
- Place of meaning-making
- Place for singing, chanting, meditation, dancing, and sometimes drumming
- Many people who may be supportive, helpful
- Extend services



The Role of Ritual: Comfort, Connection, Soothing, Deepening, Joining



Faith Communities: Model



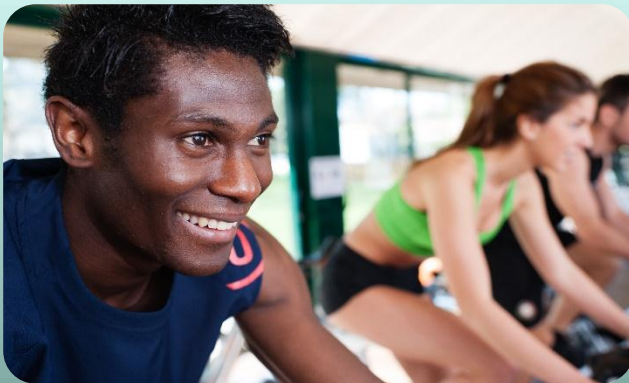
Self-Capacity #1: Faith Communities & Positive Inner Connection to Others

Worship
Symbols
Songs
Small group gatherings
Prayer beads
New stories

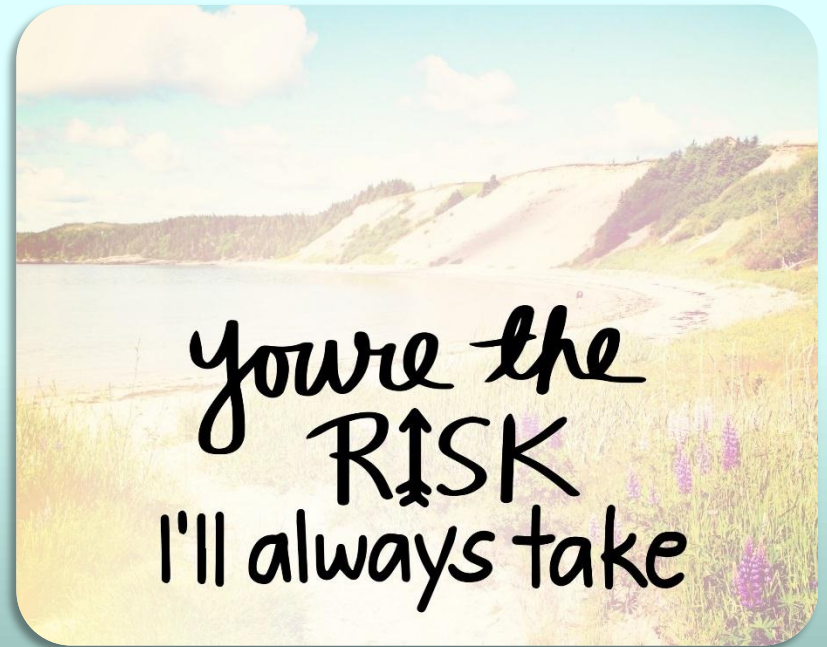


Colors
Texts
Calendar
Friendships
New Memories
Gatherings

Self-Capacity #2: Faith Communities & Managing Strong Feelings



Self-Capacity #3: Faith Communities & Feeling Worthy of Life



Yoga--and Why It's Important

- Rewires the brain
- Regulates the breath
- Restores awareness
- Places the person in control
- Connects person to their body in a controlled manner
- Offered (sometimes) by faith communities



Challenges in Faith Communities

- Dogma
- Tendency to use stigmatizing language
- Risks of shame-based organization
- Distortions about consequences of trauma, origins of refugee status
- Unspoken need to keep people in need
- Histories of trauma in members, leaders



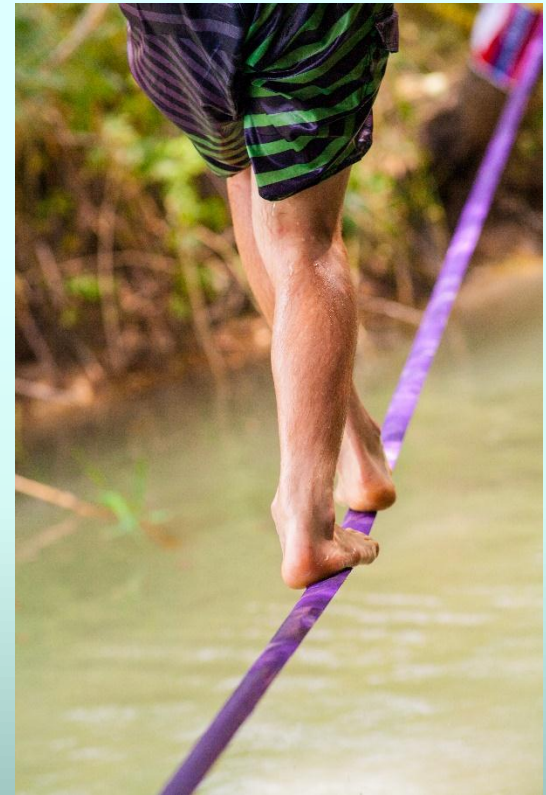
Universal Need: Managing Vicarious Trauma

- VT is result of exposure, compounds personal history
- Results in same impact as direct experience
- Requires management to be able to continue the work well
- Service providers / faith leaders are vulnerable



Walking the Talk..

- Awareness
- Balance
- Connection
- Increase your self-capacities
- Foster RICH[®] relationships
- Make meaning in your life
- Foster faith for yourself



Resources

- American Association of Pastoral Counselors, www.aapc.org
- International Society for the Study of Traumatic Stress Studies, www.istss.org
- Bessel van der Kolk / NPR interview, <http://www.onbeing.org/program/restoring-the-body-bessel-van-der-kolk-on-yoga-emdr-and-treating-trauma/5801#.VGAfw-ktCGA>
<http://www.nicabm.com/programs/>
- Joan Borysenko, <http://www.joanborysenko.com/articles-and-news/>
- Posttraumatic Growth in Former Vietnam Prisoners of War
<http://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/psyc.2008.71.4.359>
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