



1 Ensuring immediate safety

Without some stability and safety, the ability to focus on anything but immediate survival is limited.

Address urgent needs first, considering what the person sees as most pressing.

Help them establish a daily routine that can make their environment feel more consistent and predictable.

Be consistent and adopt a calm approach. Involve the person. If they feel unsafe, a common coping strategy is to try to take control. This can turn into a 'debilitating power struggle'

Wherever possible avoid changes at home, with care arrangements or school. If change is necessary, recognise that traumatised young people may be less resilient.

Uncertainty is threatening.

Build trust

2

Work with the person, not on them. Find out what is important to them, find out what their goals are, and consider this alongside the professional assessment of their needs.

Think about the reasons behind behaviour and what it might be communicating. The person may be unable or unwilling to articulate this.

Help people to understand what trauma is and about its effects. Trauma survivors can have a poor self-image (or a belief that they are intrinsically bad). Understanding that effects are not inborn and can be changed could build hope and motivation.

Engagement

Provide opportunities to learn key skills if they are lacking or under developed.

Model pro-social behaviours.

Use praise and reinforcement to help people to identify their strengths and see themselves as competent.

Explain what is being praised and why. It might be best to focus on the action or decision.

If a person has a strong negative self-image, praising their behaviour rather than their person may be more readily accepted.

3

Try, "that was really good" rather than, "you are really good."

Complex trauma can last a lifetime

The impact of trauma also seems to be cumulative. Persistent distress or multiple events stack up, wearing down resilience and available resources that help the young person recover. These extensive trauma histories are sometimes described as complex or chronic trauma. Some studies have made a distinction between complex and single event traumas. Complex trauma was associated with an increased risk of offending

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Understanding behaviour

Trauma can teach people to be suspicious of kindness, and sometimes 'acting out' is a way to test how others respond.

This can be incredibly frustrating for the people trying to help and support them. It can also have the effect of unintentionally drawing adults into echoing established patterns of abuse and rejection

One strategy is to develop a plan together to help avoid poor behaviour, to clarify what they should do if they feel themselves getting worked up and upset, how to tell someone they trust about it, and where they could go for some space.

4

6 Engage in training, learning and development

Training helps to develop an understanding of the development and attachment consequences of trauma.

Staff working alongside people need support and the flexibility to work with traumatised young people effectively. In addition, there needs to be management oversight and support systems to minimise the risks and effects of vicarious trauma in staff.

Be clear and repeat

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People that have suffered traumatic experiences may need the information broken down to small chunks, have them written down, or may need advice to be repeated (as concentration and memory can be a problem). The volume of information, rules and appointments in navigating systems and services can be a real challenge.