

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network meeting April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Attendance: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change Counseling Center), Johnnie Burt (ARMS), Dean Camarda (Men's Resource Center/Allies in Change), Tim Logan (SoValTi), Paula Manley (Manley Interventions), Leonard Larson, Jr. (ARMS), Jacquie Pancoast (ChangePoint), Chad McGhee (Allies in Change), Paul Lee (Men's Resource Center), Elka Grisham (Allies in Change), Regina Rosann (ARMS), Michael Crowe (Washington County Probation), Steve Stewart (Allies in Change), Melinda Sherman (Men's Resource Center), Guruseva Mason (Choices DVIP), Samantha Naliboff (Volunteers of America Home Free), Linda Castaneda (Manley Interventions), Songcha Bowman (Multicultural Counseling), Sara Windsheimer (Choices), Ashley Boal (Portland State University)

Minutes by Ashley Boal, edited by Chris Huffine

This month's topic: Presentation by Ally Jamison- Interpersonal Neurobiology and the Impact of Trauma

(PowerPoint notes provided)

Informed care- we need to be aware of the effects of trauma because if we are not informed we could be perpetuating negative things that are going on for the individual instead of helping.

The brain is plastic and can adapt to various different realities. Every individual perceives the world differently (an example of an optical illusion was presented which different people in the room perceived differently). Even within individuals there is a large degree of adaptation through chemistry and hardwiring of the brain.

The brain can be thought of as composed of three parts: the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for thoughts and problem solving; the limbic system which is responsible for emotion and emotional regulation; and the reptilian brain which is responsible for basic body functions like heart rate and breathing. This part has the "last word". All of these systems interact and work together.

Social interactions have a biological effect. "Cells that fire together wire together." "If you don't use it you lose it." In other words, our external experiences have a direct impact on how our brain functions and responds to external experiences. For example, if having a safe secure experience with someone leads the neurons in the brain to connect differently than if one has an unsafe experience. This can have an impact on how the individual experiences the world. It can make violent behavior feel "normal" because the brain has been, literally, hard-wired that way.

It can take a very long time to change behaviors that are wired. Some say 3 months. It seems that in reality to make solid change without relapse it probably takes years. What if someone doesn't want to change? Then they aren't going to. But even if they want to change it still is a challenge, wanting to change isn't enough.

Stress produces Cortisol which is an important hormone but too much of it can be damaging. People who grow up in a safe loving environment may be more resilient to trauma experienced in isolation. On the other hand, people who grow up in a traumatic environment may have poorer tolerance or emotional regulation because their brain is responding differently to the experience. This doesn't have to be permanent-- healthy relationships can change this.

Trauma mainly impacts the hippocampus, which is responsible for memory and learning. Trauma causes decreased hippocampal volume. It looks like the brain has shrunk because of brain cell loss. The brain does regenerate some neurons but it is going to take a lot.

The right and left side of the brain serve different purposes. The left is more the logical, thinking part while the right is more the intuitive, nonverbal part. The Corpus callosum integrates the two. Trauma or sustained stress can damage the corpus callosum so the two halves can't communicate as well.

Heritage of trauma- it seems that trauma passed down through generations, some examples that may be transmitted through trauma are controlling and abusive responses, isolation, and unregulated emotions.

5 safeties involved in well-being and ability to recover from trauma (handout provided): physically safe, psychologically safe, socially safe, morally safe, and medically safe.