

# POST COVID MENTAL HEALTH

**Trauma Informed-**  
understanding a person's  
experiences to understand  
their behavior and its life-  
long consequences



**AMY EBBESON, LCSW**

**WORCESTER ADDRESSES CHILDHOOD TRAUMA**

# STIGMA

*mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or reproach, as on one's reputation*

- stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from seeking help
- many people would rather tell employers they served time in jail than admit to being in a psychiatric hospital



## PHYSICAL ILLNESS

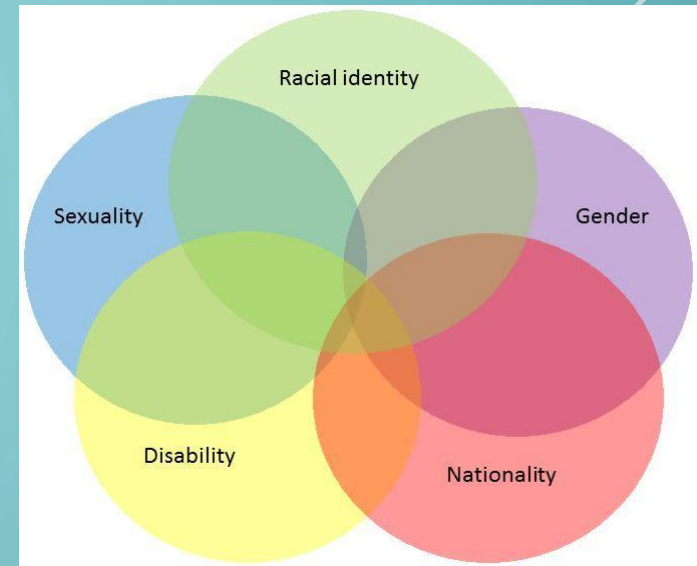


## MENTAL ILLNESS



# CULTURE & INTERSECTIONALITY

- The identity group you belong to may impact stigma and/or stress levels
- Men experience more stigma than women
- There is usually more stigma among immigrant groups
- Different cultures have historically viewed mental illness as a weakness, a character flaw or even demonic possession, placing blame on the mentally ill person



# WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

- A mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder
- Resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities

# STRESS OVERWHELMS

- STRESS IS A PERCEIVED THREAT TO YOUR MIND, BODY, SPIRIT, OR EMOTIONS
- STRESS IS AN INABILITY TO COPE
- STRESS IS A LOSS OF EMOTIONAL CONTROL
- PERCEPTION IS REALITY
- REALITY IS PERSONAL AND SUBJECTIVE





# WHAT IS NORMAL?

DSM USES- “WITHIN NORMAL RANGE”

NORMS ARE PERSONAL, SOCIAL,  
CULTURAL

WHAT HAPPENED IN YOUR FAMILY IS  
YOUR NORMAL

NORMS IMPACTS OUR THOUGHTS,  
FEELINGS AND BEHAVIORS

WE LEARN BY EXPERIENCE/  
COMPARISON/ MEDIA

ERRATIC FOR ADULTS IS NORMAL FOR  
TEENS

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IS NOT COMPLETE  
UNTIL YOUR 20'S

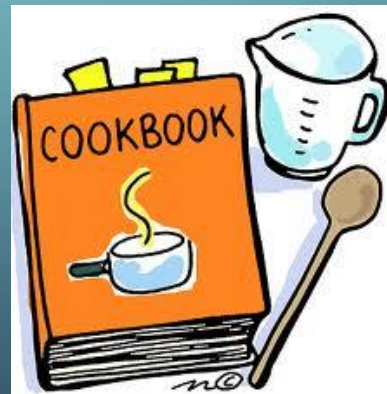
CULTURE × RACE  
× EXPERIENCE ×  
GENDER × DNA ×  
EDUCATION × AGE  
× INCOME × STATUS  
= 6,836,502,318  
TYPES OF NORMAL

# ROLE FUNCTION

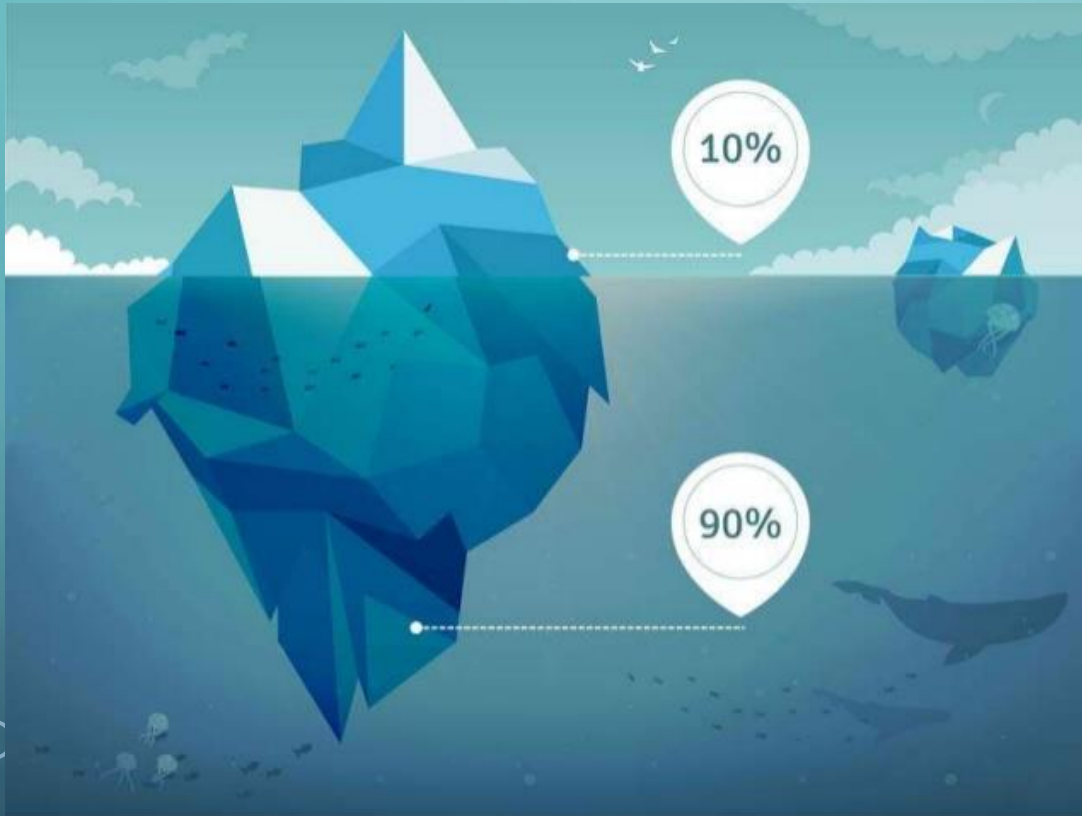
The DSM uses role function as an important part of diagnosis

Eating and Sleeping are often impacted

- A disturbance in role function that causes significant distress and an inability to perform at capacity
- A reverse cookbook- lots of symptom overlap



# THE ICEBERG THEORY



What the person shows is usually the tip of the iceberg.

- There is much more underneath
- If you see cause for alarm, you are almost certainly right



# TRAUMA



- Psychological trauma is an occurrence which is outside the scope of everyday human experience and which would be notably distressing to almost anyone (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).
- It is not the event that determines whether something is traumatic to someone but the individual's experience of the event.
- It can be a single occurrence or a chronic, repetitive experience
- Engages your fight/flight/freeze stress response
- Negatively affects all life outcomes if not treated



Generational Trauma



# ELEMENTS OF TRAUMA IN PANDEMIC

- Event is sudden or unexpected
- Exposure- directly experiencing
- Perceived as overwhelming and/or uncontrollable
- Results in feelings of helplessness, lack of safety, lack of control
- Often generates secondary adversities, life changes and distressing reminders

# POST TRAUMA- DELAYED REACTION

- Often, symptoms of childhood abuse show up in adulthood
- Trying to have trusting relationships
- The symptoms are effective in coping during the trauma, not effective when it subsides, but persist
- Feeling too much or too little
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling disconnected or numb
- **Stressed out at baseline**



# THE DEVELOPING BRAIN



Use dependent organ

Each experience shapes the architecture of the brain

Emotion super charges it

The more an experience happens, the better traveled the path is

Very mad and sad kids become mad and sad adults

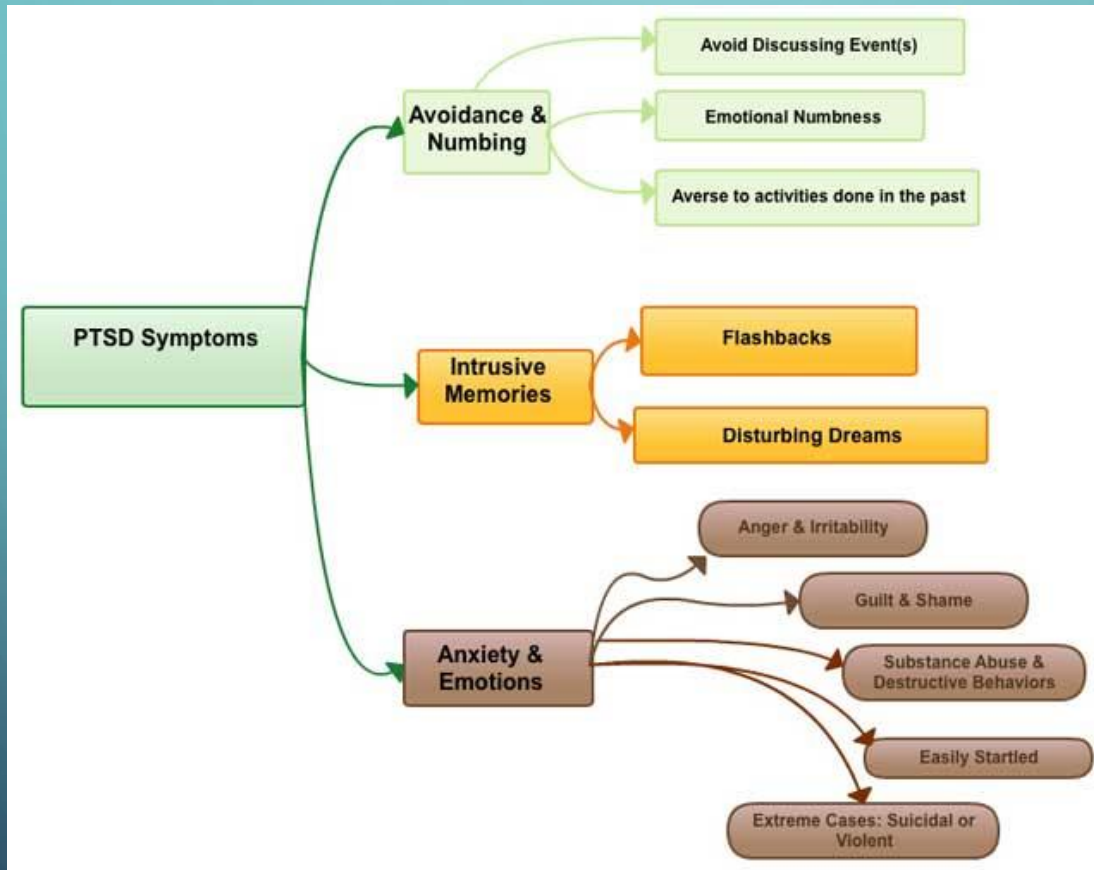
The most paved road becomes default

Abuse feels normal and expected



# SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

TRAUMA IS A PREDICTABLE RESPONSE TO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARILY STRESSFUL. IT IMPACTS ALL AREAS OF A PERSON'S LIFE AND CAN SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT FUNCTIONING AND QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS.



Stress Response  
won't turn off  
Emotional  
Dysregulation



# MOOD

- A state of mind or emotion

# Mood Disorder

- When your mood interferes with your ability to be successful in your chosen roles
- Extended duration- at least 2 weeks
- It colors all of your experiences





Mark Hates on the Frog Buttress  
Photographed by Simon Vos, 2003

# Anxiety

- Normal anxiety is useful-
- Part of fight or flight response
- Helps you tune in, focus, act quickly

# ANXIETY DISORDER

When Anxiety is maladaptive

Panic attack

heart palpitations, shaking,

Trouble breathing, chest pain,

fear of dying, going crazy,

or losing control, preoccupation with stressors- real  
and imagined



# TRAUMA AFFECTS BEHAVIOR

Steven Covey was traveling in a subway, a man gets in with his two sons, the boys are running all over the place bothering people. This continues, so he finally gets irritated enough to ask the father why he doesn't do something to control his kids.

The father replies,

*"We just got back from the hospital where their mother died. I don't know how to handle it and I guess they don't either."*



**Did your opinion change  
when you got new  
information?**



# SELF MEDICATION

the therapist



Give me 2 or 3 months  
in therapy and you'll  
begin to feel better

the psychiatrist



Give me 2-3 weeks on  
these meds and you'll  
begin to feel better

the bartender



Give this shot 2-3  
minutes and you will be  
feeling better!



# BUILDING RESILIENCE

- Basic needs first- sleep, food, warmth
- Decrease Stress
- Structure & Routine= safety
- Mindfulness/ living in the present
- Reduce sense of present danger
- Feeling seen and cared about
- Instill Hope/ Gratitude



## resilience:

"an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary

# A HELPING RELATIONSHIP

- Is a “protective factor” and can lessen or undo some traumatic effects
- Builds resilience
- Offers role models/ new normals
- Encourages healing
- Is more effective than anything else
- The problem happened in relationship and that’s where it will heal
- Can lead to traumatic growth

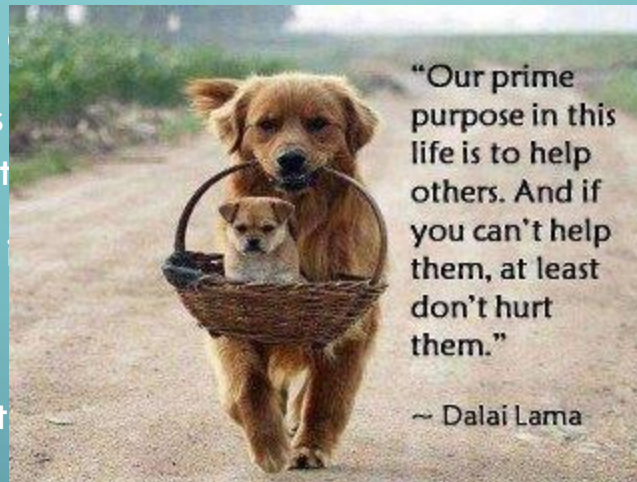


*“When you criticize me, I intuitively dig in to defend myself. However, when you accept me like I am, I suddenly am willing to change”*

*-Carl Rogers*

- **Encourage Self-Help**

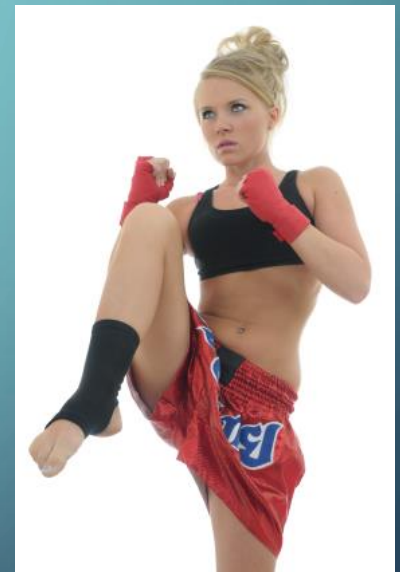
- There are many ways mental illness can contribute to your overall health
- These strategies may help:
- Exercise
- Relaxation and Meditation
- Participating in peer support groups
- Self-help books based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Engaging with family, friends, faith, and other social networks



ing symptoms of a  
illness.

# TREATMENT FOR TRAUMA

- Process trauma-related memories and feelings when appropriate
- Mindfulness, CBT
- DBT- dialectic behavior therapy
- Learning how to regulate strong emotions
- Self defense
- Legal/ policy advocacy
- Building or rebuilding the ability to trust other people
- Group Treatment when ready



# SPIRITUAL NEEDS

- Healing takes time and energy
- Range of symptoms
- Thoughts feelings behaviors

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

Confucian Proverb

**IF YOU CAN  
SOLVE YOUR  
PROBLEM,  
THEN WHAT  
IS THE NEED OF  
WORRYING?**  
**IF YOU CANNOT  
SOLVE IT,  
THEN WHAT  
IS THE USE OF  
WORRYING?**

- SHANTIDEVA



SHANTIDEVA © 2014

zen pencils.com





# POWER OF YOU

- Model self care and compassion
- Ripples / how you treat people
- Build Social Capital
- Create a happy world
- Change happens at all levels-individual, family, systems, society
- Insight is the best predictor of **SUCCESS**
- Make generous assumptions
- **Go make the world better because you're in it!**

IN 900 YEARS OF  
TIME & SPACE

I'VE NEVER MET

*anyone*

WHO WASN'T  
IMPORTANT

