



Transgenerational Trauma

*And the effects on our families and
communities*

Why is any of this important?

- Many of the problems we face in families and communities can be directly linked to the soul wound/transgenerational trauma.
- Each generation that doesn't deal with this merely passes the trauma effects to the next generation.

What are some of the effects?

- Addiction to alcohol and other substances. Alcohol serves as a substitute for the removal of culture and spiritual practice.
- Violence in the family and community because the violence that caused the trauma is passed on and acted out presently.

Initial observations

- Ideas for this presentation taken from experience with the Native American community.
- The issues found in the Native community are also found in the African American, Latino, and other communities in our society.
- Trauma and injury bring similar responses among human beings, and the effects of trauma also bring similar responses in all people who are subjected to it.

Definitions

- The Native community defined the collective trauma that occurred historically as the 'soul wound.' This is also known as transgenerational trauma.
- Transgenerational trauma is the trauma that is passed from one generation to the next if the trauma is not resolved within the generation in which it occurs.
- Effects of transgenerational trauma are also passed on if not resolved.

Serious concerns

- The soul wound not only gets passed from one generation to the next if not resolved...it is also cumulative. That is to say that a person who has not experienced trauma personally may still carry a serious amount of inherited trauma from their ancestors.
- The trauma inflicted on Native people was also directed at the removal and destruction of culture.

Destruction of Culture

- Language, spirituality, sense of family structure were systematically destroyed.
- Boarding schools were a place that systematically attempted to destroy the family system and the sense of family.
- The destruction of culture left many people empty and searching for their soul.

Is this for real? What evidence is there?

- There is a substantial body of literature that substantiates the soul wound.
- General trauma theory gives ample evidence to the theoretical construct of soul wound/transgenerational trauma.
- In addition, many years of clinical experience lend further evidence that this is a valid construct.

When the soul is wounded

- Humans react with grief when wounded.
- Humans remember the wounding and it continues to hurt.
- Humans react to healing when healing is available.

A traditional Native model of trauma

- Trauma is a three-faceted wounding process.
- It wounds the body. The body has self-healing mechanisms that go into effect when traumatized.
- The mind requires special healing methods.
- The soul is usually left without healing in most therapeutic circles.

Soul wounding as sorcery...

is this going too far?

- When the intent of the perpetrator is focused on the victim, the intent can be seen as evil since it is intended to cause pain.
- Native psychology teaches that such actions on the part of the perpetrator literally 'shoots' part of the perpetrator into the victim. This energy festers and causes the perpetrator's energy to gain life in the victim.

Western psychology also knows this

- Carl Jung the Swiss psychiatrist theorized that if an issue 'complex' does not get resolved it then creates of a life of its own in the unconscious.
- The unconscious conflict will then result in symptoms as the unconscious tries to get the person to resolve the injury.

Seriously?

- It is well known that most perpetrators have been victims themselves.
- Having been a victim pre-disposes the person to become a perpetrator...the vampire syndrome.
- Vampire mythology offers a model of how this works.

Internalized oppression...

identification with the aggressor

- Early psychoanalytic theory asserted the phenomenon of identification with the aggressor.
- Trauma predisposes victims to become aggressors.

Stockholm syndrome

- Theory and observations have shown that victims in an oppressive situation will begin to act like the aggressors especially if the aggressor rewards the behavior.
- At times victims become more brutal than the aggressor.

Internalized oppression in present day life

- Many of our communities have become our own enemies...via self-destructive behaviors.
- Much of the oppression becomes internalized and acted out as violence towards the family and community (i.e., domestic violence, violence towards our own community).

Violence gone inward

When violence gets internalized we then see some of the following:

1. Addictive behaviors
2. Depression/suicidal ideation
3. Chronic physical problems such as diabetes, hypertension

These life conditions can be interpreted as violence towards one's self.

4. Loss of identity making it easier to commit violence towards one's self or the ones closest to us.

Where do we go from here?

- Interventions must include socio-historical factors as part of the treatment, prevention and education.
- The person, family and/or community will feel that they are defective if the historical issues are not made part of their awareness.
- Awareness begins the process of re-inventing a new identity via a new narrative.
- We no longer need to become and be the stereotype that has been placed on us, i.e., drunken Indian, violent and scary person, etc.
- Re-inventing individuals leads to re-inventing families and communities.

Hopeful future

- Community programs must insist on cultural competency, otherwise the false identity continues to be reinforced because the intervention is not from the community's belief system.
- People working in the community must know and demonstrate that they have competency to work in the community.
- Transgenerational trauma must be addressed by providers and they must take responsibility for their part in this history.
- New theory construction must be part of the work as well as getting funding sources to become more culturally competent.