

## APPLICATION OF SURVIVAL STRATEGIES TO DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

Too frequently we talk of trauma treatment as we might of appendicectomy. What is **the** diagnosis? If it is PTSD, then what is the treatment of PTSD? Is it debriefing, cognitive behaviour therapy, SSRI's (serum serotonin reuptake inhibitors)? EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing)? Thought field therapy? Psychoanalysis? Visual/kinaesthetic Dissociation, Traumatic Incidence reduction?

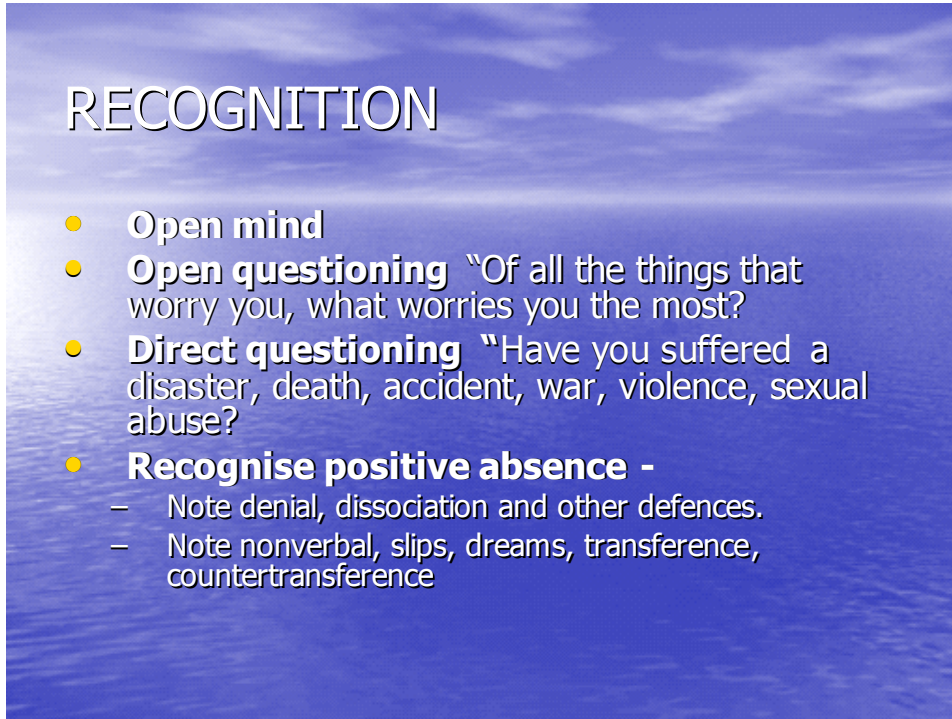
Somehow each proponent of these treatments believes it is **the** treatment of traumatic consequences. I suggest to you that all the non-drug treatments share four ingredients. Of these 4 ingredients shared by all trauma therapies, only what I call specific trauma therapy directs itself **specifically** to heal traumatic wounds. The other 3 ingredients trauma therapy shares with other psychotherapies.

### Ubiquitous Ingredients of Treatments

- **Recognition** that trauma has occurred, and its general features
- **Non-specific (Counter -trauma) treatment**
- **Symptomatic treatment**
- **Specific trauma therapy**

## 1. Recognition

Recognition of traumatic precedents to presentation is far too frequent. But without recognition of trauma, trauma therapy cannot proceed. The following are necessary for recognition.



**RECOGNITION**

- **Open mind**
- **Open questioning** "Of all the things that worry you, what worries you the most?"
- **Direct questioning** "Have you suffered a disaster, death, accident, war, violence, sexual abuse?"
- **Recognise positive absence -**
  - Note denial, dissociation and other defences.
  - Note nonverbal, slips, dreams, transference, countertransference

## 2. Non-specific (Counter Trauma) Treatment

Whether trauma is recognized or not, most therapies intuitively offer counter-trauma corrective emotional experiences. The survival strategy whose adaptive counter-trauma experience provides a neutralising influence to trauma is denoted in brackets.

1. Safety (flight)
2. Unthreatening, non-judgemental (fight)
3. Kindness, caring, empathy (rescue)
4. Support, holding (attachment)
5. Comfort (goal surrender)
6. Encouragement (assertiveness, fight)
7. Respect (competition)
8. Trustworthiness (cooperation)

### **3. Symptomatic Treatment**

Here particular symptoms are attempted to be neutralised or eradicated.

### **3. Symptomatic Treatment**

- Drugs (fight, flight, goal surrender)
- Relaxation, anxiety management (flight)
- Skills management (attachment, assertiveness)
- Assertiveness training (assertiveness)
- Anger management (fight)
- Empowerment (competition)
- Games, adventures (cooperation)

### **4. Specific Trauma Therapy**

Many trauma therapies use the steps described below. However, survival strategies are invaluable aids to them. They help to make sense of the symptoms and to verbalise them, and they help progression to breaking the nexus between past and present and to achieve a narrative.

## 4. Specific Trauma Therapy

- 1. **Make sense** of symptoms
  - use survival strategies.
  - clarify with words
- 2. **Break nexus** between past and present
  - hope- contrast past with present
- Controlled exposure to trauma
- Dual focus on past and present
  - (emotional and cognitive)
- 3. **Relearn**
  - integrate new narrative

1. **Make sense.** Trace specific biological, psychological and social symptoms and illnesses back to specific survival strategies, traumatic situations and appraisals.

This may take a long time when awareness of the original situation is absent, due to events happening in early childhood, or because awareness of the events is dissociated and defended against. Case 2

*Clarify with words* how these symptoms and illnesses are results of normal responses in abnormal situations which have persisted into normal situations

2. **Break nexus.** Find a *specific antidote* in the adaptive analogue of the maladaptive symptom. *Dual focus* requires simultaneous attention to past traumatic and current non-traumatic situations. // *Emotional learning* assimilates the two realities.// A reverse type dissociation or integration of new knowledge may occur in an *Altered state of consciousness*.
3. **Integrate.** Integrate into ever greater picture puzzle with the pieces coming together.

Let us see how these techniques are applied in particular trauma therapies.

## Techniques in Trauma Treatments

### Techniques in Trauma Treatments

- Debriefing
- Drugs
- Hypnosis
- Psychoanalysis
- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- EMDR
- "Power therapies "

All these therapies, incidentally, use non-specific and symptomatic treatments, which may provide what is called 'corrective emotional experiences'.

As specific trauma therapies, they also specifically bring to mind conjointly past traumas and non-traumatic present.

**Survival strategies add power to recognition of where symptoms belong and why, and enhance the use of specific words to clarify the traumatic silence out of which symptoms arise.**

**Survival strategies enhance rational understanding and integration of the trauma story.**