

# **MOOC 2 – UNIT 1**

## **Profile of Emergency Psychologist**

### **Chapter 3 - Psychotherapeutic Approaches Dealing with Trauma**

**Developed by Association of Clinical Psychologists (CZ)**



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# **Unit 1: Profile of Emergency Psychologist**

## **Psychotherapeutic Approaches Dealing with Trauma**

An emergency psychologist deals with a situation during the pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis stage and works almost as a manager during these stages. It is important that the psychologists or psychotherapists help to secure the psychological wellbeing of the victims/communities.

In the present Learning Unit, you will develop:

- Knowledge, skills and competences about different approaches dealing with trauma
- References, self assessment checklist and tips to support your activity
- Exercises to improve knowledge, skills and competences

# Introduction

Emergency psychologist should have tools that could be used during the crisis, especially if the victims/communities experienced a traumatic event. There are different approaches for working with trauma. The main aim is to present these approaches and use some of their techniques during an emergency.

The expert should be able to recognize how big the trauma is within the individual and what impact it has on his/her life. It is important to analyze the situation, how big the impact is and what can be done for the individual.

- 1) Assess the trauma impact
- 2) Map the possible impact on an individual's life
- 3) Plan a strategy
- 4) Use questionnaires
- 5) Create a safe space and environment for the victim

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## 3.1 How to Work with Trauma Knowledge

There are many different approaches to working and focusing on trauma. In the tips you can find useful questionnaires that focus on the description of trauma and its depth and damage on individuals. These questionnaires might be a great tool to map the situation victims/communities are in, how traumatic the event has been and what symptoms/disturbances in reality an individual is experiencing.

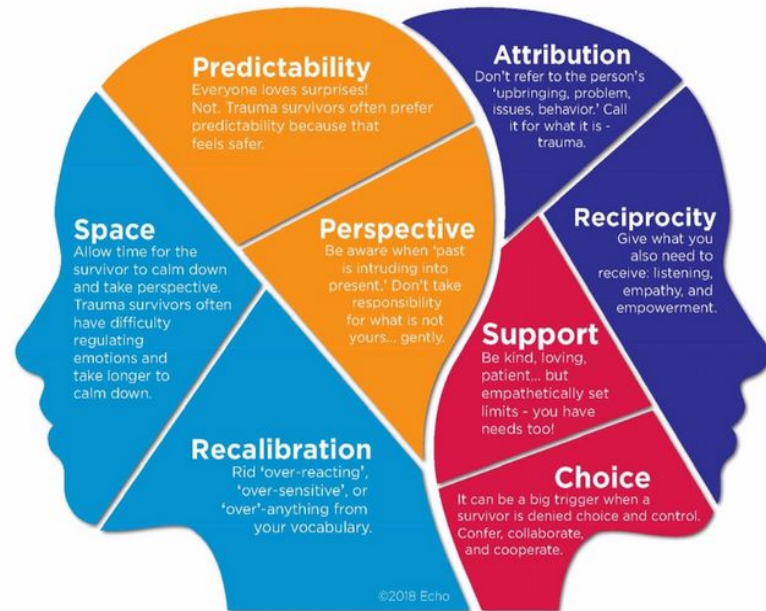
Dealing with trauma can make clients very vulnerable. You should focus on the following:

- It is crucial to establish a safe space for the individual.
- Provide empathy, authenticity during the contact and let the person know that he/she is not alone.
- Explore the feelings and reality one is experiencing without judgement and with pace that is chosen by the individual.
- Focus on what is happening here and now. Map emotions and nonverbal signals.



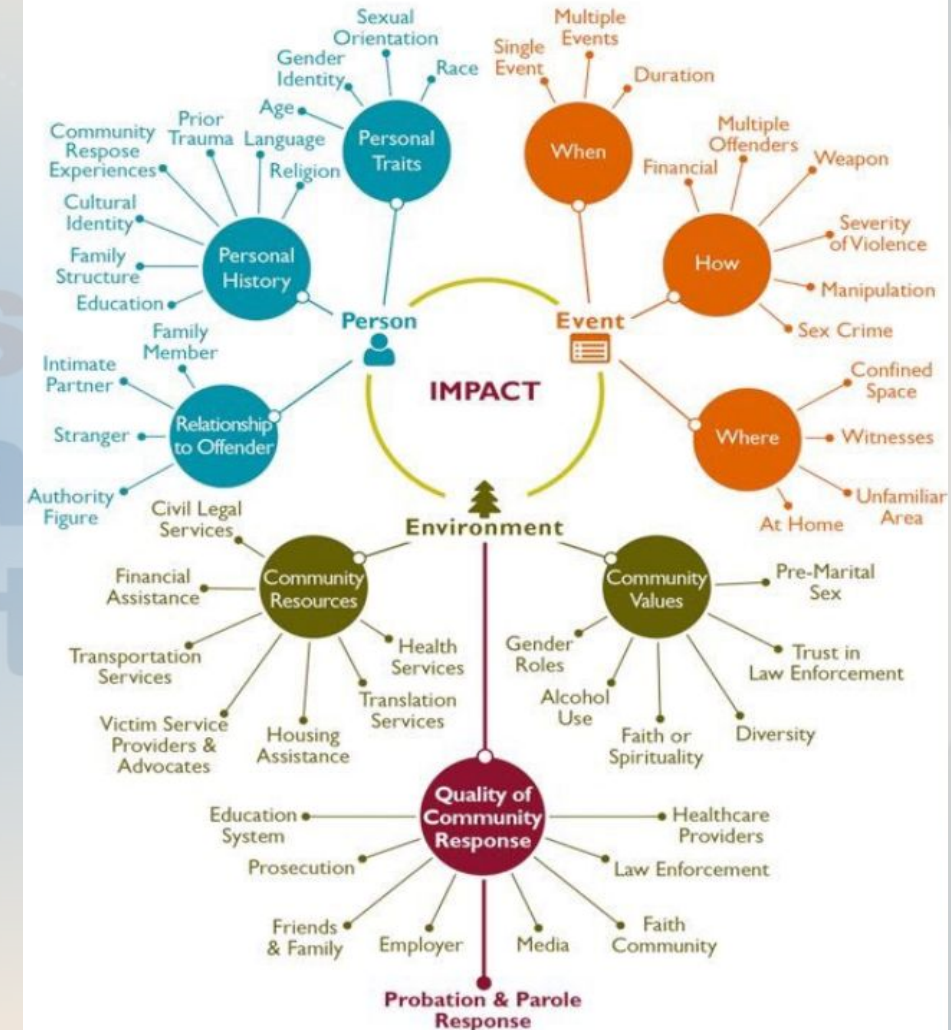
# 3.1 How to Work with Trauma Knowledge

## How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma



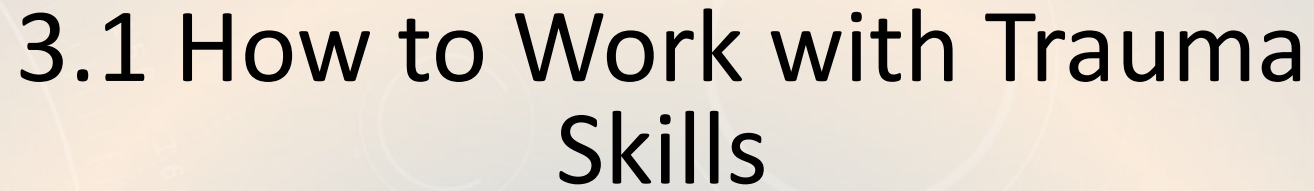
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## ECOLOGICAL VIEW OF TRAUMA



Source: Harvey, Mary. 1996. "An Ecological View of Psychological Trauma and Trauma Recovery." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 9, no. 1: 3-23.

Figure 3



- Establishment of the safe space
- Building a structure on how you can help an individual with traumatic experience
- Evaluating the impact of the trauma on an individual's life
- Identifying important parts for working with vulnerable clients





## 3.3 How to Work with Trauma Competences

- 1) You will be able to assess the trauma
- 2) You will provide a safe space for a victim/community
- 3) You will be able to support victims with trauma
- 4) You can use different types of questionnaires to map the impact of the trauma with victim and use this tool as a guidance during the therapeutic sessions
- 5) You will be able to work within the schema to provide space, give perspective, support, provide predictability to the victim and empathy
- 6) Analyze the impact that the trauma has on the person, environment and community



## 3.2 Approaches and Techniques Knowledge

### Body psychotherapy

Body psychotherapy is based on the idea that our emotions tend to manifest in our body, especially as muscular tension. These emotions are reflected physically. Body psychotherapy can be used as a therapy treating psychological trauma. The main goal is to re-establish trust in the person who went through a traumatic experience. Basic principles are to use both somatic and cognitive awareness in an individual. Body psychotherapy does not replace the treatment determined by the doctor on the basis of a diagnosis. It is suitable for clients who leave doctors with the exclusion of a somatic diagnosis or with an indefinite diagnosis. It can serve as a supplement to their treatment and at the same time provide significant support and assistance in working with the clients who have been diagnosed and suggested treatment by doctors.



**TIP 9 - Impact of trauma and strategies:**





## 3.2 Approaches and Techniques Knowledge

### Trauma-Focused CBT

Trauma focused CBT is a branch of CBT that specializes in people who have experienced traumatic events. This approach helps coping with different types of trauma such as car accidents or sexual assaults. In this therapy the individual talks about the trauma, explores the common attitudes surrounding the trauma, and this helps them to develop a healthy and well-adapted emotional state. This approach works slowly and gently. The trauma is taken step by step and the pace is based on how the individual feels. Therapy focuses on education around PTSD, providing strategies to manage symptoms and restructure the situation. During the therapy one is exposed to sources of fear and situations that he/she is avoiding (Schnurr, 2017).



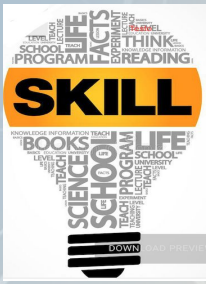
## 3.2 Approaches and Techniques Knowledge

### Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR)

This method was developed by Francine Shapiro to lower the discomfort of a traumatic event such as traffic accident, rape, assault, natural disaster, injury or illness, childbirth, unpleasant childhood memories. This method is very effective when it comes to trauma. It has been found that eye movements can, under certain conditions, reduce the intensity of unpleasant thoughts. This method uses visual bilateral stimulation and sound or touch stimulation. During trauma a certain moment is not processed and memories of a traumatic event return repeatedly like flashbacks.



**TIP 10 - EMDR Therapy video:**



## 3.2 Approaches and Techniques Skills

- Identifying the layers of intervention
- Identifying the underlying needs
- Working through trauma, providing disclosure, finding cognitive threshold and preparing readiness for building a relationship
- Preparedness for struggles in the trauma interventions

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## 3.2 Approaches and Techniques Competences

- Using different methods while working with trauma
- Basic knowledge about EMDR
- Assessment of the physical impact of trauma on the individual
- Building a trauma plan based on the different approaches

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## 3.3 How to Prevent Burnout Syndrome Knowledge

As a professionalist helping victims during traumatic events, you might experience questioning your own work. These feelings can occur and it is always better to be prepared and prevent burnout syndrome. What type of feelings and experiences you might go through and should be aware of (Hesse, 2002):

- 1) Denial
- 2) Intellectualization
- 3) Isolation of affect
- 4) Dissociation
- 5) Projection
- 6) Trust issues
- 7) Becoming cynical
- 8) Becoming suspicious of people's motives

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## 3.3 How to Prevent Burnout Syndrome Knowledge

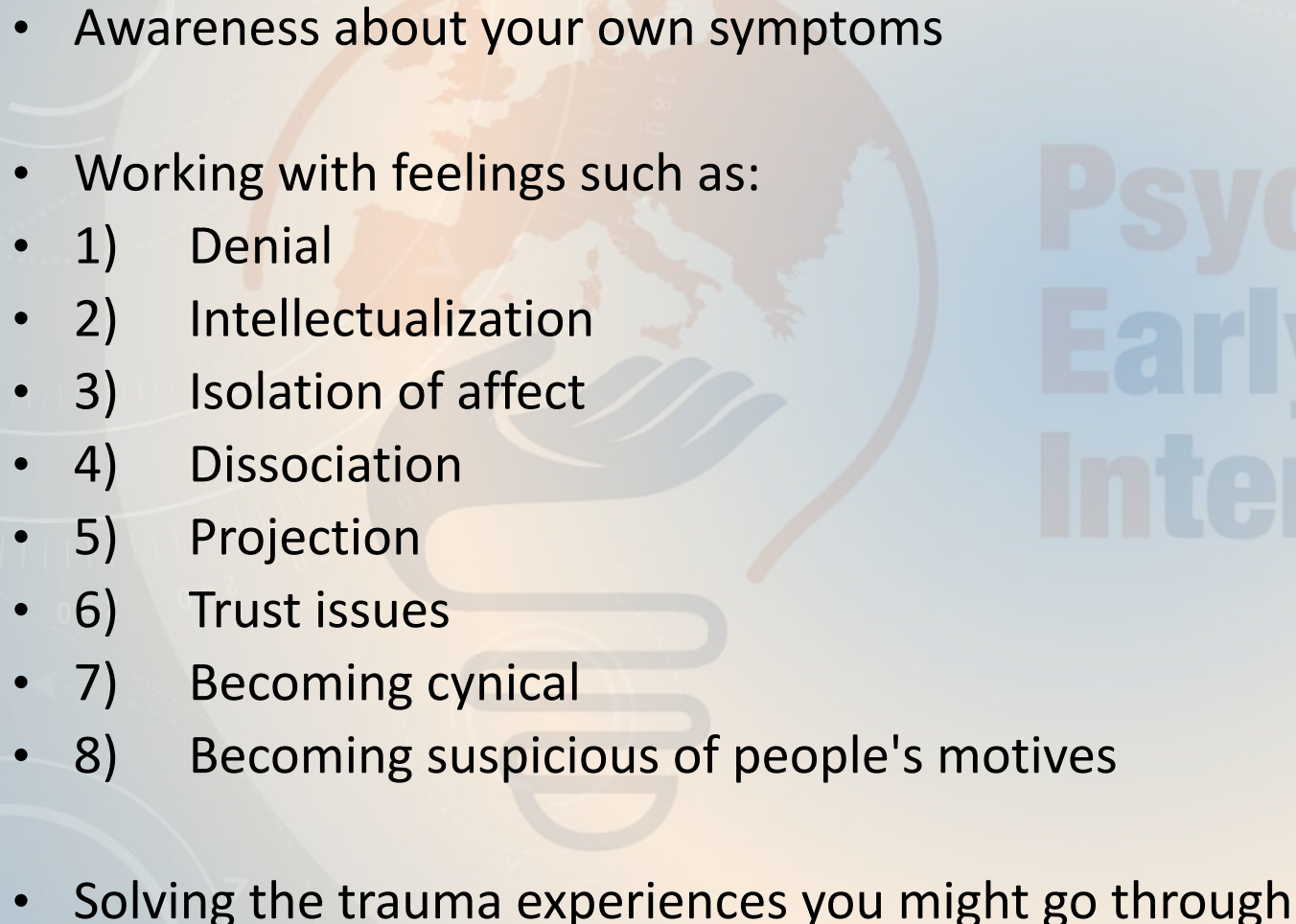
When you experience these types of feelings it is always better to solve them or prevent them by proper:

- 1) Relaxation and doing hobbies during a free time
- 2) Exercising
- 3) Eating healthy nutritious food
- 4) Reducing stress with relaxation techniques
- 5) Creative expression (writing, drawing, dancing, cooking etc.)
- 6) Supervision

You should know your limits and understand the importance of self-care along with the work with victims of traumatic experience. The goal is to maintain a realistic view and achievable targets that you can reach with the client (Hesse, 2002). An important part of working with trauma is using supervision as a prevention of burnout syndrome and a way to remain competent.





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- Awareness about your own symptoms
  - Working with feelings such as:
    - 1) Denial
    - 2) Intellectualization
    - 3) Isolation of affect
    - 4) Dissociation
    - 5) Projection
    - 6) Trust issues
    - 7) Becoming cynical
    - 8) Becoming suspicious of people's motives
  - Solving the trauma experiences you might go through



## 3.3 How to Prevent Burnout Syndrome Competences

- Preventing burnout syndrom
- Finding your limits
- Taking care of your mental health while working with harder clients
- Acknowledging the feelings of the impact of trauma on yourself
- Using supervision as a prevention from burnout syndrome

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# Conclusion

You should be able to assess the trauma and help the victim with coping strategies and building trust in themselves. Using questionnaires might be valuable to the whole process and for understanding the world of the victim. Trauma can influence the whole environment and person and therefore it is important to take into consideration all the variables. This chapter focuses primarily on practical work with trauma. It describes psychotherapeutic approaches suitable for working with trauma. An important part is also evidence on how to support someone with trauma, the physical impact of the trauma and trauma recovery model presenting layers of intervention.