

**Trauma Work**  
WORKING IN THE EARLY STAGES OF NEGATIVE REACTIONS TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS

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**PRINCIPLES**

- ▶ SAFETY
- ▶ STABILITY
  - EMOTIONAL
  - EXISTENCE
- ▶ DEPENDABLE, CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP
- ▶ MEET CLIENT WHERE CLIENT NEEDS TO BE MET
- ▶ SENSITIVE, COMPETENT

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**INITIAL SKILLS**

- ▶ ASSESS SITUATION AND CIRCUMSTANCES IF POSSIBLE
- ▶ PARAPHRASE
- ▶ REFLECTION OF FEELING
- ▶ SUMMARIZE
- ▶ DIRECT CLIENT TOWARD CHANGES IN PERSPECTIVE
  - DIRECTIVES
  - STATEMENTS OF CURIOSITY
  - INTERNAL WORK
  - OPEN ENDED QUESTION IF MUST
- ▶ SUPPORT COPING
- ▶ ASSESS FUNCTIONAL STATE AS NECESSARY

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**ASSESSMENT**  
SUICIDALITY AND MENTAL STATUS



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**RISK FACTORS: HIGHEST**

- ▶ PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS
- ▶ SUICIDAL IDEATIONS
- ▶ SEEKING LETHAL MEANS TO KILL ONESELF
- ▶ LACK OF MEANING IN LIFE
- ▶ ANXIETY
- ▶ SLEEPLESSNESS
- ▶ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- ▶ HOPELESSNESS
- ▶ SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL
- ▶ PATTERNS OF ANGER
- ▶ VICTIM OF SPOUSAL ABUSE OR CHILD ABUSE
- ▶ RECKLESSNESS
- ▶ MOOD CHANGES



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**Other factors**

- ▶ OVER 45 YEARS OLD
- ▶ GENDER ISSUES: MEN TRY MORE LETHAL MEANS, WOMEN MORE OFTEN
- ▶ DIVORCED, WIDOWED, RECENTLY SEPARATED
  - LOWEST RISK, NEVER MARRIED
- ▶ RECENT JOB LOSS
- ▶ IDENTITY CONFLICTED YOUTH
- ▶ CHRONIC ILLNESS
- ▶ RECENT LOSS OF LOVED AND ANNIVERSARY OF LOSS
- ▶ HISTORY OF SUICIDE IN THEIR FAMILY
- ▶ HISTORY OF IMPULSIVE OR RECKLESS BEHAVIOR
- ▶ RECENT HUMILIATION OR SHAME



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### **Suicide Risk Assessment**

- ▶ HIGH RISK
  - HISTORY OF LETHAL SUICIDE ATTEMPT(S)
  - PERSISTENT SUICIDE IDEATION OR INTERMITTENT IDEATION WITH INTENT
  - PSYCHOSIS, HALLUCINATIONS ORDERING SELF-HARM
  - RECENT ONSET OF DEPRESSION OR OTHER PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
    - ESPECIALLY YOUTH WITH NEW ANTIDEPRESSANT PRESCRIPTION
  - RECENT TREATMENT FOR PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER
  - HISTORY OF IMPULSIVE OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

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- ▶ MODERATE RISK
  - SUICIDE IDEATION WITH SOME LEVEL OF SUICIDE INTENT, BUT WHO HAVE TAKEN NO ACTION ON THE PLAN
  - CURRENTLY ATTENDING COUNSELLING OR PSYCHOTHERAPY
- ▶ LOW RISK
  - SOME MILD OR PASSIVE SUICIDE IDEATION, WITH NO INTENT OR PLAN
  - NO HISTORY OF SUICIDE ATTEMPT
  - AVAILABLE SOCIAL SUPPORT
  - HISTORY OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DIAGNOSIS

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### **Underactivating responses**

- ▶ LITTLE OR NO EMOTIONAL REACTION OBSERVED
- ▶ POSSIBLE STATES
  - NUMBING (SHOCK)
  - DISSOCIATION
  - THOUGHT SUPPRESSION (INTERNALIZATION)
  - DENIAL
  - MEDICATIONS BEFORE THE FACT

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### **MENTAL STATUS**

- ▶ **CAN** YOU TELL ME YOUR NAME?
- ▶ WHAT IS YOUR BIRTHDAY. HOW OLD ARE YOU?
- ▶ **CAN** YOU TELL ME WHAT YEAR THIS IS?
- ▶ MONTH?
- ▶ DAY OF THE WEEK?
- ▶ **DO** YOU KNOW WHERE WE ARE NOW?
- ▶ **DO** YOU KNOW THE NAME OF THE CITY WE ARE IN?
- ▶ STATE?
- ▶ COUNTRY?
- ▶ WHO IS THE PRIME MINISTER?

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- ▶ PLEASE REPEAT THE FOLLOWING WORDS AND REMEMBER THEM FOR A LITTLE LATER (WAIT 3 MINUTES AND ASK WHAT WORDS THEY WERE)
  - CHAIR
  - HAPPY
  - AUNT
- ▶ PLEASE COUNT BACKWARD FROM 100S BY 7 (WITH LESS EDUCATION, BY 3)
- ▶ SPELL WORLD BACKWARD (IF LITERATE)
- ▶ HAVE CLIENT REPEAT 3 WORDS

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- ▶ SHOW THE CLIENT A PEN
  - WHAT IS THIS USED FOR?
- ▶ SHOW CLIENT A WATCH
  - WHAT IS THIS USED FOR?
- ▶ REPEAT AFTER ME, "NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTS"
- ▶ TAKE THIS PIECE OF PAPER, FOLD IT IN HALF AND PUT IN ON THE FLOOR
- ▶ WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU SAW A LOT OF SMOKE COMING FROM YOUR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE?

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### **Activation Skills**

- ▶ EXPOSURE
  - DIRECTIVE
  - DRAW ATTENTION TO CRITICAL NATURE OF EVENT
- ▶ REFLECT FEELINGS
- ▶ INTERNAL WORK
- ▶ FOCUS ON PERCEPTIONS
  - DIRECTIVES
  - STATEMENTS OF CURIOSITY
- ▶ DISPUTATIONS

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### **If client becomes overactivated**

- ▶ DON'T REINFORCE OVEREMOTIONALIZATION
- ▶ REFOCUS ON PERCEPTION, INTERNAL DIALOGUES, AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS, SELF STATEMENTS
- ▶ COUNTERCONDITIONING
  - REACT OPPOSITE OF EXPECTATIONS
  - RELAXATION
  - STATEMENTS OF AFFIRMATION OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

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### **Overactivation reactions**

- ▶ PROCESS RESPONSE IS EMERGENCE OF POSTTRAUMATIC EMOTIONS, MEMORIES, COGNITIONS, ANTICIPATIONS
  - EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION
  - ANXIETY, PANIC REACTIONS
  - GUILT, SHAME
  - SUICIDALITY
  - ACUTE PSYCHOTIC RESPONSE

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### **Grounding skills**

- ▶ FOCUS ATTENTION OF CLIENT ONTO COUNSELLOR
  - MOVE INTO RANGE OF SIGHT
  - CHANGE PITCH, VOLUME AND TENOR OF VOICE TO CALM
- ▶ CHANGE FOCUS INTERVENTION PROCESS
- ▶ DIRECT CLIENT TOWARD SENSORIUM
- ▶ REORIENT TO IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT
- ▶ DEEP BREATHING
- ▶ RELAXATION

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### **AVOIDANT RESPONSES**

- ▶ INTERNALIZATION (DANGER IS PTSD)
- ▶ SUBSTANCE USE OR ABUSE
- ▶ PSYCHOSOMATIC RESPONSE

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### **AVOIDANCE SKILLS**

- ▶ EMPATHIZE
  - PARAPHRASE
  - REFLECT FEELINGS
- ▶ DEVELOP DISCREPANCY
- ▶ AVOID ARGUMENT
- ▶ ROLL WITH RESISTANCE
- ▶ SUPPORT SELF EFFICACY

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- ▶ PROBE STATE OF AVOIDANCE
  - REFLECTION OF FEELINGS
  - DIRECTIVES
  - INTERNAL WORK
  - PARAPHRASE
  - DISCOVERING PERCEPTIONS
  - DOUBLE-SIDED REFLECTION
  - SHIFT FOCUS
  - REFRAME
- ▶ SUMMARIZE

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