



Key Considerations in Trauma-Informed Interviewing

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Objectives

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Conduct thoughtful and effective victim interviews
- Identify key considerations when conducting these types of interviews
- The importance of working as a team

Key Considerations for Conducting Collaborative Trauma Informed Interviews

Changing the interview to better fit the victim and our case



“

“Can you tell me what happened?””

Disclosure

- It is often a process, not a single event
- Victims may disclose more over time
- Do not force victims to fill in details
- Most importantly: Let Your Victim Talk
- Privacy and police reports/investigations

Before the (Re)Interview

Things to Consider

Preparation

- Report review
- Review the statements of: victim, witnesses, defendant, nurses, etc.
- Talk to the responding officer (if possible)
- Review evidence, photos, medical records, etc.
- Listen to 911 tapes
- Review defendant's and victim's criminal history

Preparation

- Golden Rule: Make sure you know everything about this case!
- Do not wing it!
- Your victim will know
- We are trying to gain his/her trust

Let's Talk...

- Determine the best method of contact as a team
- Confidentiality
- Who knows?



The Neurobiology of Trauma

The Basic Concepts



The Neurobiology of Trauma

- Police are taught to hunt for the truth
- Investigations are predicated on evidence, our experience, and the truth
- Without training about trauma and how it affects victims, we won't have a great understanding of victims or how they respond

The Neurobiology of Trauma

- Rape victims and recounting their attack
- Why?
- Because the brain shuts certain parts off
- The memory area can be most affected
- Science has shown, many rape victims memories will return

The Neurobiology of Trauma

- Rape victims' memories can return out of order
- Can be problematic for the untrained investigator
- Need to keep an open mind

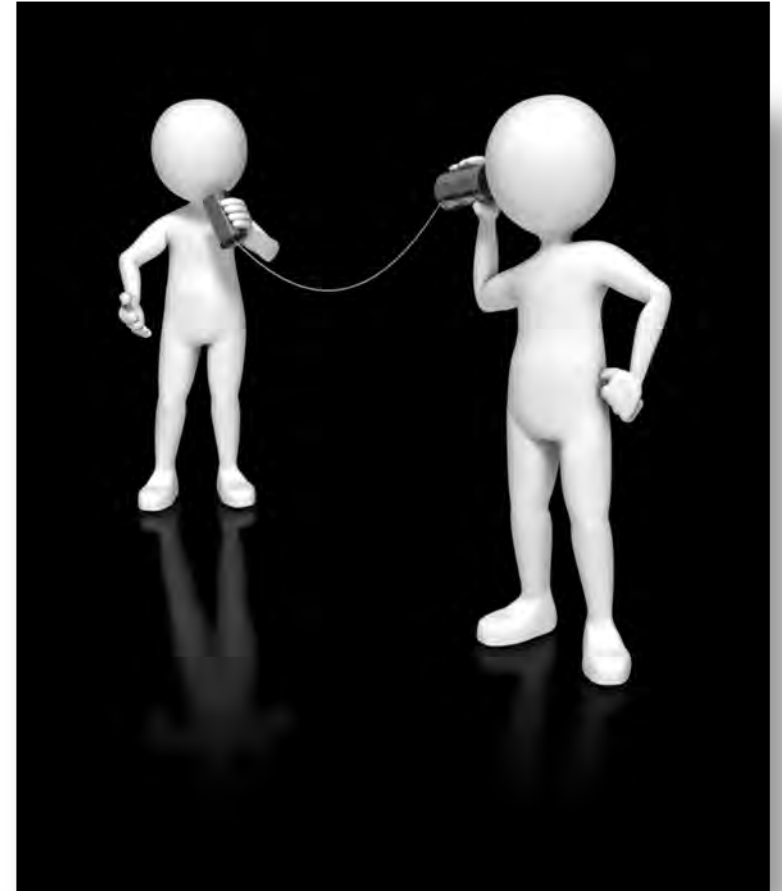
Look Beyond the Report

- Building a rapport
- Memory changes
- Do not interrupt – active listening
- Open mind

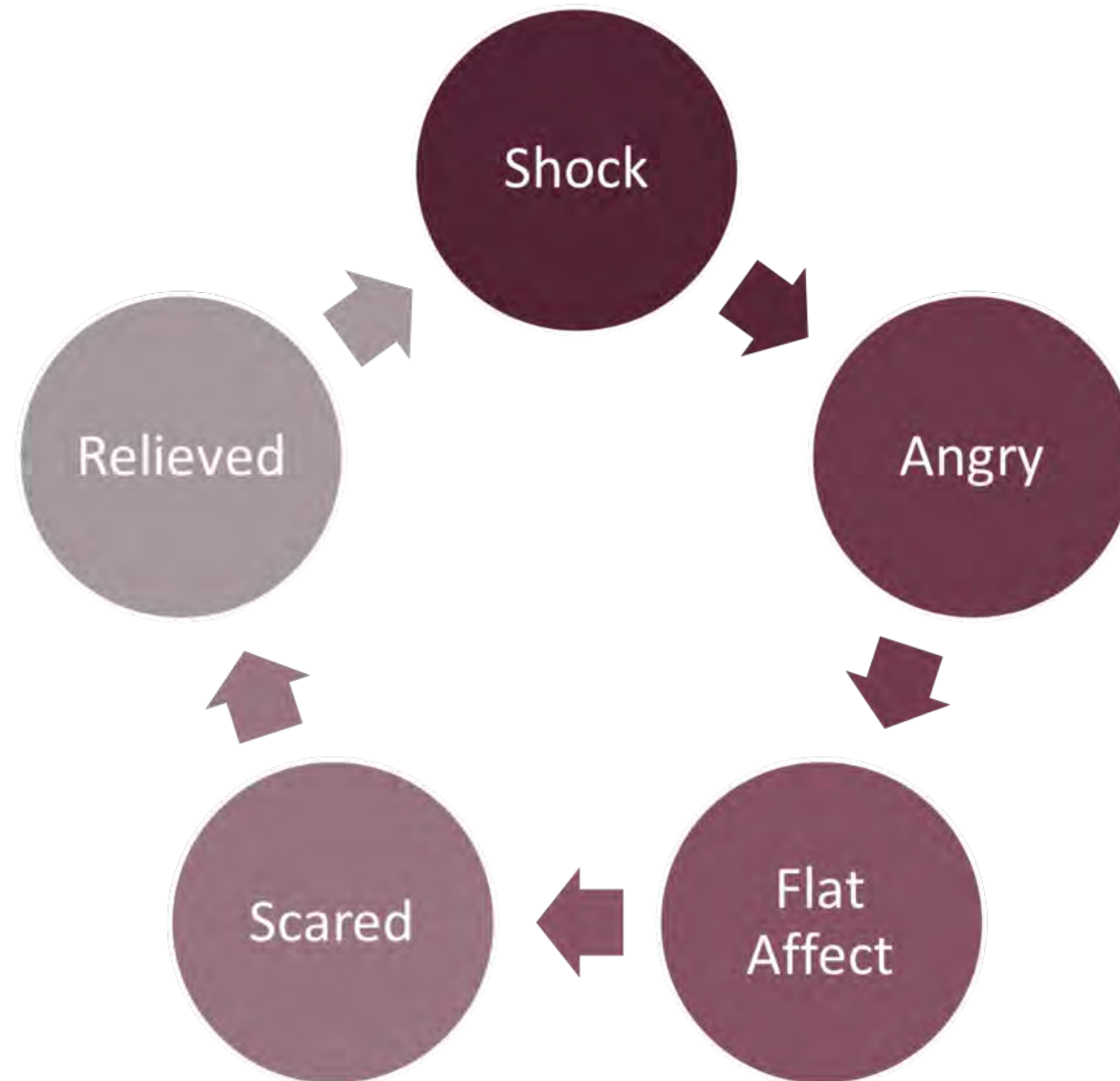


Body Language

- Eye contact
- Posture
- Hands
- In the present?
- Gauge level of understanding
- Does the victim understand what is being said?



Emotional Rollercoaster



Where should the interview occur?

What Best Fits Your Victim vs What You Have Available



Here?



Or Here?



Who should be in the room for the interview?

What Best Fits Your Victim vs What You Have Available



Who is in the room?

- The victim
- The investigator
- The victim advocate

Law Enforcement and Victim Advocates

What Victim Advocates Bring to
the Table:

- Training and Certification
- Crisis Intervention
- Safety Planning
- Maintaining Communication
(check-in, case updates, etc.)

Benefit: To enhance support



Support and Compassion

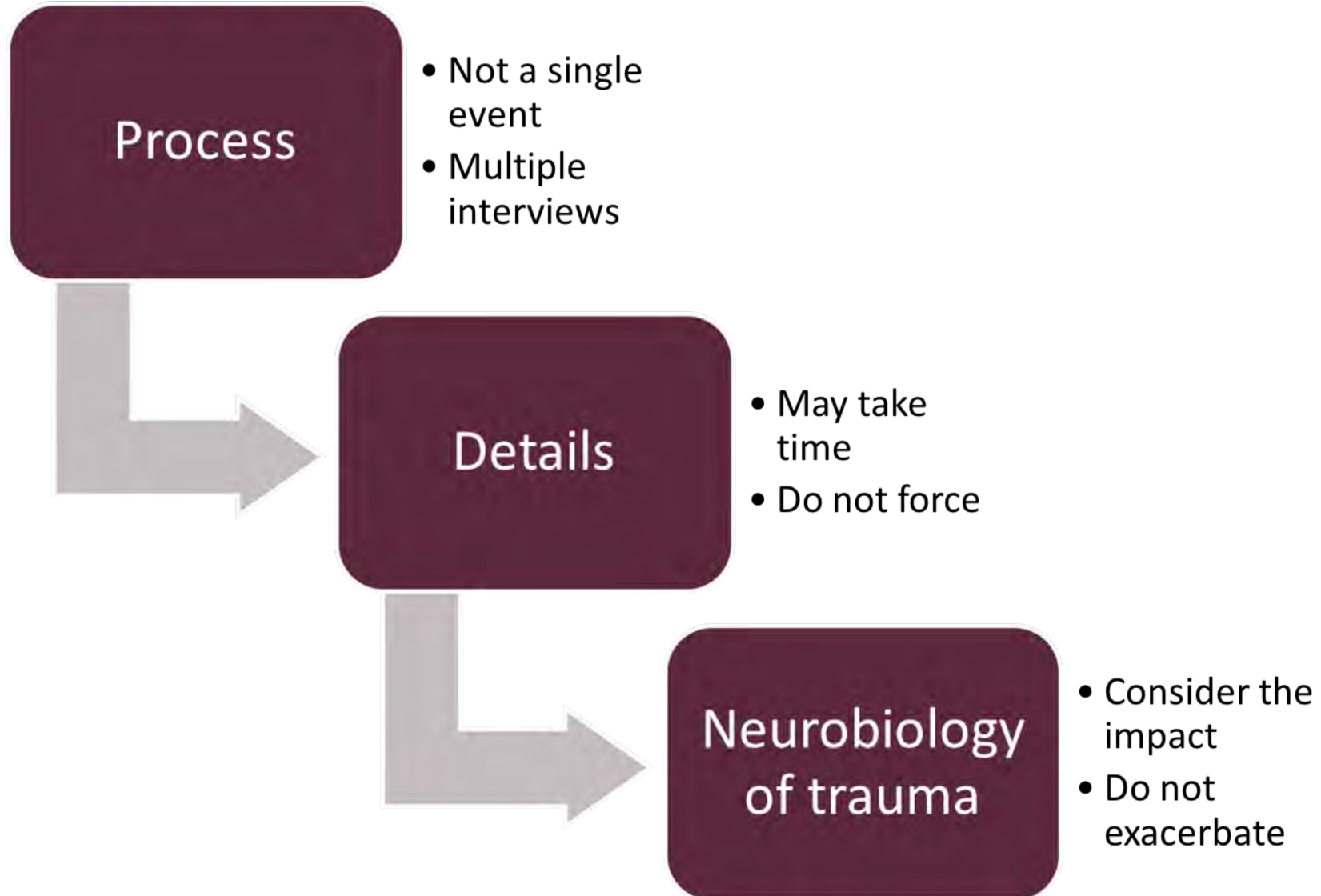
- Know when to give space
- Silence is okay
- Apologizing is okay
- Transparency



Different Approach

- Usual practice in other cases is to establish a timeline and key facts
- Encourage victims to describe the assault in their own words
- Do not interrupt
- Do not antagonize or zero in on discrepancies
- Do not force victims to prematurely try to piece together fragmented memories
- Do not interrogate

Process Approach



Victim-Centered

- Adapt to meet the needs of the victim
- Let victim know that you are part of a team that is here to offer support
- Meet the victim's physical needs before any interview (e.g., food, clothing, sleep)

Victim-Centered Cont.

- Mirror language used by the victim
- Recognize how societal myths and stereotypes affect everyone, even victim
- Avoid language that could be perceived as judgmental
 - Why did you?
 - Why didn't you?
- Ask open ended questions
 - What are you able to tell us?

Rapport Building

- Engage on relevant topics
- Gather background information
- Ask about family or topics that they care about
- Avoid re-victimization
- Put victim at ease/ allow some measure of control of interview
- Share commitment to victim-centered service

Victim Advocates

- Safety Planning:
 - Identify and develop a plan
- Case Management
 - Mental Health
 - Drug & Alcohol Dependency
 - Housing/Utilities/Childcare
 - Employment
- Maintaining communication (check-in, case updates, etc.)



Initial Interview

- Rapport building
- Identify needed services
- Provide information about your role and the process
- Get contact information
- General facts of the case
- Identify witnesses and evidentiary leads
- Address safety concerns; talk about witness intimidation
- Allow victim to ask questions

In-depth Interview

- Timing and victim's needs should be considered
- Schedule with advocate
- Let victim know that this conversation will be longer
- Allow victim to take breaks
- Follow up on initial interview topics, including services and safety plan

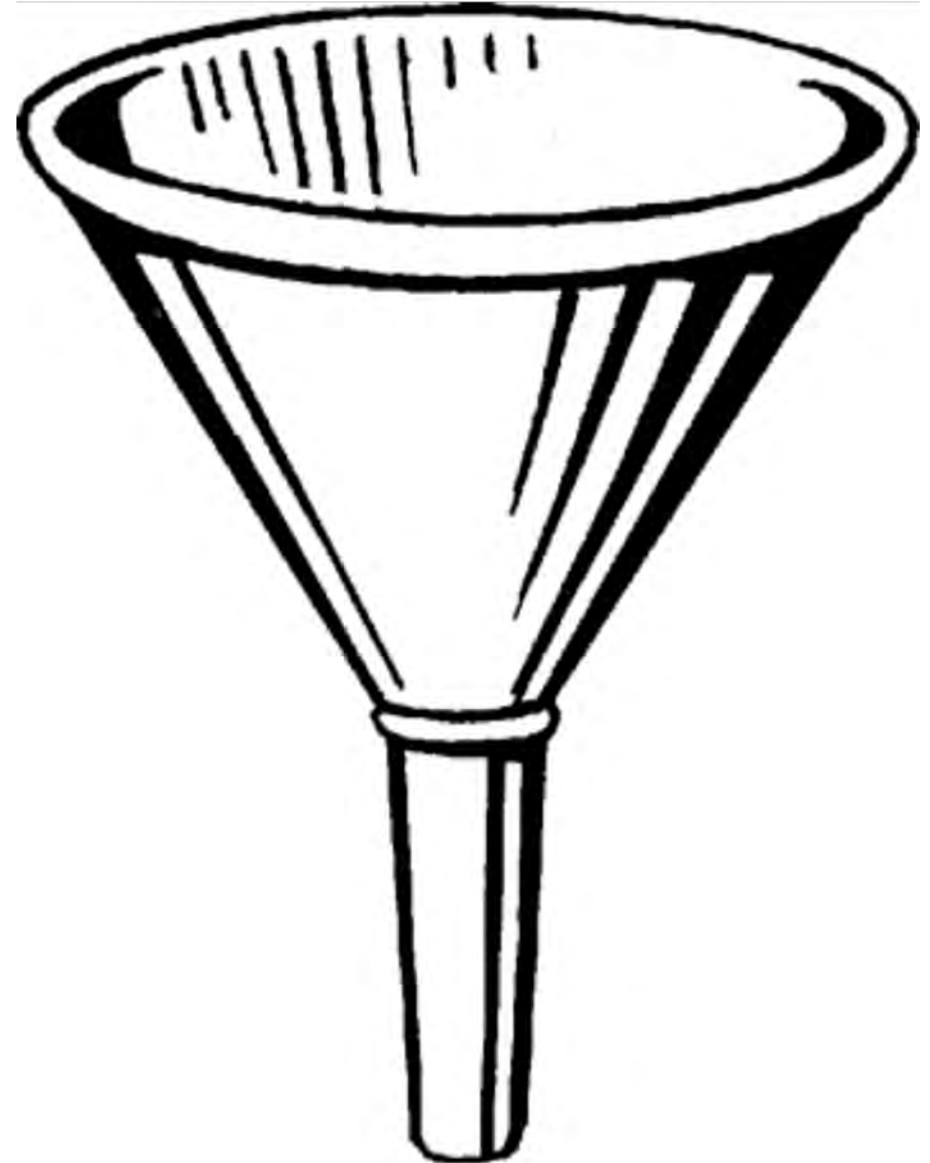
Open Questions

Invites victim to provide as much information as possible

- What was the party like?
- What are you able to tell me about what happened once you were alone?
- How did the night start?
- Can you tell me more about that?

Funnel Approach

- Open questions
- Follow up
- Closed
- Leading
- Summary



Closed Questions

Narrow and seek a one or two-word answer

- When you left your house, was it dark outside?
- Did you pay for the drinks?
- Do you remember anyone taking photos at the party?

Avoid Accusations and Ask Better Questions

- Why didn't you . . . ?
- Why did you . . . ?
- What are you able to tell me about . . . ?
- Do you remember . . . ?

Follow-up Questions

Used to clarify a response to an open question

- When you say that he gave you a funny look, can you describe that a little more?
- You said that there was a “tussle” – what do you mean by that?

Be careful not to interrupt the flow of the victim’s experience

Leading Questions

Suggests an answer in the question and are used to confirm facts that logically flow from the victim's responses

- You drank the shot he bought you?
- Your friend was not there at that point?

Use when appropriate

Trauma and Disclosure

- Avoid chronological questions
- Allow victim an opportunity to describe experience
- Ask for sensory, emotional, and physiological information
- Ask follow up questions to clarify language

Summary

Review the facts and victim's responses or reactions you have learned in the interview and invite the victim to elaborate or explain anything necessary

Recreate the Reality

When he held his hand to my throat, I could feel it on the other side. I thought I would die. I was sick before it went.

These questions may trigger traumatic memories.

Recreate the Reality

Sensory
Details

Sight

Hearing

Touch

Taste

Smell

Emotional
Response

How did
you feel?

Physiological
Effects

How did
that affect
you?

Breaking up the Monotony

Redirect the conversation

Remember special events and dates

Don't have the same conversation

Follow up on conversations in a timely manner



Investigator Training

Collaboration with local rape crisis

Constructive Criticism

Willing to Adapt to a New
Generation of Advocacy

Case Example

The conversation may go in a different direction

- Trauma triggers other memories
- Re-Victimization
- Crisis Intervention

Case Example: A.J.



The Truth

- Honesty is key
- Reassure victim that s/he will not be judged
- Recreates the reality of the crime
- Make victim comfortable; be respectful
- Want unflattering details
- Knowledge = power
- Prosecutor might keep “bad” information out
- Lies are often “face saving” and always relevant and admissible

Benefits

- Victims able to provide detail in her/ his own words
- Elicits sensory details
- Helps prosecutors and investigators identify corroborating evidence



Contact Information



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