Breaking the Silence

PRESENTER: SARAH SUPER, M.ED.
Agenda

› My story
› Defining trauma-informed leadership
› Why everyone should be trauma-informed
› Trauma-informed language and behaviors
› Break the Silence
Trauma-Informed Leadership

Trauma-informed leadership as a way of life

• A set of beliefs and practices to make a positive difference in the lives of those suffering from trauma.

• The courage to do what needs to be done and to say what needs to be said in the spirit of helping others heal from trauma and ultimately, curing our society of atrocities.
The Need for Trauma-Informed Leadership

1. Survivors surround us.

*The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (1998):*
1 in 5 Americans was sexually molested as a child;
1 in 4 was beaten by a parent to the point of a mark being left on their body;
1 in 3 couples engages in physical violence;
1 in 4 Americans grew up with alcoholic relatives;
1 in 8 witnessed their mother being beaten or hit.
Why Trauma-Informed Leadership?

2. Time does not heal trauma.

“The goal of treatment of PTSD is to help people live in the present, without feeling or behaving according to irrelevant demands of the past.” – Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

Traumatic Memory:
No beginning, middle, end.
Felt experience in the body.
Why Trauma-Informed Leadership?

3. Self-care does not heal trauma.

“Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.” – Judith Herman, M.D.
Why Trauma-Informed Leadership?

4. Every interaction with a trauma survivor is either hurtful or healing.

What we say and do, and what we don’t say and don’t do, matters.

We will either help restore a survivor’s sense of agency and trust, or we will compound the damage:

The world is good -------------The world is evil
People are trustworthy--------People are deceitful
I am deserving of respect-----I am not deserving
Why Trauma-Informed Leadership?

5. We too often fail trauma survivors in our communities.

E.g. Can a rape survivor heal in a rape culture?

Accountability – What is the relationship between accountability and healing?
How to be a Trauma-Informed Leader

› At the heart of every traumatic experience is:
  
  Disempowerment (force)
  Disconnection (betrayal)

› Thus, healing begins with:
  
  Empowerment (choice)
  Re-connection (trust, solidarity)

Herman, J.L., (1997). *Trauma and Recovery*. Basic books
Break the Silence: Say Something

Silence can be a reminder to the extreme experience of isolation and apathy that took place during the traumatic experience itself.

“All the perpetrator asks is that the community do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the community to share the burden of the pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering.”

Judith Herman, Trauma & Recovery
What can we say?

‣ “I’m sorry that happened to you.”
  • “I’m sorry” = shows compassion
  • “that happened” = validates their experience
  • “to you” = you are a victim and not to blame.

‣ “You are strong. You are courageous. You are inspiring.”

‣ “I stand with you.”
  • Starts with believing the narrative
  • Puts the victim/survivor’s needs first and foremost
    ◦ Requires us to take an active stand against sexual violence
Trauma-Sensitive Choices

Invitational Language
“As you’re ready…”
“If you would like…”
“You might…”
“Maybe…”
“You are welcome to…”

Validating Language
“That’s okay too.”
“Your choice.”
“Whatever sounds best for you.”
“You have my support either way.”

Offer one or more options + Offer an “opt out” + Validate all options = Real Choice
The choice is yours to break the silence, and we support you either way.
When You Trigger Someone

1. Take accountability and apologize.
   - For the pain you caused
   - If what you did was wrong or inappropriate

2. Offer choices for how you could make it better.

3. Invite their ideas for next steps.

4. Follow through on your commitment to make things right.
Break the Silence

Ending rape culture, holding perpetrators accountable, supporting survivors of sexual violence in healing.
Break the Silence
Break the Silence

I believe you.
You are so strong to break out!

Your bravery is inspiring.
Thank you for breaking the silence.

Thank you for breaking the silence.
You are strong and courageous.

I continue to learn from you. I am so honored to stand with you in this.

Sarah.
I am so sorry this happened to you.
I stand with you and I will fight back along with you.
Thank you for breaking your story and creating a space.

You are courageous and amazing. I am so happy with you.

Thank you for courageously sharing your story and creating a space.
Break the Silence

- Photography project
  - “Survivors of the Twin Cities: You are not alone.”
  - Featured on our Facebook page: Break the Silence Day
Break the Silence
Discussion

Thank you!

Stay Connected:
ssuper@breakthesilence.org
www.breakthesilence.org

Facebook: Break the Silence Day
Upcoming Events

Shattering Walls: Sex, Abuse, and Agency Webinar Series

Understanding Childhood Sexual Abuse
April 5, 2017; 12-1PM

Community Based Interventions
May 11, 2017; 1-2PM

Best Practices
June 8, 2017; 12-1PM
Thank you!

Contact us at CTAC.info@nyu.edu