



Connecting in Troubling Times

Deepening our understanding of safety planning in the Context of COVID-19

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

1 PM - 2:30 PM

Facilitators: Karine Silverwoman, Deepa Mattoo, Faith Ann Mendes

Agenda

1. Welcome remarks
2. Land acknowledgement
3. Introductions
4. Context around Safety Planning
5. Initial ideas around safety planning
6. Go around
7. Connecting to trauma-informed practice and Deepening safety tools
8. Check out
9. Questions, comments
10. Resources

Land Acknowledgement

The "Dish," or sometimes it is called the "Bowl," represents what is now southern Ontario, from Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe into the United States. We all eat out of the Dish, all of us that share this territory, with only one spoon. That means we have to share the responsibility of ensuring the dish is never empty, which includes taking care of the land and the creatures we share it with. Importantly there are no knives at the table, representing that we must keep the peace."

-Land Acknowledgement created by Aboriginal Education Council at Ryerson

Land acknowledgments are relational, and it is important for everybody doing a land acknowledgment to reflect on their own relationship with this land and colonialism. The Clinic understands that many of the populations we serve and are a part of have a history of experiencing violence and colonialism in their own lives and communities. We see this as a basis for solidarity between settlers and Indigenous Peoples.

Safety Planning Tools

High Risk Consult Questions and Reflections- by Karine Silverwoman

- a. CAS consults
- b. Concerns for client/children physical safety (risk from others)
- c. Suicide risk assessment

Questions to Guide the Consult:

1. Tell me what the situation is and what factors you think are important for me to know?
2. What is your assessment of the situation?
 - 2a. What are you aware of that is touching in you? How are you attending to this energy?
3. What actions need to happen? Today/Tomorrow/Next Week?
4. What is your professional experience and intuition telling you to do?
5. What is the timeline we are working with?
6. Does the client have a history with the Clinic? Have they consulted with legal before?
7. What if any systems/services are in play? Does the client need more systems in play?
8. What is the client's assessment of the situation, and what does she/they want?

Timeline

1. What is the worst-case scenario?
2. How quickly do we have to act?
3. When did these occurrences happen?
4. Are things escalating?
5. When did something happen? Did they happen with the child/ren?

Safety Planning

1. Did you go over the Barbra Schlifer Clinic's safety plan checklist? Suicide Assessment, Risk Assessment?
 2. Are there questions that you missed? Are there questions that make you uncomfortable?
 3. Let's go over the 5-point death review (obsessive behaviour, depression or other MH issues, excessive alcohol or substance use, suicidal ideation or escalation of violence, actual pending separation from domestic violence)
 4. What is the short-term, mid-term and long-term safety plan?
 5. Have you documented the safety plan?
 6. Have you given the client resources (crisis lines, etc.?)
 7. Has the client written down the safety plan?
 8. What part of the safety plan worries the client the most?
 9. How are you slowing down the process and creating a supportive, empathizing tone during the process?
 10. If the client comes from a racialized community, does not have status or is queer or trans, how do you talk to them about the impacts of connecting with the police or child welfare? What kind of supports can you offer them? (Calling with them, making a list of questions with them etc.)
Is CAS currently involved? Has CAS been involved in the past?
 2. What was the experience like for the clients and children?
 3. How does their social location impact the decisions we make?
 4. What are our legal and professional obligations?
 5. What does the client want us to do?
 6. What, if any, is our discomfort?
 7. What are the pros and cons of calling CAS today vs another day?
 8. If a call has to be made, does the client want to be involved? If yes, how so?
 9. Ask the client how they want us to advocate.
 - 9a. If the client comes from a racialized community, does not have status or is queer or trans, how do you talk to them about the impacts of connecting with the police or child welfare? What kind of supports can you offer them? (calling with them, making a list of questions with them etc.)
- **Have you received consent from the client to talk to all other agencies, institutions or people involved in the person's life?

Other Questions

1. How does their social location impact the decisions we make?
2. What are the strengths of their situation?
3. What are the client's biggest fears?
4. What is the worst-case scenario?
5. What are your biggest fears?
6. What risks are there she stays? What are the risks if she leaves?
7. Is there time to reflect/How fast do we need to respond?

8. What kind of advocacy does the client need?
9. Where there any moments you could slow the client down?
10. How can you slow things down for yourself?
11. Remind clients of their strengths
12. What other alternatives have you explored other than the police and CAS

Follow-up

1. Are the notes complete?
2. Any other follow-up needed, and what is the timeline for the follow-up?
3. Does a case consult need to happen with legal and counselling-when? Do we have client permission?
4. Have you scheduled a debrief?

Debriefing and Emotional Impact?

1. Have you scheduled self-care?
2. What stood out for you personally and professionally?
3. What arose in you? (emotionally, physically)
4. What do you need to do to take care of yourself at work and after work?
5. What did you learn from it?
6. What would you do the same or differently?
7. How your agency be of support to you?
8. Is there any follow up you need to do for yourself or your colleagues?

Safety Planning and COVID-19

IF YOU ARE LIVING WITH YOUR ABUSER:

- Try and identify patterns in your partner's use and level of force so you can attempt to predict danger to you and others before it occurs.
- Develop an emergency escape plan and review/revise it often.
- Think about safe areas of the house with no weapons, and there are at least two ways to escape. If the situation escalates, try to move to those areas.
- If comfortable, notify a neighbour of what has been happening. You can use a visual code or some other code with the neighbour to let them know you need help. IE. Curtain pulled to the side, plant on the windowsill, turning a specific light on or off etc.
- Make sure the home address is visible for emergency calls.
- Consider staying with friends, family members, or anyplace your partner would not immediately look should you need to leave quickly.
- If you are planning to leave, try and plan to leave when your partner is going to be out of the home. Have someone attend if possible to be with you in the event they return when not expected.
- Always have a cell phone charged and close by. Have a backup cell phone in a safe spot, if possible.

- Put together an emergency bag and keep it at a trusted friend or neighbour that is quickly accessible and safe. In the emergency bag, keep important personal/legal/financial documents such as passports, bank records, health cards, journals of abuse if logged etc. You can also keep practical items such as clothing, extra money, cell phone, a spare key to home/car etc.
- Create a phone list with numbers of local police, emergency shelter, assaulted women's helpline, family members and children's friends and keep it accessible at all times.
- Call the police if you feel at risk when leaving. Both Police and Toronto Victim Services can provide you with an accompaniment to retrieve your belongings.
- Ensure children have a safety plan in the event of an emergency and feel comfortable enough to follow through if needed. Practice as one would with a fire alarm. (See safety plan for children)
- If you are planning to go to a shelter and have a pet, a referral from your shelter can be made to SafePet Ottawa. SafePet can foster your pet until you are in a safe space. You can also prepare a pet emergency bag.
- Keeping a log of all abuse/harassment can be very helpful. This log can be used to recount incidents to the police or in court. Include all types of abuse and harassment in your log, and it may help identify patterns of behaviour. (See the incident log)

While My Kids Are Home from School:

- My children know not to try to get involved in the fight and to call 911.
- I have taught my children:
 - Not to call 911 in front of my partner.
 - I have taught my children: What to say when they call 911.
 - To stay on the line with the dispatcher when they call 911 and to not hang up.
- My children know the code word that tells them to call 911. The codeword is: _____.
- I have shown my children:
 - A safe place in the home/apartment.
 - A safe way to exit the home and a safe neighbour's home to go to for help. The name and phone number for the neighbour(s) is: _____.
 - A safe way to go to the concierge/security desk in my building to get help.
- My children know that I will come and get them from their safe place as soon as possible.

SAFETY PLANNING RESOURCES

Pods and Pod Mapping Worksheet by Mia Mingus

<https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>

Preventing & Managing the Spread of COVID-19 Within Domestic Violence Programs

<https://vawnet.org/news/preventing-managing-spread-covid-19-within-domestic-violence-programs>

iDetermine social media tool kit A new digital helpline for women & non-binary folks in abusive relationships.

www.idetermine.ca

Alternatives to Police and Anti-Black Racism

<http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/>

<http://criticalresistance.org/resources/addressing-harm-accountability-and-healing/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Fumbling-Towards-Repair-Accountability-Facilitators/dp/1939202329>

Resources Around Anti-Black Racism

[https://canadianwomen.org/blog/robyn-](https://canadianwomen.org/blog/robyn-maynard/?gclid=CjwKCAjw8df2BRA3EiwAvfZWaFNBlkyrFKDsbeE784G_Mted7Nt9oXsobvn49pjVqB4N1ydnRQZNmHBoCk5kQAvD_BwE)

[maynard/?gclid=CjwKCAjw8df2BRA3EiwAvfZWaFNBlkyrFKDsbeE784G_Mted7Nt9oXsobvn49pjVqB4N1ydnRQZNmHBoCk5kQAvD_BwE](https://canadianwomen.org/blog/robyn-maynard/?gclid=CjwKCAjw8df2BRA3EiwAvfZWaFNBlkyrFKDsbeE784G_Mted7Nt9oXsobvn49pjVqB4N1ydnRQZNmHBoCk5kQAvD_BwE)

<https://robindiangelo.com/>

<https://www.goodlifeproject.com/podcast/rev-angel-kyodo-williams/>

- <https://ruthking.net/the-untold/>

- <https://www.rachelcargle.com/>

https://www.gofundme.com/f/a-fund-for-blackled-mental-health-supports?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link-tip&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet

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By Alexis Pauline Gumbs Dedicated to Eric Garner

And to Margaret Garner's Daughter

**take a deep breath everywhere you see a star*

i.

return to the place

where you learned

how to breathe

where night washed itself

into your dreams

return

to the place

where you learned

*

breathing was bigger
than you
or your fears of
dogs bats and sea creatures

*

and would continue
all night long
without you trying
to keep it going

*

human freedom is like that
unstoppable
as the ocean at night
sometimes the crashing is just louder
like right now

*

ii.

*

we are feeling it in our chests
right now
the underwater knowing
of upside-down justice
that has to right itself
that hasn't righted itself

*

the sinking feeling
that the chokehold of the state
is more persistent than the ocean

*

it is not

*

iii.

*

if I could
I would bring all our people
right next to the ocean
to just sit
and breathe with the ancestors

*

just listen

knowing all this sand
was bone
and the stars
are just us
reflected
across the black history
of the universe

*

iv.

*

i want every last breath
to be a tide going out
so we can imagine
some baby somewhere
gasping into time
with an unbroken custody
of air

*

i don't want the choking struggle
the staccato of bullets
shattering the song
of what we know

*

but sometimes
even as the ocean
slaps the sand
it sounds shocked to me
shoreline shaping impact
this is happening
again

*

v.

*

I imagine
Eric Garner
becoming the ocean
like Margaret Garner's baby
awakening stream
how all blood flows back
to the salt in this water
how something

unstoppable
screams
*

Trauma

"Trauma is an internal straitjacket created when a devastating moment is frozen in time. It stifles the unfolding of being and strangles our attempts to move forward with our lives. It disconnects us from ourselves, nature and spirit. When overwhelmed by threat, we are frozen in fear, as though our instinctive survival energies were 'all dressed up with no place to go.'"

"Trauma originates as a response in the nervous system and does not originate in an event. Trauma is in the nervous system, not in the event." – Peter Levine

"Trauma is when we have encountered an out of control, frightening experience that has disconnected us from all sense of resourcefulness or safety or coping or love".
(Tara Brach, 2011)

Trauma and the Brain

Question:

What are some of the ways stress shows up in your body?

Embodying a positive memory as a resource:

Pick a time when you felt loved/ connected/ happy and notice what happens in your body.

Safety (internal)

The Slower You Go, The Faster You Get There

"Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives."- Bessel van der Kolk

"Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence in others; the critical issue is reciprocity; being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow, we need a visceral feeling of safety."

-Bessel van der Kolk

Trauma and Oppression

Window of Tolerance

Ask yourself:

- Who do you connect with when you are feeling off-balance, or at the edge of your window?
- Now take a moment to jot down things that have helped you when you are out of your window of tolerance?
- Can you identify when you are out of your window?
- How do you know?
- What brings you back?

Working with Stress and Anxiety

Grounding Techniques

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present. Grounding helps reorient a person to the here-and-now; its skills can help manage overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety. They help someone regain their mental focus from an often intensely emotional state.

What are some grounding techniques you already use?

Tools for Orienting or Grounding

- Focus your attention entirely on each breath, on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of breaths to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash some water on your face. Notice how it feels. Notice how the towel feels as you dry.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can or bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them. Notice how your feet feel to be encased in shoes or socks.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it. Notice the pressure of the chair or floor or table against your body and limbs.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part of your body feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop and listen. Notice and name what sounds you can hear nearby. Gradually move your awareness of sounds outward, so you are focusing on what you can hear in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Don't rush drinking it; take small sips, and take your time tasting each mouthful.
- Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side. Name and notice the qualities of large objects and then smaller ones.
- Get up and walk around. Take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- Stamp your feet and notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together. Hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.

- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.
- If you can, step outside, notice the air temperature and how much it is different or similar from where you have just come.
- Notice five things you can see, five things you can hear, five things you can feel, taste, or smell.
- Run your hands over something with an interesting texture.
- Get a sultana, a nut, or some seeds, etc. Focus on how it looks, feels and smells. Put it in your mouth and notice how that feels before chewing mindfully and noticing how it feels to swallow.
- Put on a piece of instrumental [music](#). Give it all your attention.

Self-Soothing Techniques

- Self-soothing activities are a source of decreased arousal, pleasurable sensations and calming feelings. Slow, gentle or rhythmical movements characterize them; softness in texture, tone and hues; quietness in volume. They include but are not limited to, the following:
 - Calming breathing
 - Gentle holding and rocking
 - Calming self-talk
 - accessing calming sensations: e.g. warm baths and showers, warm drinks, soft textiles (blankets, soft toys, hot water bottles), calming music, soft lighting walking, or gardening.

Body-Based Techniques

- Power poses
- Standing like a tree grounding exercise
- Hand on heart, other on the belly
- Controlled breathing (in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4)
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Running/walking
- Stretching and noticing different parts of the body
- Squeezing large muscle groups
- Self-touch holds

Glimmers and Triggers

By: Andrea Glik

Glimmers are essentially the opposite of triggers!

If a trigger brings us into a survival state and is also known as a cue of danger, glimmers are what bring us back into our tolerance and safety (signal of safety).

To fully understand where glimmers take us in our nervous system, it's important to outline the branches. The nervous system has the sympathetic branch and the parasympathetic branch.

The sympathetic is our fight or flight response; it's our nervous system's call to action. It calls us to fight back, or run away, depending on what feels like it is going to be more successful, or what has worked for us in the past.

This is also known as a hyper-aroused state, a state of the body with more stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, increasing our heart rate and suspending our appetite, so we are more ready for the fight to run. This can also show up as anxiety, anger, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, and so on when we get stuck in this state.

The parasympathetic branch has two separate parts, the dorsal vagal and the ventral vagal.

The dorsal is our submit/freeze response. It is where our nervous system goes when we have perceived that fight or flight isn't safe. It is the "giving up," hopelessness, "if I am so still maybe no one will see my response." It's like the hurt animal we try and help on the side of the road, which is listless, and we can't even tell if they are alive. It's playing dead.

The ventral vagal is where we go when we feel safe and connected. Our glimmers take us here. It is the feeling of being known and understood, seen and validated. It feels cozy and safe and secure, in a space or with a person.

As Deb Dana talks about, our goal is not to be here all the time. We are meant to fluctuate between states, with flexibility. It's when we get stuck in a survival state, and can't access the safe and connected place where we need help coming home to the ventral vagal state.

So back to triggers and glimmers, Certain smells, places and people and so on activate us into a sympathetic response (our fight or flight response) or the parasympathetic response connected to the dorsal vagal (our freeze or collapse response).

Certain smells, places and people and so on can activate us into our ventral vagal, the safe and connected zone of our parasympathetic nervous system.

Those are our glimmers!

Trauma-informed Tools your agency can incorporate for connection

- Formal and informal debriefs
- Morning check-ins
- Flexing work time to accommodate working parents and caregivers
- Incorporating and embodying trauma tools in supervision and check-ins
- Incorporating high-risk protocols, so workers do not feel alone
- Honouring vulnerability as a strength
- Psycho-education about how our brain, body and nervous systems are impacted by the work (not just in negative ways)
- Having buddy systems
- Encourage breaks
- Encourage intentional transitions between work and home life especially given the nature of the work
- Have conversations with teams: what is helpful, what is stressful, what are your signs of stress, how will I know you need help, what are you grateful for, what brings you joy? These are not conversations that you have just once. They are ongoing and help you stay in contact with the level of stress people are experiencing.

Resources

Mad Queer Organizing Strategies:

Surviving the Apocalypse Together! A Mutual Aid Safety and Wellness Planning Template for COVID-19

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18jineTQqwCaTjUYoLiO3I-Z60vSE-r00/view?fbclid=IwAR2gSOzmtHvRmh8kmnCF_XqQfTEweGNepbYkbW7PuZQKVdIfaQuGVwBIWFE

Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty

[https://4648dcw4pye15w61x1reklps-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/assets/covid-19/guide to living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty en-us.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2JnAlkAo6q91QxTBwtjPfeqsxDMF5x02eRtaRNFZBJSbtK0IS51onU9jM](https://4648dcw4pye15w61x1reklps-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/assets/covid-19/guide%20to%20living%20with%20worry%20and%20anxiety%20amidst%20global%20uncertainty%20en-us.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2JnAlkAo6q91QxTBwtjPfeqsxDMF5x02eRtaRNFZBJSbtK0IS51onU9jM)

RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture

<https://www.tarabrach.com/rain/>

Surviving a Pandemic: Tools for Addressing Isolation, Anxiety, and Grief

https://crimethinc.com/2020/05/07/surviving-a-pandemic-tools-for-addressing-isolation-anxiety-and-grief?fbclid=IwAR2RvNhtyvakoKlpB_Ov1Z3qUVoMRFraqe1RePbUYfZPxHMIKlkjxUsrZJU

Accessible & Inclusive Mental Health Resources for Coping Through COVID-19

<https://takecare19.com/?fbclid=IwAR1yyLDHxarw3JT9jQJShAlcgnDmflfzGwPh11BbEe94tFICjp5UGUy5UU>

Tolerance for Uncertainty: A COVID- 19 Workbook

A guide to accept your feelings, tolerate distress and thrive

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wVkhHai96zxHP55b4S70FnL7YjnPOY_fd/view?fbclid=IwAR1Roz0ErrEOPFvx0kDb_J_nxSZN9JlkuMPBvfDqWFKV2cD79LsqCvDYaZJU

Resources for Trauma-Informed Practice

Books:

Unfuck Your Brain: Getting Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-Outs, and Triggers with Science. Faith Harper

Treating the Trauma Survivor. Carrie Clark

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies. Book by Resmaa Menakem

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others. Laura van Dernoot Lipsky.

The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma. Francoise Mathieu.

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead. Brene Brown.

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Bessel van der Kolk.

Trauma is really strange. Steve Haines

Websites:

Tara Brach - tarabrach.com

Palouse Mindfulness - palousemindfulness.com

The Trauma Toolkit : https://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf

Ruth King

<https://ruthking.net/>

CTRI (Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute)

<https://ca.ctrinstitute.com/>

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver
Wild Geese