

HS 207: Trauma, Sexual Abuse, and Recovery

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Reaction paper #1: Andrea Gerry

Trauma... relatively speaking, a lot of things can cause trauma. Child abuse, sexual/physical abuse, deaths, accidents, and medical trauma. I also think about growing up with a parent who has mental disorders or a substance abuse problem.

As I sit here trying to write this paper I'm having a hard time finding the right words to explain myself. Trauma is so easily thrown around casually as we talked about in class, It shouldn't be. I began to wonder when initially diagnosed with trauma. Is it a label? Do you identify as damaged? I would think very few would want to identify as having been traumatized. Cultural shame and secrecy are pervasive. I don't know if it is shame, being pain averse, or not wanting to think your own issues are actually trauma.

I did come to realize that a person's response to certain events may vary. Ranging from mild disruption of daily life for a short period of time to multiple responses that create debilitating effects on normal life activities. If symptoms are left untreated, the lives of these individuals and their families will become impacted negatively.

Traumatic experiences do leave traces. Whether small, large, on our families, or dark secrets being passed down through generations. They leave a trace on our minds and emotions. Fortunately human beings have the capacity for resilience. Many of us try to push

these thoughts out of our minds like nothing happened. Yet, the memory of shame and vulnerability continue to negatively impact our lives.

This class so far has been extremely interesting for me. I have a big interest in this. What really piqued my interest the most is the impact it has on the children and how it carries on into life as an adult. I have a lot of curiosity about individual trauma as well.

From what has been discussed so far and with the study of Adverse Childhood Experiences, It deeply saddens me to know that children are so greatly affected by traumatic stress. That individuals and or parents are unaware of the impact it is having on their families. These children are emotionally unprepared to handle these circumstances on their own. I would imagine that their emotional coping skills are not fully developed. All of this carries on into adulthood.

Which leads to my interest in the Adverse Childhood Experiences. Although adults say "He/She was so young when that happened, He/She won't remember it as an adult. Childhood trauma can have a lifelong effect. With appropriate interventions adults can help kids recover from traumatic experiences more effectively. Early intervention can prevent a child from experiencing ongoing effects. (as stated in previous lectures)

I think the ACE questionnaire is really important to give during intake or assessments. It gives you an idea of what you are up against and the best way to help guide and motivate an individual into healthy living. I believe it could make them feel more hopeful. It may even be validating in some way. ACE can help individuals understand the impact of Post Traumatic Stress. Trauma is traumatic but I think that understanding ACE can be both helpful and hopeful.

The outcomes of ACE drew my curiosity because the study found a number of childhood exposures to also be linked later to health risk factors and a leading cause in deaths among adults. It showed disrupted neurodevelopment, cognitive, emotional, and social issues, adopting high-risk health behavior and disease, disability, and social problems. This all eventually could even lead to an early death. That is incredibly troubling to me not only as a counselor but as a mother. Substance Abuse was also the most prevalent amongst the 7 categories of ACE. So I can see why this class would be vitally important because we will encounter individuals with underlying traumatic issues. It is heavily correlated with Substance Abuse. ( as talked about in-class lectures)

Individual trauma also piqued my interest in the class. Many individuals struggle with individual trauma. This is also the wounds we don't see. You are always on edge, feel shaky, easily startled, It sometimes leaves you wondering if you can even feel at all. I'd like to get deeper into this because I think during our career we are going to have clients who experience individual trauma. We need to better understand them and to be able to have the knowledge to better guide our clients.