

Psychosocial Healing: Theory and Practice

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Course
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PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALING

- **Definition**
 - Psychosocial healing of a traumatized population integrates psychological healing of the individual with social healing of the community
- **Principles**
 - Psychosocial healing is closely related to peace-building; both are ultimately about developing or repairing healthy human relationships
 - Post-traumatic stress reactions can be a normal reaction to abnormal events
 - Trauma does not happen in a social vacuum, nor does it heal apart from ongoing social processes

Context for Psychosocial Healing

- **Human security**
- **Social reconstruction**
- **Community reconciliation**
- **Conflict management**
- **Integrated action**
- **Health Bridges for Peace**

Stress and Trauma

Ordinary Stress

Slow or gradual change

Wearing down over time

Able to plan and adjust

People affected differently

Traumatic Stress

Sudden, significant loss

Piercing intensity; shock
to system

Overwhelming sense of
helplessness

Terror; frightens almost
anyone

Glossary of Stress and Trauma

- **Stress** — physical, emotional, psychological and /or behavioral reactions to a threatening event.
- **A traumatic event** — event beyond the boundaries of ordinary human experience, overwhelming normal adaptive responses, causing loss of sense of control and connection.
- **Traumatic stress reactions** — responses during or immediately after a traumatic event.
- **Post-traumatic stress reactions** — delayed responses to a traumatic event.
- **Post traumatic stress "disorder"** — set of delayed responses of such high severity (the dividing line is controversial) that professional help is needed.

Post-traumatic stress reactions

- cognitive
- emotional
- physical
- behavioral

Manifestations of post-traumatic stress

- hyperarousal
- intrusion
- constriction

Societal Trauma and its Sequelae

Causes of societal trauma

Impacts of societal trauma

Psychosocial degeneration

- Loss of trust
- Difficulty mourning
- Helplessness and humiliation
- New social patterns
- Environmental destruction
- Increased large-group identity

Trans-generational transmission

- Myths and chosen traumas

Stages of Psychosocial Healing

A Healing Relationship

- support group or network

Safety:

- from unpredictable danger toward reliable security

Acknowledgement

- from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory

Reconnection

- from isolation, helplessness and stigmatization to meaningful social connections and empowerment

Medical Network for Social Reconstruction in the Former Yugoslavia

Structure

- Health-care professionals drawn from all parts of the former Yugoslavia
- Coordinated by a Contact Group

Operating Principles

- Violent conflict and war are the ultimate threat to public health
- The health community has a unique and crucial role to play in post-conflict reconstruction

Programs

- Conferences
- Training and education
- Local assistance
- Publications
- International outreach



PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALING

Definition

- Psychosocial healing of a traumatized population integrates psychological healing of the individual with social healing of the community

Principles

- Psychosocial healing is closely related to peace-building; both are ultimately about developing or restoring healthy human relationships
- Post-traumatic stress reactions can be a normal reaction to abnormal events
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Stages of healing

- safety
- acknowledgement
- reconnection

Implementing Psychosocial Healing

Community integration

- Social reconstruction by integration of vulnerable groups

Volunteer action

- Training and empowerment of volunteers to engage in social reconstruction

Training, and training of trainers

- Identification, empowerment and activation of health professionals to meet assessed needs

Help to helpers

- Assistance to healers for stress, burnout, and/or indirect trauma

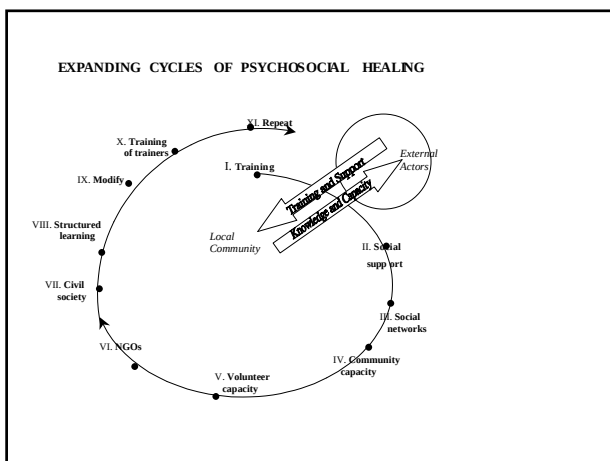






Lessons from Training and Training of Trainers

- Employ new and creative healing skills
- Tailor programs to the needs of trainees
- Build mutual-support networks
- Gains from training can extend far beyond the initial focus



Lessons from Social-Reconstruction Programs

- Guidance of local programs by a broadly representative group of indigenous personnel
- Embed a program in a structure that has the potential for long-term sustainability
- Offer international assistance in the spirit of partnership
- Establish effective channels for ongoing communication and information exchange
- Build links with other actors and other sectors
- Evaluate programs in a manner that is empowering and instructive
- Share lessons learned



