

Theory and Practice to Address
and Reduce Hopelessness,
Suicidality, Trauma and Violence

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Welcome

- 1. Introduction of presenter
- 2. Introductions of attendees with one statement about their work and one statement about what they want to learn
- 3. Introduce yourself to two or three people sitting near you
- 4. Brief presentation of format

Focus on History: Attachment and Trauma

- 1. Review people's history prior to meeting them and with them. If they have been incarcerated often and /or for a long time, acknowledge that they have done this before.
- 2. Focus on attachment and the possible presence of trauma
- 3. When trauma is present, acknowledge it
- 4. An ex: I hope you have been told this for years, but I'd like to have it said here: you didn't deserve this, any of this abuse, neglect, abandonment.

Focus on Recent Past and Interweave Present

- 1. Recent Past: What got you here? Review it yourself though let them tell their story. If they don't want to tell their story then, let them have the choice to control the pacing. If they tell you about not committing the crime and /or feeling that their sentence isn't fair, empathize. It doesn't mean you necessarily agree with them.
- 2. How are you doing now? Focus on emotions, eg depression and then anxiety, stress, worry and tension all together. Ask to rate on 0 to 10 scale.
- 3. What are their assignments, including work, groups, activities in and out of their cells, a cellmate.
- 4. Do they have rule violations? If so, how many, for what, how did they feel when the 115 happened?

Continue with Present Support and Activities

- 1. Do they communicate with anyone outside? If so, who, by mail and / or phone, how often?
- 2. Do they exercise? How often? For how long? If not, how come? Encourage some: modified push ups against the wall in their cell if they don't go to yard, squats, sit ups, walking if possible.
- 3. Who do they talk to inside? How often?
- 4. Do they have religious, spiritual, cultural beliefs?
- 5. What is their day like? Read, draw, other?

Their Goals

- 1. Ask about their goals. Push them on this.
- 2. If they will get released, ask them to forget practical limitations and think about what they'd want to do if they could do anything. If they can't think of anything or say "I don't know," ask what subjects they liked in school. Build on that.
- 3. If in your assessment they are smart, tell them so. Ask about high school and / or GED, and if they have that, encourage them to take college courses and get their AA degree, depending on their time.

Addressing Trauma: EMDR and Other Approaches

- 1. Distancing from the trauma with:
 - - the DVD exercise
 - - driving into the future
 - - tapping
 - - reducing size and light
- 2. Separation of the abuser from the patient

Addressing Trauma II

- 1. Increasing tolerance of emotional pain: Fastening the safety belt
- 2. Understanding waves of pain and grief: Swimming pool
- 3. Addressing traumatic nightmares
- 4. Creating healthy word pictures of life without drugs, alcohol, violence, the intensity of illegal activities to block out the pain of trauma

Reducing Hopelessness: Paint a Word Picture

- 1. If they will get released and have legal work they can and want to do, support the value of that work
- 2. If their sentence is long, or LWP, talk with them about legal changes that may lead to earlier release
- 3. Ex. Man with 3rd strike sentence for nonviolent robberies. Parole board approving release of IM's
- 4. Ex. Man with very low academic abilities: Talk about a realistic good life after release.
- 5. Ex. Man with physical disabilities from beating trauma and history of homelessness: Talk about positive possibilities with SSI, son, daughter, grandson

Reducing Hopelessness: IM's with Unlikely Release

- 1. With thorough history, focus on what matters to them. If possible, put that into a future perspective.
- 2. Talk about how they may have a positive impact on other inmates and may already have had a positive impact on other IM's and may never know it
- 3. Ask about writing their story, joining a creative group if any are offered. Encourage IM's to act, do improv.
- 4. With especially tough folks, eg in gangs, have killed a number of people, ask what matters to them. If they say something related to their own safety, I take that as an indication of a young developmental level possibly related to abuse, neglect and / or abandonment, and I support that goal.

Reducing Suicidality

- 1. Explore their religious beliefs and whether their beliefs prohibit suicide
- 2. Again, discuss their goals and / or sense of purpose. What if they commit suicide, but could have achieved their goals if they'd stayed alive? What if they would have met someone they loved who loved them? It'd be a shame to miss that.
- 3. Family and friends would never recover.
- 4. What if some part of them continues past death and has the same feelings they had when they died?

Reducing Violence

- 1. Challenge the cultural idea that if someone disrespects them, they must fight and claim respect
- 2. Challenge the notion that in prison everyone fights: Assert that every prison has people who never fight and never get harassed or threatened
- 3. Talk about not taking anything personally that anyone else does, even if intended to be personal
- 4. To do that means letting themselves get caught in someone else's drama

Reducing Violence II

- 5. What if they take personally an IM disrespecting them, get into a fight and hurt that IM, and get 6 yrs added to their sentence for assault. Then they learn that IM had just gotten a dear John or Jane letter, or learned their child or mom was ill, and the IM was upset, depressed and furious?
- 6. They are giving their power away, their power to control their own future by controlling their behavior if they let someone else get them into a fight, and let themselves get drawn into someone else's drama.
- 7. Whether incarcerated or not, play inside the ethical field.

Pulling it Together

- 1. We are more than the worst things we've ever done. So are the people we work with, even if they have done things that will keep them incarcerated for life.
- 2. As long as we are alive, we can make changes, even in baby steps.
- 3. Celebrate every positive step no matter how small!