The Trauma Experience

- **Overwhelms:**
  - Ability to cope
  - Ability to integrate ideas and emotions of event
- Result? Extreme confusion & insecurity

Trauma & Stress=
Amygdala in Control

Senses and Emotions
Memory of Crisis Event looks like....

EFFECTS of TRAUMA

- Memory has been impaired
- The emotional and sensory parts of the brain are responding.
- Memory is fragmented, difficult to retrieve
- Memory is accurate.

The Investigator’s Role: Take The Allegation Seriously

“By corroborating as many facts as possible, no matter how insignificant they may seem, the officer can better help establish the validity of the victim’s story and improve credibility even when there are other problems with the investigation.” – Russell Strand
Credibility Concerns in the Care Facility Setting

Some Background on MEMORY

- **Implicit Memory**: Central details are retrievable and not distorted.
- **Explicit Memory**: Peripheral details are hard to retrieve and easily distorted.

- Attention is needed for central details to be retrievable and not distorted.
- Attention is not needed for peripheral details to be retrievable and not distorted.
The Problem: Close-Ended Questions

RECALL

V.
RECOGNITION

More information, More accurate

Requires providing specific information in response to investigator inquiry

Partner Interview Exercise

We can get what we need by modifying our approach to account for the fact of trauma.
Will I help or will I hurt?

RECOVERY OF MEMORY IS A PROCESS, NOT A MOMENT

Will remember more as time passes

15% vs. 80%+
We must facilitate return of a sense of control to the victim.

The Initial Interview: Acute Crisis

- Essential information ONLY. Do not press the victim to reveal details of the assault that are not necessary in order to take the initial report.

Minimal Facts/Getting the Info – think “Critical Incident”

RATIONAL THOUGHT BLOCKED, so you:
- Ask Short & direct Q’s; open-ended as possible
- Listen & Re-Word
- Repeat and Verify
- Non-leading: victim likely to "agree" out of confusion/not listening
Critical Incident/Minimal Facts
Interview
“WHAT HAPPENED.”

Why are you listening for this info?
• What happened?
• When did it happen?
• Where did it happen
• Who did this?
• Who are the witnesses?
• Are there other victims or offenders?
• Lastly... ask, “How did it end?”

• Avoid “why-type” questions.

When You Need More than Minimal Facts:
Interviewing
Not Interrogating

Action Step 2: Be Empathetic
How would you like it if the mouse did that to you?
Action Step 3: Build Rapport

- Rapport
- *respects
- *accepts
- *provides information
- *establishes your interest

Action Step 4: Put the Victim at Ease

Victim Satisfaction is directly related to victim perception of being in CONTROL.

Action Step 5: Actively Listen

Every good conversation starts with good listening.
Action Step 6: Be Open-Minded

What we have learned from Trauma Research

- LISTEN WITHOUT INTERRUPTION
- ALLOW the VICTIM to CONTROL flow of information

USE JUDGMENT-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

“Tell me about what you were thinking...”

✓

“Why did you...”

“Why didn’t you...”
Action Step 7: Ask Open-Ended Questions

- THE VICTIM IS THE EXPERT.

- ALLOW THEIR MEMORY TO LEAD THE WAY.

Action Step 8: Focus on EVENTS

The EVENT EXPERIENCE is the central idea.

The details will come.
Action Step 9: Ask about Sensory and Emotional Details

Making the emotion/senses connection

- Questions might look like:
  - Tell me about what you were feeling when...
  - Tell me about what you were thinking when...
  - What were you hearing/tasting/smelling/touching/seeing when...
  - What was your reaction to...

Action Step 11: Prepare the Way for Additional Disclosures

COMING SOON
Safety is key
Build trust to overcome reluctance
Use your eyes
Understand coded language
Open door to disclosure of sensitive information

Steps to Encourage Disclosure

Coded Language
He loves me
He's rough when he...
He makes me uncomfortable
I don't want her to be the one who...
He's my boyfriend

Helpful interview techniques taken from child interviewing guidelines
• Short, open, only one at a time
• “Tell me more about...”
• Minimize distractions
• Aids to disclosure: pictures, dolls

Ask good questions
Maximize ability to tell
Since Victim may not be available in future, investigate as though inevitable

- Photographs and Preserve Evidence
- Scene Victim Suspect
- Videotape Victim
- Substitute for live testimony? Evidence of inability to consent?
- Have them describe actions and thoughts fully; may confess

Avoid the mistake of discounting information without an investigation. Because trauma memory is different than normal memory, even those with cognitive challenges can accurately relate their experiences.