

TRAUMA-INFORMED COUNSELLING AND DRUG ADDICTION

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Abstract

Globally, it is not uncommon to hear that an individual who has suffered a traumatic experience now struggles with addiction. Too often, trauma leads to alcoholism or drug abuse. This paper focuses on trauma-informed counselling and drug addiction. Trauma-informed counselling involves the counsellor applying some useful skills and professional qualities, such as empathic skill, opening skill, nonjudgmental and steadiness to assist the individual understand the happening and help them reduce the causes of the trauma to avoid reoccurrence. Thus, some of the types include complex trauma, chronic trauma and secondary trauma, among others. The therapeutic measures used by counsellors in handling trauma discussed in the paper include cognitive behavioural therapy, exposure therapy and group therapy. The types of drugs commonly used include depressants, narcotics, cocaine and nicotine. The roles of counselling focused on healing the clients and their nervous system by helping them learn how to respond to current events in a manner that is not conditional, and to help clients learn the origin of the problem and adopt strategies that can assist them in changing their current behaviour. The paper recommended that counsellors should have knowledge of diversity of skills, techniques and therapies on how people differently react to traumatic events, and that the counsellors should put to practice ethics of their profession and qualities in handling traumatized clients for proper counselling.

Keywords: Trauma, trauma-informed counselling, drugs, drug addiction

Introduction

The global problem of drug addiction can be viewed as one of the responsible factors for individual's major cause of trauma. Trauma is the Greek word for "wound". Although the Greeks used the term only for physical injuries, today, trauma is referred to as emotional wounds. However, a traumatic event may leave psychological symptoms long after involved physical injuries have been healed; while emotional trauma mainly occurs after an extremely stressful event like a natural disaster, or sexual or physical abuse, of which its symptoms include depression, anxiety, worry, flashbacks and

recurring nightmares. Trauma-informed counselling is necessary when psychological issues occur within an individual who has encountered intense or life threatening situations. The outcome of trauma may have inflicted fear and loss of control within the client and equally caused an overwhelming issues or flight emotional response in other situations. Trauma however, has the potential to destroy an individual in relationships, identity and even how they trust others in their environment. Those who survive the trauma may recall the event but have no emotions associated with them.

Trauma is a response to feelings that occur when an individual sees or goes through strong situations, such as the loss of loved one, fire disaster and other life damages. There is need for counselling as a useful tool to help clients heal and overcome these challenges. Counsellors help to point the indications of trauma such as fear, isolation, anxiety, withdrawal, sadness, grief, irritations, doubting self and others, not achieving goals, pessimism, demoralisation, drug abuse and emotional separation. Hence, if clients are exposed to several useful techniques like shaping, re-verbalisation of irrational thoughts, eye contact, group therapy and assertiveness among others. The clients with such trauma can benefit from these techniques and adopt the one that best suits them.

Trauma and Trauma-informed Counselling

Trauma is viewed as an emotional response to a terrible situations such as an sexual abuse, hardship and natural crisis. Individuals can experience shock and denial immediately after the occurrence of trauma. Trauma reactions can be in short or long term, such as strained relationship, aches, unpredictable emotions, nausea and flashback. In general, trauma can be defined as a psychological, emotional reaction to an incident or an ordeal that is highly tormenting or worrying. When loosely applied, this trauma definition can refer to something upsetting, such as being involved in accident, having an ailment or pains, losing a valuable individual, or going through a divorce.

According to Mathew (2020), any distressing situation that can prevent an individual from functioning, carrying out responsibilities and inability to cope with events can be seen as trauma. Trauma can be harmful to individuals physically, emotionally and psychologically. People can experience some traumatic events for a reason like losing a loved one unexpectedly in ghastly accident, although it is not all individual that develops Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after such traumatic events. Therefore, an individual can as well experience trauma after seeing traumatic events that affects someone else, because people have different responses to traumatic events based on their life experiences and environments.

Trauma-informed counselling involves the counsellor using some useful skills and professional qualities such as empathic, opening skill, nonjudgmental and steadiness to assist the individual understand the happening and help them reduce the causes of the trauma to avoid reoccurrence. Therefore, counsellors should be intuitive with clients and look for signs of unexpressed trauma such as sweaty palms, restless movement in sessions and failure to make eye contact. Meyers (2017) stated that trauma-informed counselling is a paradigm shift from what is wrong with the client to what happened to the client. That is to say that the practice is all about changing the overall focus of counselling by moving away from the “problem” approach. A trauma-informed counsellor helps clients understand where their behaviour is coming from by explaining trauma's effect on the brain and emotional regulation. Counsellors however, can also help clients to understand the real importance of basic self care, deep breathing, good eating, exercise and that a focus on wellness on a

daily basis as workable skills to address the trauma impact and arousal.

Types of Trauma

Trauma is the physical, emotional and psychological response when a person experiences high levels of fear or stress without having the chance to overcome it. There are different types of trauma;

- a. Acute trauma: acute trauma occurs as a result of a single stressful or dangerous event around an individual.
- b. Chronic trauma: people who experience repeated and prolonged exposure of stressful event such as all manners of abuse especially child abuse; family conflict, bullying etc are as a result of chronic trauma.
- c. Complex trauma: this type of trauma repeatedly occurs especially when an individual is disclosed to numerous traumatic events. It occurs in direct harm which makes it incremental to the individual involved. The traumatic ordeal often transpires within a specific duration, relationship and setting.
- d. Secondary trauma: this is a kind of trauma that is contagious as a result of close contact with any individual who has experience traumatic event. This can occur through observations.
- e. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can develop after a person has been endangered to a frightening event or has been through an ordeal in which strong physical harm occurred or was terrorized. Victims of PTSD have constant and horrible thoughts and memories of their situations.
- f. According to Miao, Chen, Wei, Tao, and Lu (2018) the following are the sign that an individual is at chance for developing PTSD.
 1. Loss of interest: once an individual starts separating or isolating from others, there is possibility that such person is losing interest from people. Thus, this shows that there is a chance of developing PTSD. This can as well lead to depression if not well managed.
 2. Avoidance: once after a traumatic situation, it is widespread to avert certain events, activities, or individuals. Therefore, one needs to pay attention to avoidance behaviours. Such behaviours creates unsecured mind that leads to suspicious act by seeing the world as an unsafe environment.
 3. Unhealthy coping behaviours: as a result of traumatic events, people seek for unhealthy coping techniques as a way of avoiding signs of trauma. This can make them to be more problematic which is more distressing.
 4. Developmental Trauma Disorder: This disorder can be seen from the early developmental stage of a child's life. It happens as a result of child abandonment by the parents, child abuse and parental neglect which disrupts the ability and early cognitive, social and psychological development of the child. Therefore, as a result of fixation, adults that exhibit developmental trauma do it unintentionally because they lack knowledge of emotional and social needs of infants.

Therapies Used by Counsellors for Trauma Management:

1. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): the main rule of CBT is that individual's thoughts significantly affect their behaviours. Therefore, there is need for such person to acquire some helpful skills that will help to reshape the pattern of thoughts which can equally help to overcome adverse responses to past traumatic events.
2. Exposure Therapy: this is the kind of therapy where clients would be exposed to those factors

that strongly triggers the emotional trauma. This has to be done gradually in order to replace those factors with knowledgeable ideas for client to know that such traumatic event that occurred previously are not suppose to lead to traumatic event.

3. Psychodynamic Trauma Therapy: the aim of this therapy is to determine the traumatic response level the client is engaged in. once achieved, the counsellor would be able to predict the aspect of the situation that hinders the client from achieving healing goals as a result of the traumatic events.
4. Group Therapy: counsellors use group therapy as a means of communication for the client not to have negative perception over self. Thus, through this therapy, the clients get to know that other people are equally involved in similar event. Clients are placed in the groups based on the level of traumatic response such as; remembering, reconnection and safety.

Drug Addiction

Drugs are chemical substances that can change how a person's body and mind work. They include prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Thus, taking any drug other than medical prescription which includes; taking a drug that was prescribed for someone else, taking a larger dose than the individual suppose to, using the drug for a different purpose such as getting high or misusing over-the-counter drug can as well be seen as drug abuse. Therefore, drug use is dangerous and can harm the brain and body sometimes permanently. It can hurt other people around the drug abuser, including friends, families, kids and unborn babies. Drug use can also lead to addiction; therefore drug addiction is considered "relapsing" disease that causes brain damage.

According to Jordi and Margi (2003), drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disorder in which compulsive drug-seeking and drug-taking behaviour persists despite serious negative consequences. Addictive substances induce pleasant states (euphoria in the initiation phase) or relieve distress (Gupta & Singh, 2017). Drug addiction is correlated with physical, social, emotional and psychological harm. It is not out of place to say that drug addiction is a growing global problem.

Types of Drug

According to Gupta and Singh (2017), the following are the types of drugs commonly used by the drug addicted individuals:

1. Depressants (Downers): depressants, also known as sedatives and tranquilisers, are substances that can hamper brain activity. These include alcohol, hypnotics to induce sleep, anxiolytic to reduce anxiety, sedatives for relaxation and anticonvulsants such as barbiturates (Gupta & Singh, 2017). Among all, alcohol is the vastly used depressants.
2. Narcotics: narcotics are medically used drugs for pain relief though they have strong addictive capacity. This drug produces a strong feeling of pleasure, and that is the main reason for its popular usage even in the streets. It is also seen as a drug that mild perception of individual's personal problems, which is attractive to people who seek for a mental escape from pressure and anxiety.
3. Cocaine: cocaine is a form of drug that is extracted from the leaves of the coca plant which makes it a natural stimulant. It is usually breathed in powder form through the nose or smoked in a way they will no longer be able to function normally.
4. Nicotine is found in tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco.

Tobacco is used by smoking, chewing, sucking and applying to the teeth and gums etc (Gupta & Singh, 2017).

5. Marijuana: marijuana is commonly used by adolescents. It is derived from the cannabis sativa plant. It is also classified as a hallucinogen because it can produce perceptual distortions or mild hallucinations (Gupta & Singh, 2017). It is also known by majority as weed. This drug can produce some level of uncertainty and a sense of serialisation.

Importance of Trauma and Drug Addiction Counselling

1. Counsellor would provide a grounded presence that helps the client to explore the causes of the trauma, while feeling safe, listened to and held. A counsellor who is trained on how to work with trauma, will be able to offer grounding techniques, and awareness exercises in the here-and-now, so that you can start to feel safe.
2. The counsellors help a trauma survivor to recognise their resources and skills, and to build on this. In therapy, the trauma survivor may be able to learn how to regulate emotions and feel safer in here-and-now. Working with a trauma therapist can help you to understand trauma symptoms, and to start to work through your experiences.
3. It focuses on healing the client and their nervous system by helping them learn how to respond to current events in a manner that is not conditional
4. It helps the client to get rid of this automatic response as a result of the trauma they have experienced throughout their lives. When the client has the capacity to speak about the events without dealing with the reoccurring emotions and images, they have taken a step forward in overcoming the issue of trauma.
5. It helps the client to learn how to build trust again within relationships so that they can see the world neutrally with a higher level of tolerance towards people and emotional responses. However, after the client learns the origin of the problem, they will adopt strategies that assist them in changing their current behaviour.

Conclusion

The outcome of trauma may have inflicted fear and loss of control within the client and equally cause an overwhelming issue or flight emotional response in other situations. Trauma however, has the potential to destroy an individual in relationships, identity and even how they trust others such as their relations, colleagues and neighbours residing in their environment. Those who survive the trauma may recall the event but have no emotions associated with them. Trauma –informed counselling involves the counsellor using some useful skills and professional qualities such as empathic skill, opening skill, nonjudgmental and steadiness to assist the individual understand the happening and help them reduce the causes of the trauma to avoid reoccurrence. Thus some of the types include complex trauma, chronic trauma, secondary trauma among others. The therapeutic measures used by counsellors in handling trauma discussed in the paper includes; cognitive behavioural therapy, exposure therapy and group therapy.

Recommendations

1. Counsellors should be intuitive with clients and look for signs of unexpressed trauma such as sweaty palms, restless movement in sessions and failure to make eye contact
2. Counsellors should have knowledge of diversity of skills, techniques and therapies on how people differently react to traumatic events.
3. The counsellors should put up the ethics of their profession and qualities in handling

traumatised clients for proper counselling.

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