



Pamela Woll, MA, CADP

ICOCE Co-occurring Disorders Training

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Most of the materials referred to in this presentation can be downloaded for free at the Human Priorities web site:

www.humanpriorities.com or <http://xrl.us/humanpriorities>

Human Priorities is the home of Pamela Woll, MA, CADP, Chicago-based author and consultant in writing, training, and instructional development. The web site offers access to a variety of materials for general audiences and for human services professionals. It also offers a web-based section for general audiences on understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma.

Areas of concentration include:

- Reintegration needs of service members, veterans, and their families
- Family trauma and interpersonal violence
- Trauma and addictive disorders
- Trauma and mental illness
- Disaster human services

You can reach Pam at pamelawoll@sbcglobal.net, or at (773) 334-7531.

Recommendations for Programs that Serve Troubled Families

In looking at troubled family systems, and the needs of the children affected by them, our vision must be:

- flexible enough to consider the combined effects of addictive family circumstances and other trauma-producing influences in children's lives;
- sophisticated enough to respect the complexity and variability of the addiction and mental illness—its ability to hide under surface functionality, the sophistication of its denial process, and the varying degrees to which it affects families;
- long enough to see the generational momentum of the disease process through the history of the family, carried not only in genetic factors and learned behavior, but also in attitudes and patterns;
- broad enough to take in the whole family system—with all its complexities and contradictions, balance and imbalance—not just the identified alcoholic/addicted parent(s);
- deep enough to focus on the core issues—components of health that have not been allowed to develop naturally in children's lives and the self-defeating attitudes and patterns that have developed in their absence—and the connection between that pain and the risk or reality of destructive life patterns; and
- open enough to assess our own attitudes toward these illnesses and continue to work' our own growth, health, and wholeness, understanding that our success in promoting health and respect will depend more than anything else on our success in modeling those qualities.

In the programs we develop for children, we need to keep these things in mind:

- the fact that the amount of trouble children are causing for adults is not a reliable indicator of how troubled they or their families really are, or how severe their problems will be in the future;
- the need to give general audiences of children carefully prepared information about troubled families and their effects on children, knowing that our success in doing so will benefit all children;
- the vulnerability to a sense of "shame" or worthlessness that children develop in many troubled families, and the importance of screening our words and actions to avoid doing harm;
- the concept that children need empathic adults who can listen to, accept, and validate their emotions and experiences far more than they need any of the information or activities our programs can provide;
- the need to make all of our prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs respect the realities in which children live, including children of troubled families;
- the need to have ongoing support systems in place before we do anything that might raise children's awareness of alcohol and other drug dependence in their own families;
- our opportunity to supplement the growth of health and wholeness by teaching children and adults about core components of healthy self-concept that often get lost or distorted in troubled families; and
- the strengths, resources, and resiliencies already available in children, families, recovery programs, and cultural heritage, and the importance of emphasizing these positive elements and the hope that they represent.

(Adapted from *Breaking the Chain: Making Prevention Programs Work for Children of Addicted Families*. Prevention Resource Center (Prevention First, Inc.), 1991, 1994.)

Characteristics of Trauma-Competent Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support Responses

Effective responses to the needs of children and adults with post-trauma effects include a consistent approach that:

- Integrates trauma-informed mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) care
- Maintains and supports a strength-based, recovery-based, consumer-centered, culturally competent, and safe approach toward prevention, treatment, and recovery
- Begins with knowledge of and respect for the individual's and the family's culture
- Respects each individual's right to set goals and choose prevention, treatment, and recovery support approaches

Staff have mastered the key areas of knowledge and understanding necessary to help people return to balance, including:

- The nature of human resilience and vulnerability to stress, trauma, and substance use disorders
- The neurobiology and physiology of stress, trauma, embodied stress, return to balance, and management of post-trauma effects and substance use disorders
- The many levels of human experience that are affected by trauma and involved in the return to balance, and the range of biological, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social processes that an individual woman may need to address
- The difference between acute stress disorder, transient post-trauma symptoms, acute PTSD, chronic PTSD, and developmental trauma, and the many relationships between these effects, mental illness, and substance use disorders
- The relationship between trauma and the range of disorders of extreme stress sometimes diagnosed as attachment disorders, conduct disorders, and personality disorders, and the relationships between these effects and other disorders
- The effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) on learning, emotions, and substance use, and their implications for treatment
- The stages of trauma recovery and appropriate measures at each stage
- The purpose, protocols, and appropriate audiences for the treatment approaches they use
- Their own experience of extreme stress and/or trauma, and the effects of that experience on their ability to provide safe and effective services for individuals with trauma histories
- Self-care measures for those who work with individuals who have experienced trauma

Individualized, strength-based, consumer-driven, trauma-informed, and evidence-based prevention, intervention, assessment, and treatment/recovery planning:

- Assesses and builds on the individual's strengths and resources
- Uses respectful assessment tools that match the individual's experience and needs
- Matches safe, appropriate evidence-based and promising practices to the individual's goals, challenges, needs, and circumstances
- Allows the individual to choose among appropriate treatment approaches
- Refers individuals readily to other providers when needed services are not available on site
- Acknowledges and coordinates multidisciplinary treatment and case management for the range of injuries, disorders, and challenges that an individual might have
- Wherever safe and appropriate, includes other family members in the treatment process and provides services (and linkage to services) for family members, including children

The provider's recovery support focus:

- Builds on the SAMHSA-supported national efforts toward recovery-based services
- Assertively links adults, children, and families with ongoing national and community-based support structures

This page adapted from *Finding Balance After the War Zone: Considerations in the Treatment of Post-Deployment Stress Effects* (Woll, 2008).

Tool: Grounding

**Adapted from a workshop by Dr. Laurie Leitch and Elaine Miller-Karas, LCSW
Trauma Resource Institute**

“Grounding” is one way of getting away from out-of-control thoughts, feelings, memories, etc. and returning to the “here and now.” It’s a good skill to learn, practice, and get used to doing. Practicing this skill can give you more overall control over your stress system. You can also use it to get back in balance when thoughts, emotions, or memories start crashing in on you.

You can practice grounding when you’re alone and doing nothing else, and then use the same skills and techniques when you’re in hard situations—or even in ordinary situations. No one will notice, except you might get more quiet and calm. Here are some possible steps:

1. Get comfortable in your chair, with both feet on the floor. (If you’re standing, you can stand with your back to a wall, a strong tree, etc.) You can close your eyes if you’re alone or with people you trust who are grounding too, or you can keep your eyes open and rest them someplace neutral.
2. Notice the support that the back of the chair (or the wall) is giving you—on your back, on your seat. Keep feeling that support, and notice any physical sensations it gives you.
3. Notice your feet, connecting with the ground. Notice any sensations that gives you.
4. Push a little bit with your feet against the ground, and notice what happens in your body when you feel that extra contact. Now relax your legs (if you’re sitting). If pushing against the ground made you feel more comfortable, remember that, so you can use it in the future when you feel uncomfortable.
5. Check in with your breath, without changing the way you’re breathing or making an effort to breathe a certain way. Just notice your breath, and follow it as it goes in and out. See if you notice anything about your breathing. When you pay attention to it, does it get deeper or more shallow? Notice any physical sensations as you breathe.
6. If you notice any places in your body that may be feeling tense, just shift your attention to someplace else in your body that’s feeling less tense, or even someplace that’s feeling calm and relaxed.
7. Just connect with that place for a while, feeling that calm place in your body. Make a mental note of that place, so you can go back there at times when your stress system starts to overreact. If that place in your body still feels calm when your stress reactions start to rise, that might be a good place to remember and focus your attention on.
8. Let your attention drift like a very slow wave, down from the top of your head, all the way down, past your back, sensing into the support of your chair (or the wall, tree, etc.), all the way down to your feet connected to the ground.
9. When you’re ready, if you closed your eyes, open them and bring your attention back to the room or the scene around you. Notice the people around you (if there are any), the furniture, the walls, the trees, the ground, etc. What do you notice in your body when you notice what’s around you? Do you feel more or less comfortable?
10. Practice this whenever you can, so you’ll remember to do it when things get intense.

Tool: The Safe Container

Adapted from an exercise in a presentation by Lisa Ferentz, LCSW-C, DAPA

Why use the “Safe Container”?

Once you think of or talk about a scary or emotionally charged memory, it’s like you’re “letting it out of the bag.” You don’t want it bouncing around in your head and body, scaring you and putting you off balance. You may want to visit that memory again—in counseling, with a trusted friend, or whenever you feel strong and ready—but you don’t want it to mess you up in the meantime.

How do you do it?

When you’re done looking at a memory for a while:

1. Use your imagination to “build” a container strong enough to hold the memory. You can make it any size and shape you like, of any material you like. You’ll want to make sure it has a very strong lock, so you can lock the memory in it, and the memory can’t get out.

What would your container be made of? _____

What would it look like? _____

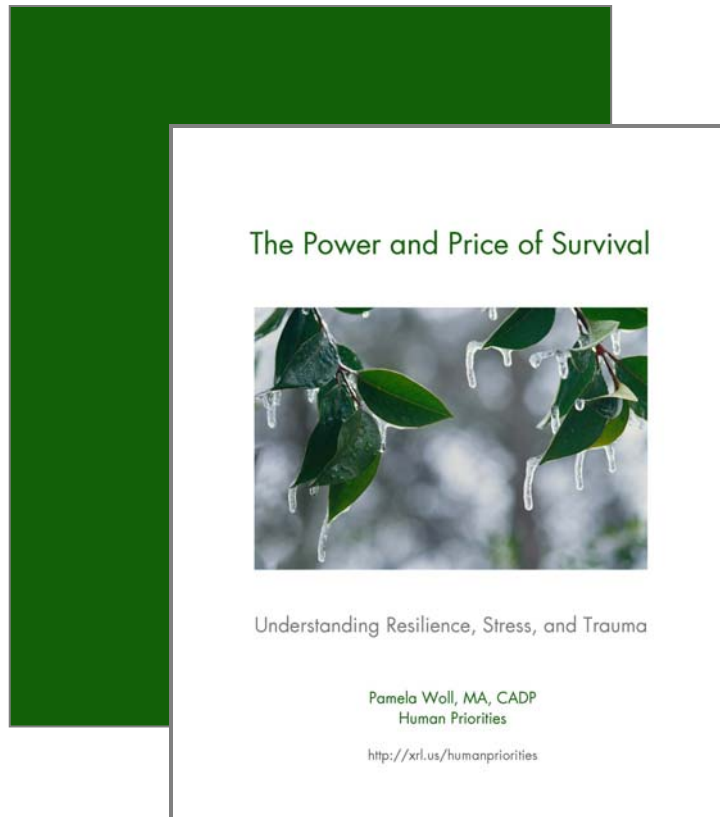
What would you use to seal and lock it? _____

2. If you’ve been talking to a counselor or trusted friend about the memory, you can talk to him/her about the container. Describe it, how big it is, what it’s made of, how it locks.
3. Open the container, put the memory in, and lock it up. Imagine what the lock looks and sounds like, and notice what happens in your body when you lock it. Make sure the lock is secure. Ask your stress system if the memory is securely locked away, and notice the sensations in your body to see if it feels secure. If you need to, add more seals or locks.
4. Put the container somewhere where the memory can’t get out. If the memory is very intense, you might want to bury the container underground. At each step along the way, check your body sensations to see if it’s locked away securely enough.

Next time you’re ready to work on the memory, you can dig it up, unlock it, get it out, and work on it. As long as the memory is still emotionally charged, you can keep it locked up. When the day comes when it’s comfortable to have the memory around, you can stop locking it up.

The Power and Price of Survival

Understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma



Pamela Woll, MA, CADP
Human Priorities

The Power and Price of Survival: Understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma is a 50-page workbook for general audiences, designed to make four things very clear:

1. We all have resilience—and ways of strengthening that resilience.
2. Post-trauma reactions really are signs of strength, rather than weakness.
3. The things that happen to memories after trauma are not signs of being "crazy" or "dwelling on the past." They make perfect sense, once we understand resilience, stress, and trauma.
4. There are many things we can do to bring the stress system back into balance.

You can download it for free from the Human Priorities web site, www.humanpriorities.com
The link for this workbook is: <http://sites.google.com/site/humanprioritiesorg/home/tools-for-growth-and-therapy/the-power-and-price-of-survival>