Trauma Travels but Healing Happens when we understand the Power of Story

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Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson

Healing people sharing culture Regenerating Communities
Acknowledging the Indigenous ancestors, elders, peoples living within the Australian landscape.
Acknowledging the peoples who have travelled here, as invaders, immigrants, and refugees seeking asylum - their contribution to this country now called Australia. *(Story of ankle)*

- Convicts and prison wardens
- Immigrants from England Ireland Scotland – Europe
- Whalers and Sealers
- Japanese ... Chinese
- Melanesian indentured labourers
- First world war refugees
- Second world war refugees ... Italian Greek .. Jewish .. German .. Polish
- Vietnamese ... Korean Cambodian .. Iraq ... Iran
- Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, South Africa...
Dadirri – the Ancient Tradition of Mindfulness

- Ngangikurungkurr - dadirri - listening to one another in contemplative - reciprocal relationships – an ancient mindfulness practice.

- Pitjantjatjara - kulini (listening), or pulgkara kulin tjugku (really (deep) listening, and wanting to listen).

- Bundjalung - gan’na hearing, listening, feeling, thinking, understanding.

- Gunmbayngirr - junga-ngarraanga miinggi - hearing, learning, understanding, knowing from the heart.

Artwork: Chris Edwards Haines. 2004
The Power of Story

“We live storied lives. We organise experience into stories as we share life interactively with others. The plot, characters, and morals of the stories we hear influence our synatic connections, they change our brains. Stories also live through us. We are born into stories, those of our families, nations, religions and cultures.”

(Lewis Mehl-Madrona in Healing the Mind through the Power of Story)
The Violence-Trauma Generational Vortex
Symptom as History

Understanding the trauma story and how it moves across countries and generations through ‘behaviour as language’ - Historic, Collective Social, Cultural, Complex, Developmental Trauma.
Trauma can become generational, unless healed

- Historical trauma is ‘the collective emotional and psychological injury, in the life of an individual or of a community, both over the life span and across generations’, (Muid, 2006, p. 36).

- Collective trauma is the “psychological blow to the basic tissues of social life that damage the bonds attaching people together and impairing the prevailing sense of community” (p. 233), “a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as a source of nurturance and that part of the self has disappeared” (Erikson, 1976).
The Destruction of Cultural and Social Systems

Salzman and Halloran (2004), describe the destruction of cultural worldviews which have sustained Indigenous peoples for millennia; a collective experience across diverse cultures and peoples: the Yup’ik of Alaska; Navajos and Athabaskan Indians; Hawaiian Natives; Maori in New Zealand, and Aboriginal Australians,

all having experienced similar physical, social, behavioural and psychological symptoms (eg high rates of suicide, alcoholism, accidental deaths, and layers of loss grief and trauma (p. 233)).
TRAUMA RUPTURES OUR CONNECTIONS

to ourselves
  ✓ physically
  ✓ emotionally
  ✓ mentally

to others
  ✓ family
  ✓ social group
  ✓ generation
  ✓ culture

to nature
  ✓ instinctually
  ✓ environmentally
Complex Trauma

(Herman 1992 1997 van de Kolk 2005)

- is the pervasive effects that exposure to repeated or chronic trauma sometimes has on an individual’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and psychological functioning. (Brier 2006, Scaer 2001; van de Kolk 2007).

- Majority of people (over 90%) treated by public mental health and substance abuse services have trauma histories.

- When unresolved, complex trauma causes ongoing problems, (intergenerational effects in families), and across society as a whole.

   (Herman 1992 1997 van de Kolk 2005)
Complex trauma and its effects are often unrecognised, misdiagnosed, and unaddressed.

- People impacted by complex trauma present to multiple services over a long period of time; care is fragmented with poor referral and follow-up pathways.

- A ‘merry go round’ of unintegrated care, risks re-traumatisation and compounding of unrecognised trauma.

- Escalation and entrenchment of symptoms is psychologically, financially and systemically costly and damaging to the individual - family – and society.
Generational Teaching
Learning to Listen

Artwork Chris Edwards Haines 2003
"To circle into truth through stories"

The Testimony - to be seen and heard.

Story of women presenting at a medical service, with a skilled doctor who knew that there were other issues under the presenting medical concern. He was listening for the deeper story under the presenting story.
Developmental Trauma

Repeated instances in a child’s life can cause negative effects on cognitive development, neurological development, and psychological development as well as attachment development.

When the survival brain is active it overrides the learning brain, interfering with usual development.

The survival brain is driven by fear and “the most complex occurrences of psychological trauma tend to involve... harm and abuse of children, which... ‘teach the child or adolescent to focus on danger and survival, rather than on trust and learning’” (Ford 2009).
Recent research has shown that refugees face a substantially higher risk of ‘psychotic’ disorders, including schizophrenia, compared to non-refugee migrants from the same regions of origin, but are we diagnosing for mental illness, or listening for trauma. Traumatic experiences may be layered across the different experiences of war zone, refugee or detention camp, and seeking asylum - moving to a new country.
A Nine year old (Aboriginal) child ..

Diagnosis:
- Emerging psychosis with mood depressive content – some paranoia (he thinks the world is unsafe)
- Suicidal ideation
- Chronic grief
- Chronic Complex Post Traumatic Stress.
Under anger is always grief

‘Loss and Grief’ depicts the complexity and difficult areas of life, death and spirituality. The teardrop symbolises the sadness, life experiences, the losses and the grief which leaves ‘voids’ within a ‘damaged spirit’.

The cocoon reflects the continuation of life as it emerges into a butterfly, while hands are used to reflect the many different colours of Indigenous people and the sustenance we provide each as we heal together.

Artwork Chris Edwards Haines 2003
Grief versus Trauma
Grief Reactions Versus Trauma Reactions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grief</th>
<th>Trauma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grief generally does not attack or ‘disfigure’ our identity</td>
<td>Trauma generally attacks, distorts, and ‘disfigures’ our identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In grief, guilt says. ‘I wish I would or would not have ...’</td>
<td>Trauma guilt says, ‘It was my fault. I could have prevented it. It should have been me’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In grief, dreams tend to be of the person who died.</td>
<td>In trauma, dreams are about the child himself dying or being hurt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalised reaction .... SADNESS</td>
<td>Generalised reaction ... TERROR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief reactions can stand alone</td>
<td>Trauma reactions generally also include grief reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In grief, pain is related to the loss.</td>
<td>In trauma, pain is related to the tremendous terror and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and fear for safety.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Grief reactions are generally known to the public and the professional.</td>
<td>Trauma reactions, especially in children, are largely unknown to the public and often to professional counsellors as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In grief. A child’s anger is generally not destructive.</td>
<td>In trauma, a child’s anger often becomes assaultive (even after non-violent trauma, fighting often increases).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trauma reactions are DIFFERENT from Grief Reactions

Trauma reactions OVERPOWER Grief Reactions

People can be traumatised by violent or nonviolent incidents. Separation from a parent through divorce or foster care, a family member’s terminal illness or sudden death, exposure to physical or sexual violence, witnessing drug use, house fires, cyclones, flood, earthquakes, as well as drowning, murder, suicide, and school violence can all be traumatising incidents. Copyright: TLC 2011 [http://www.starrtraining.org/tlc](http://www.starrtraining.org/tlc)

For refugees, it is also possible that "post-migratory factors, such as discrimination, racism, and social exclusion" may contribute to trauma, as it has done for Aboriginal peoples.
The Future
The Need for Healing
How do we heal?

1. Creating culturally safe places
2. Finding and telling our stories
3. Making sense of our stories
4. Feeling and understanding feelings
5. Moving through layers of loss and grief ... ownership ... choices
6. Strengthening Cultural and Spiritual Identities

Health and wellbeing
Judy Atkinson 2002
ITC was designed to give people skills to be mind-full listeners. Blend of Indigenous and western counseling theory and practice.

- Modeling the healer holds the stories and allows the person or group to find their own answers.
- It provided structure and stability so people could support each other at times of crisis after the actual training was finished, face to face in their families and communities, and on the phone.
Trauma and Recovery
What’s the difference between political trauma - social trauma - cultural trauma
A Model for Healing
Trauma specific response to Aboriginal needs
Establish State Regulation
- Safety

Somato-Sensory Integration
- Movement, Yoga
- Music, Nature Discovery

Facilitate Emotional Regulation
- Relationships, Dance, Play, Art
- Somato-Sensory Integration
  - Movement, Yoga
  - Music, Nature Discovery

Encourage Abstract thought
- Story telling, writing
- Drama, Theatre, Art, Music

The Heart brain Resonance

Resonance – growth, vitality, meaningful life - curiosity and openness promote growth.
Steps and stages of Healing:

- An awakening
- A sense of safety and security
- Community Support
- Rebuilding family and community connections
- An ever deepening sense of self knowledge
- Ceremony Strengthens Cultural and Spiritual Identity
- Is Transformative ... and Transcendent.

(Atkinson J. 2002)
“Examination of the known beliefs, rituals, and healing practices for loss and trauma [by Indigenous peoples]... reveal some remarkable principles.

Healing rituals converge into a set of core elements related to adaption and healing following trauma. ...

These core elements include an overarching belief system – a rationale, a reason for the pain, injury, loss; a retelling or re-enactment of the trauma in words, dance, or song – all provided in intensely relational experiences with family and clan participating in the ritual. ...
Perry, continued

- retell the story,
- hold each other,
- massage, dance, sing,
- creating images of the battle in literature, sculpture and drama,
- reconnecting to loved one and to community,
- celebrate,
- eat and share together
Perry is clear that these Indigenous healing practices work because they are:

- ‘repetitive, rhythmic, relevant, relational, respectful and rewarding’,

- “While these therapeutic practices may not at first seem “biological”: be assured that they are not only likely to change the brain, but they will assuredly provide the patterned, repetitive stimuli required to specifically influence and modify the impact of trauma, neglect, and maltreatment on key neural systems” (ibid).
Trauma informed services and trauma specific care

- Understand trauma and its impact on individuals, families and communal groups
- Cultural humility, in providing culturally safe physical and emotional spaces and services
- Ensuring Cultural Competence - Proficiency - Fitness
- Supporting Control, Choice and Autonomy though sharing Power and Governance
- Integrating Care – a holistic approach to service needs.
- Healing or Recovery Happens in Relationships, and you have to believe! Healing or Recovery is Possible.

(AIHW Resource Sheet 20. CTG. Atkinson 201...
The peoples’s violence - trauma stor(ies) becomes and remains the centre piece of the healing process.

These stories are historical because the storyteller(s) believe that the stories are not just about her/him self, but also her / his culture and society.

The healer has to place him/herself as close as possible to the pain and suffering of the traumatized person/people in order to take in the revealed truth. This process becomes the foundation of all healing actions.

Making healing tracks across the nation

judyatkinson1@me.com    +61266899452    +61409866075