Welcome to Session VIII

Community of Practice on Using a Public Health Approach In Communities to Build Pop-Level Mental Wellness and Resilience For the C-E-B Catastrophe

April 2, 2024

Many Thanks to Our Co-Sponsors!
Key Message

“Community is Medicine”

Throughout human history our ability to band together has always been key to responding creatively, adapting to, and solving complex problems!

By working at the community level we can do this again now!
So Always Remember

If trauma can be passed
down through generations,
then so can healing
and transformational resilience!

This is Our Mission!

Adapted from Judith Landau 2021
Recap of Last Week Fourth Foundational Focus
Regularly engage residents in specific practices that build and sustain mental wellness and resilience

- A public health approach to preventing and healing mental health and psychosocial problems requires ongoing multisystemic efforts to transform norms, attitudes, habits, and behaviors.

- So as residents engage in the other 4 foundational areas, it is important to regularly engage them in specific practices that research and experience show can help build and sustain their mental wellness and resilience. They include:
  - Laughing often
  - Practice forgiveness
  - Keep learning
  - Being grateful
  - Care for the body
  - Find simple joys

- These practices shift our attention from distress, anger, hopelessness etc. to factors that can build wellness, resilience and healthy hope.

- As with other actions, they are most powerful when done with others at grassroots and community levels.
Today’s Agenda

The Fifth Foundational Focus:
Establish Ongoing Opportunities for Residents to Heal Their Traumas

We are Honored to Have Two Outstanding Presenters

Elaine Miller-Karas, Co-Founder and Head of Innovation, Trauma Resource Institute

Dr. Kenneth Thompson, CEO Visible Hands Collaborative
Take a Short Resilience Pause

If it resonates with you, take a moment to use the “skylight method” to notice what are you experiencing right now in your body, your mind, and your emotions.

Identify Your Healing Resources

Think back to a time when you were very distressed or traumatized.

If you were able to heal what were the most helpful elements?

For example:

Was it having an individual or group you trusted to talk with?

A physically and emotionally safe and supportive environment to be in?

Specific skills or strengths you brought to bear?

Be clear about the resources that helped you heal—and how you can strengthen and maintain them in the future.
10 Minute Breakout Rooms

Please share:

• In 1 word how you feel now in the present moment?

• Did you practice a “Purposing” resilience skill, or develop your own “Purposing Safety Plan?” If so, what did you experience?

• What stood out to you from Fr. Paul Abernathy and James Baraz’s presentations last week about a how to engage residents in specific activities that build and sustain mental wellness and resilience?

• Did you share that information with 2-3 people you have already spoken with about forming an RCN, or expanding an existing one, and if so, did you decide how to engage residents in one or more of the 6 activities that build and sustain mental wellness and transformational resilience, and if not why not?
Recap of the Flow of the CoP on Forming and Operating RCNs for the C-E-B Catastrophe

**After Overview, First Focus**
- **Step One**
  - Get Organized by Forming an RCC and Clarifying Mission, Values, and Operating Principles

**Second Focus**
- **Step Two**
  - Begin Building Community Capacity
  - **Option A**
    - Begin Trauma Healing and Resilience Education
  - **Option B**
    - Develop Asset Maps and Community Resilience Maps Portrait

**The Four Previous Sessions**
- **Step Three**
  - Establish Vision of Success, Goals, Strategy, and Action Plan
    - Build Social Connections Across Boundaries
    - Create Supportive Built/Physical Economic & Ecological Conditions
    - Develop Universal Mental Wellness and Resilience Literacy
    - Foster Engagement in Activities that Promote Wellness & Resilience Literacy
  - Establish Ongoing Opportunities for Residents to Heal Their Traumas

**Today**
- **Step Four**
  - Implement Strategy with Focus on Five Core Focal Areas

**Last 2 Sessions**
- Q&A with Panel of Leaders of Community Initiatives, Presentation by Reb McKenzie, and Development of Action Plans
- Sharing and Discussion of Action Plans, Problem Solving, and Next Steps—including TRCN “Commissioning” Program

**Thursday 4/11**
- “Special Session”—Role of Government
Always Remember: The Five Foundational Areas RCNs Should Focus on to Build Population-Level Mental Wellness and Resilience for the Long C-E-B Catastrophe Are *Interconnected*
The Importance of RCNs Offering Ongoing Mostly Peer-led Group and Community-Minded Opportunities for Residents to Heal Their Trauma

- As distressing as it is to think about, we **must** come to terms with the reality that the C-E-B catastrophe will get considerably **worse** and **continue for decades**.

- The mix of toxic stresses and disasters will cause **billions** of people to experience anxiety, depression, anger, grief, hopelessness & other **social, psychological** and **emotional struggles**.

- For most, these feelings will **not** be symptoms of psychopathology: They will be **normal reactions** to dysfunctional and often frightening external conditions.

- Rather than pathologizing people, it will be important for RCNs to help **everyone** understand that their distress is perfectly **natural** given the state of the world...

- ...and that their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are instinctive **coping mechanisms**.
Helping people engage in the other foundational areas involved with enhancing mental wellness and transformational resilience will enable many to heal themselves!

Yet many others are still certain to be & remain traumatized and need support to heal.

Healing can be difficult because traumatized people often feel hopeless because they believe they have no control over their lives.

They consequently often won’t understand what they are experiencing or how to deal with it.

Often, all they can do is attend to their basic needs-- finding food, shelter, money-- and sometimes use coping mechanisms that initially made sense but then go awry.

This is why RCNs must take the lead to establishing ongoing healing opportunities.
What Does Healing Involve?

Judith Herman Describes Three Basic Stages: Safety, Acknowledgement, Reconnection.

• People often cannot heal until they feel physically and emotionally safe and supported.

• Individual and group and community support—meaningful social connections and provision of key resources—are thus essential to start the healing process.

• When people feel safe and supported, they can begin to acknowledge what they are experiencing and share it with others—which begins to release their trauma.

• This can lead to reconnection with the self and others—and help people learn how to manage their distress in ways that allow them to regain control over their lives.
Numerous Age and Culturally-Accountable Group and Community-Minded Opportunities Exist To Help Residents Heal their Traumas
Today We Will Hear About Two Outstanding Group and Community-Minded Healing Methods

Introducing

Elaine Miller-Karas, Co-Founder and Director of Innovation, Trauma Resource Institute

Introducing

Dr. Kenneth Thompson, CEO, Visible Hands Collaborative
Q & A with Elaine and Ken

Please post questions in chat
Breakout Rooms

• Share what you took away from Elaine and Ken’s talks ...

• Discuss if and how you can implement ongoing methods to help residents heal their traumas in your neighborhood or community RCN

  • Identify key issues and questions
Numerous Age and Culturally-Accountable Group and Community-Minded Opportunities Exist To Help Residents Heal their Traumas

National Compadres Network
Healing Circles Global

Center for Mind-Body Medicine;
and Convivencia Gatherings in Sonoma County, CA. after wildfires
Healing Through Mental Health Treatments

Individualized Mental Health Services Will Remain Very Important

• However, the number of certified providers will **never be sufficient** to assist all the people who will be traumatized as the C-E-B catastrophe accelerates.

• Most of the certified professionals that do exist are usually located in wealthier **urban** areas, **not** lower-income or BIPOC communities, or rural areas.

• Further, due to fears of being stigmatized, treated inequitably, conflicts with spiritual beliefs, high costs, and other reasons, research shows **almost 50%** of people who could use mental health services **will not engage**.

• And many clinicians **themselves** will often be traumatized by climate impacts, which is why it will be important for providers **themselves** to regularly engage in **healing activities**.

• And treating **individual symptoms** may **not work very well** when social-ecologically generated toxic stresses and disasters **continually occur** and are **reinforced** by social norms, economic practices, and public policies.

This is why **group** and **community-minded** healing opportunities must be the **priority**.
The Importance of Using Trained Peers

As you just heard, and as Father Paul Abernathy said about the need to train Community Health Deputies, not just certified CH Workers, it will be very important to train and engage peers in all aspects of an RNCs activities.

Training and empowering local residents who are trusted members of the community, and have a good understanding of and relationships with other residents—i.e. peers—can:

- Lead and facilitate mental wellness and transformational resilience gatherings and exercises
- Help people get access to the supports and resources they need
- Give informal counseling and guidance on health behaviors
- Advocate for individual, group, and community health equity and justice
- Provide some direct services such as first aid and other medical needs that reduce need for emergency & specialty services
- Improve adherence to psychological and physical health recommendations
- Enhance communications between community members by providing culturally appropriate mental and physical health education and offering interpretation and translation services
- Enhanced communication between community members and all types of health providers and public agencies.
- Provide vital feedback to the RNC steering committee on what works, what does not, what is needed etc.

This is why training local peers to lead efforts should be a priority.
Homework

• Develop a draft **Action Plan** for how **you** will assist an existing or form a new Resilience Coordinating Network in your neighborhood or community that includes:
  
  o **Who** you will discuss forming an RCN with and organizing a **planning team**—with a **date of execution**.
  
  o Your “**elevator speech**” describing **why** you want to form an RCN, a **vision** of success, and its **benefits**.
  
  o An **initial list** of grassroots, neighborhood, civic, faith/spirituality, education, youth, human services, and other public, private, and public organizations you **think should be involved**.

Next Tuesday’s April 9 Session: Will include:

• Q&A with a panel of people involved with community resilience initiatives: **come prepared with questions**!

• A short presentation by Reb McKenzie of a resilience project she developed as result of a previous CoP

The Final “Special Session” the following Thursday, April 11, from 12 noon to 1 pm ET will focus on role **public officials** can play in supporting RCNs with short presentations by people who will discuss their work.

If you want CE credits please remember to complete the APHA session evaluation
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