



Parallel Process: Why is it So Important?

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Parallel Process

Complex interaction between traumatized clients, stressed staff, pressured organizations, and the social and economic environment.





Our systems frequently replicate the very experiences that have proven to be so toxic for the people we are supposed to treat.

Parallel Process!



Parallel Process

The Organization is a Living, Growing, Changing System with Its Own Unique Biology...It is Every Bit as Susceptible to Stress, Strain & Trauma as the Individuals Who Live and Work in the Organization.



Parallel Process

- Stress has a Disruptive Effect on Brain Development and Sets the Trajectory for Future Development
- You Cannot Redo What has Been Done but You Can Build in Supports that Will Improve Functioning

*Consider Organizational History &
Stress in Our Agencies*



Impact of Trauma

We Ain't Just Talking About the Kids

- Traumatized kids have been in care from the beginning
- They have shaped our practices in RTC's as much, if not more than, we have shaped their lives
- Practices we call "treatment" often serve to re-traumatize the children we hope to help



*"If you don't change your beliefs,
your life will be like this forever.
Is that good news?"*

~ Dr. Robert Anthony
Educator & Writer





*Each Level Can Positively or
Negatively Impact the Other*

*Helping Children to Change &
Grow Requires Change & Growth
In the Staff & In the System!!*



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Reluctant to Discuss Traumatic Past
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Assessment Does Not Take Trauma History Into Account, When it Does It is Quickly Forgotten or Discounted
 - Symptoms Become the Entire Focus Not the Pain Behind the Symptoms



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- In Our Kids:
 - Increased Aggression
- In Our Staff & Programs:
 - Increase Coercion, Seclusion, Restraint, Restrictions, Blaming



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Hyperarousal
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Running From Crisis to Crisis
 - Lack of Planning
 - Managing Like Your Hair is on Fire



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Impaired Problem Solving
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Short-Sighted Problem Solving
 - Follow the Loudest Voice
 - Formulaic Solutions to Complex Problems
 - Quick Fixes



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Poor Emotion Management
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Avoidance of Charged Issues
 - Non-Participatory Decision Making
 - Collective Disturbance



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Hopelessness & Helplessness
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Loss of Hope & Faith In Kids & Their Ability to Change
 - Just Maintaining
 - Staff Turnover



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Physical Symptoms & Somatic Problems

- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Broken Down Physical Plant
 - Unnoticed Hazards
 - Cluttered, Dirty Units that Do Not Reflect the Care
We Claim to Provide



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- In Our Kids:
 - Poor Relationships
- In Our Staff & Programs:
 - Conflicts Go Unresolved or Ignored
 - Team Meetings Get Cancelled (Too Busy!!)
 - Feedback Loops Break



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Reenact Trauma
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Failed Strategies are Constantly Repeated
 - Coercive Behavior Management Strategies
Rule the Day



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Fragmented Mental Functions, Dissociation
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Fragmented Service Delivery
 - Lack of Shared Beliefs, Values & Assumptions
 - Collective Disturbance



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- In Our Kids:
 - Inability to Recognize Success
- In Our Staff & Programs:
 - No Praise
 - No Recognition
 - No Appreciation
 - No Fun



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- **In Our Kids:**
 - Arrested Grief, Resistance to Change
- **In Our Staff & Programs:**
 - Resistance to Change
 - New or Different is Squeezed Out
 - Same Stuff ...Different Day



Parallel Process Trauma Symptoms

- In Our Kids:
 - Sense of Foreshortened Future
- In Our Staff & Programs:
 - Sense of Mission Gets Lost
 - Values Erode
 - Community Deteriorates
 - Every Man for Himself



Parallel Processes

Kids

- Feel unsafe
- Angry/aggressive
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Hyperaroused
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Depressed

Staff

- Feel unsafe
- Angry/aggressive
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Hyperaroused
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Demoralized

Organization

- Is unsafe
- Punitive
- Stuck
- Missionless
- Crisis Driven
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Valueless
- Directionless



Parallel Process of Recovery

Reluctant to Discuss Traumatic Past

- **Kids:**
 - Trauma Work, Trauma Narrative, CBT
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Do Trauma Assessment
 - Review History at All Treatment Conferences
 - Conduct Trauma Training



Parallel Process of Recovery

Lack of Safety / Increased Aggression

- Kids:
 - Safety Plans, CBT
- Staff & Program:
 - Debrief All Safety Breaches
 - Use Staff Safety Plans
 - Monitor Trends



Parallel Process of Recovery

Hyperarousal

- **Kids:**
 - Self-Soothing Techniques
 - Community Meetings
 - Medication
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Team Meetings to Review & Plan
 - Collaboration & Team Work
 - Adults Manage Affect Rather Than Stoke It



Parallel Process of Recovery

Impaired Problem Solving

- Kids:
 - Frequent Group Meetings
 - Resident Government
 - CBT
- Staff & Program:
 - Debriefing Incidents
 - Shared Problem Solving
 - Proactive Review



Parallel Process of Recovery

Poor Emotion Management

- **Kids:**
 - Teach & Reinforce Emotion Management Skills
 - Community Meetings
 - CBT
- **Staff & Program:**
 - More Democratic Processes
 - Consensus Building
 - Welcoming & Encouraging Dissent



Parallel Process of Recovery

Hopelessness & Helplessness

- **Kids:**
 - Role Modeling
 - Permanency Planning
 - Focus on Skill Building & Competency
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Staff Empowerment
 - Recognition Programs
 - If It Doesn't Work, Try Something Else
 - Outcomes Assessment
 - Staying on Mission



Parallel Process of Recovery

Physical Symptoms & Somatic Problems

- Kids:
 - Body & Movement Work
 - Medical Attention
 - Physical Activity
- Staff & Program:
 - Renovation
 - Beautification
 - Attention to Environment



Parallel Process of Recovery

Poor Relationships

- **Kids:**
 - Conflict Resolution Skills
 - Social Skills
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Opportunities to Discuss Conflict
 - Focus on Values



Parallel Process of Recovery

Traumatic Reenactment

- **Kids:**
 - Redirection of Traumatic Scenario
 - Life Space Interview
 - Safety Planning
 - Trauma Work
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Staff Training
 - Tag Outs
 - Debriefing
 - Focus on Self Awareness



Parallel Process of Recovery

Fragmentation / Dissociation

- **Kids:**
 - Trauma Work
 - CBT
 - Non-Verbal Therapies
 - Grounding Exercises
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Ample Opportunities for Discussions & Review



Parallel Process of Recovery

Inability to Recognize Success

- **Kids:**
 - Systematic Encouragement
 - Ample Rewards
 - Tons of Positives Experiences & Interactions
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Staff Recognition & Appreciation
 - Outcomes Management
 - Clear Goals



Parallel Process of Recovery

Arrested Grief / Resistance to Change

- Kids:
 - Grief Work
 - Bereavement Groups
- Program:
 - Group Decision Making
 - Change Management



Parallel Process of Recovery

Foreshortened Sense of Future

- **Kids:**
 - Focus on Higher Purpose
 - Future Goals
 - Competency Development
- **Staff & Program:**
 - Focus on Mission & Vision



Lessons Learned

- Leaders are the Brains of the Organization and Need to Learn How to Manage the Organization's Stress Response
- Managing and Containing Affect is a Major Function of Organizational Leadership
- System-Wide Understanding of Trauma Theory and the Impact of Trauma & Stress on Clients, Staff and the Organization is Crucial
- Failing to Manage Stress Will Result in Some Ugly Outcomes



Lessons Learned

- Creating Systems for this Purpose is Essential to Organizational Health (e.g. Community Meetings, Team Meetings, Red Flag Reviews, Safety Plans)
- Finding Folks Who Can Manage Their Own Stuff is a Key to Success
- Beliefs & Values are Not Negotiable





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