Trauma-Informed Mentoring for Young Adults

Julian D. Ford, Ph.D.  jford@uchc.edu
Rocio Chang, Psy.D.  chang@uchc.edu

University of Connecticut Health Center
& Complex Trauma Treatment Network
National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Overview

• Young adults are the experts on their own lives, needs, options, and solutions.
  – *But they face unprecedented challenges that require new knowledge and skills*

• Trauma Informed Mentoring Affirms Youths’ Expertise & Provides Skills and Knowledge

• Outcomes = Enhanced independence, work success, personal growth, relationships
A two-word Definition of Trauma Informed Mentoring

ASK US
Psychological Empowerment = ASK US

• **A**: Affirmation of Strengths & Connections
• **S**: Skills for Communication & Achievement
• **K**: Knowledge about Trauma & Resilience
• **U**: Understanding the Challenge of Recovery
• **S**: Solutions that Highlight a Path to Success
Young Adults Cope with ...

- Traumatic Uncertainty
- Traumatic Loss
- Vicarious Trauma
Trauma Informed Mentoring is a Collaboration among ...

• Young Adults
  who bring their lived experience

• Employers
  who provide opportunities/support

• Mentors
  the bridge between youth & employers
Two Evidence-Based Models that Can Serve as Guides for Trauma Informed Mentoring of Young Adults

• ARC ~ Attachment, self-Regulation, and Competence

• TARGET ~ Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education & Therapy
How Does Trauma Informed Mentoring Increase Young Adults’ & Employers’ Knowledge?

Explaining Trauma, Resilience & Recovery in New Ways that are Empowering
TARGET Explains How the Brain Operates Under Normal Stress

The Brain & Body Working Together
The Brain Under Normal Stress

Alarm System
(amygdala)

Filing Center
(hippocampus)

Thinking Center
(prefrontal cortex)

Copyright University of Connecticut 2001-2010
TARGET’s Explanation of the Brain Under Extreme Stress (Trauma and PTSD)

The Alarm Takes Control
The Brain Under Extreme Stress

- **Alarm System** (amygdala)
- **Filing Center** (hippocampus)
- **Thinking Center** (prefrontal cortex)
How Does Trauma Informed Mentoring Increase Skills?

Enabling youth and employers to handle (alarm) reactions consistent with their values, goals, and mutual respect.
SOS: 3 Steps to Focusing

• **Step I: Slow Down**
  – Sweep your mind completely clear

• **Step II: Orient Yourself**
  – Focus on ONE THOUGHT that YOU CHOOSE

• **Step III: Self Check**
  – Stress Level (1 to 10)
  – Personal Control Level (1 to 10)

*Copyright University of Connecticut 2001-2010*
How Does Trauma Informed Mentoring Affirm Young Adults’ Strengths?

Validating young adults’ resilient pursuit of FREEDOM
FREEDOM steps

FOCUS
Slow down, Orient, Self-Check

RECOGNIZE
Stress Triggers

EMOTION
One MAIN Emotion

EVALUATE
One MAIN Thought

DEFINE
One MAIN Personal Goal

OPTIONS
Build On Your Positive Choices

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION
Make the World a Better Place

Copyright University of Connecticut 2001-2010
“You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.”

-Galileo

1564–1642, Italian astronomer & mathematician