

The Journey

FALL 2011 VOLUME 21

Training Day

I never thought Victim Impact training would change my life forever. I remember the facilitators Mary Roche and Teresa O'Tool telling the class to "take care of yourselves" after every class. I literally took the statement for granted. After a couple of panelists addressrd the class I found myself very "raw" even after the debriefing. Learning how the "ripple effects" of crimes affect not only the victim but the victims, families, and other areas of their lives gave me insight to just how deep the lives of people are changed after they have been victimized. It is amazingly different from just reading about it in a newspaper or hearing about it in the news. The panelists speaking about their trauma was phenomenal.

Then there was one panelist who spoke to the training class about sexual assault. He was the victim and survivor of a sexual assault that happened when he was a young boy. He was an attractive man who was also a navy veteran. He shared his story about how he was assaulted as a young boy by another neighborhood teen. Instantly he was my brother! My brother was a navy veteran who had been sexually assaulted by the son of our mother's best friend. My brother was about 13 years old when he was assaulted. He was assaulted for about 3 years before we finally moved to another state.

Growing up my brother and I never talked about what happened. He never told me until about 20 years ago. He said when he tried to tell our mother she didn't believe anything happened and just thought "boys were being boys." My father never truly embraced his "first son" when my brother told him what happened. My brother's declaration of being sexually assaulted somehow created an estranged relationship between all of us. My mother later died believing my brother was confused about his sexuality.

My brother and I came from a good home. We were never abused. My mom and dad provided us with what we needed and often times too much of what we wanted. We were the typical middle class family with a good home, a dog, 2 cars and loving parents. My dad was always proud to have a son and daughter. My mother was always the nurturing and loving one. How could something like this happen to *my* family? I learned in Victim Impact perpetrators don't discriminate.

The day the panelist shared his story about his sexual assault and how it changed his life, I couldn't stop crying. While he was speaking, he was my brother. He opened some wounds in my life that were buried so deep and when they resurfaced I knew I was in trouble. I couldn't stop crying. When I got home that night, I called my oldest daughter crying hysterically

Continued page 2

Restoration, like healing, is a journey that we all must make together. We lean on, support, learn from, give ideas, encourage, and grow in the attempt to heal, make whole again, and restore that which was taken during the commission of the crime. As correctional professionals, advocates, victims, community members and offenders, we are on a journey that will change our lives forever as well as those lives that we touch along the path of our journey.

Inside this Issue....

Training Day	1
A Primer on Somatic Experiencing Therapy (SE)	2
Healing is a Process	4
My Wish	6
PREA Update	7
VAC News	8
Update on Gavin	9
Workplace Conflict Resolution Program	10
Victim Advisory Council Update	9

Training Day (continued)

in the phone telling her what the victim had shared at the Victim Impact training class. I was crying for myself and my brother. I asked myself, "How could I have so much empathy for someone I didn't even know?" The truth of the matter was, I did know this man, and he was a representative of my brother. He was telling my brother's story and the story of so many other men that have been victims of sexual assault!

I cried because I had contributed to my brother's trauma and victimization by not being there for him over the years. I was ashamed because I had been superficial when he had tried to talk to me about his assault over the years and how it had affected him by triggering his use of alcohol and drugs to help him forget and deal with his emotional pain. I was not there when he wanted to talk about being confused about his sexuality. I cried because I was angry about not being there to protect my brother from someone that hurt him like I did when we were in grade school. I would fight the boys who bullied him. I cried because I had lost the brother that I remembered growing up and 20 years seem to have turned into a life time. Time lost, that I can never get back to love and support him...time I could have spent helping him to find a way to live as a survivor and understand his sexuality as a man.

I also cried because I felt so blessed to have been exposed to such a powerful training session that gave me the tools to accept and face the challenges of being a secondary victim of a crime. I learned the true meaning of "When you are taught better, you can do better." I called my brother and told him how much I love him. I also told him I was ready to listen. I also apologized for being so selfish over the years for only thinking about how I had been affected by what had happened to him and not being there for him when he needed me the most!

He wanted to know what happened to help me understand what happened to him and how it had changed his life. I told him Victim Impact training happened! I told him I was "taking care of myself," by reaching out to him as my brother and a victim. I learned through the Victim Impact training how to love my brother for whom he is in spite of what happened to him. He was the victim of a sexual assault, but he is a survivor and I thank God for that. I am also grateful that Victim Impact changed how I think. Victim Impact training is helping me to mend the relationship with my brother I thought would never be the same!

Thank you, Mary Roche and Teresa O'Tool!

MLB

A PRIMER ON SOMATIC EXPERIENCING THERAPY (SE) by GERAL BLANCHARD, LPC

VAC members have been given a brief introduction to SE and readers of *The Journey* now have a link to Dr. Peter Levine's website. Because this healing approach to trauma recovery is so hopeful, additional information is now being offered.

As an avid wildlife photographer, there have been numerous times when I have come upon a deer fawn or an elk calf frozen in fear lying in a field. In their own way, animals protect themselves from danger by not moving and not resisting. In the moment of danger, often the safest course of action is to mentally separate from the threat, become invisible, and wait for danger to pass.



While visiting Africa I noticed impalas, another member of the deer family, do something similar. When a hungry lion approached a herd of impalas, individuals would either run or collapse on the ground. If the lion failed to notice a frozen impala and pursued another target, the impala eventually jumped to its feet; kicked, jumped, and shook, releasing the previously immobilizing fear. Just moments after shaking it off, the impala would resume its day, no longer carrying the

Continued page 3

A PRIMER ON SOMATIC EXPERIENCING THERAPY (SE) (continued)

damaging fear in its body, no worse for the wear. Fear was allowed to run its course.

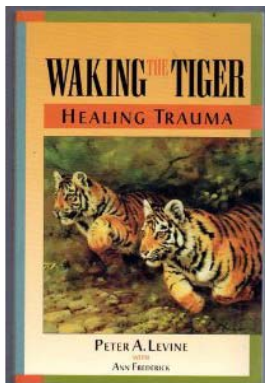
Psychologist Peter Levine contends that trauma represents a profound compression of survival energy that was not allowed to complete its normal expression and be released back into nature. He believes it is important to befriend the energy aroused by a traumatic event. If we avoid scary internal sensations thinking they are inherently dangerous, emotionally painful energy can become imbedded in both the body and the psyche. The resulting experience of powerlessness can take over leaving a person feeling immobilized and overwhelmed.

The key to transforming trauma is to “touch into” the body’s energy and feel it (rather than recoil from it) which releases the immobilizing energy. This keeps a person from becoming stuck in traumatic hypervigilance. By noting their internal sensations, victims become comfortable with their own natural energy alterations, seeing them as signs of a very normal recovery pattern, as rhythmical shifts between tensed vigilance and relaxed alertness.

Psychologists have many labels for how we respond to trauma. When we freeze and detach (“go away”) it is often called *dissociation*. When emotional pain lingers and we flash back to images of the original traumatic event, it may be called *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. Immobilization may be called *learned helplessness*. And the terror held in our bodies often is called a *body memory* or *cellular memory*. Curiously exploring the location and expression of traumatic bodily energy is called *pendulation*; it offers a way out.

SE therapy involves investigating our bodies which hold trauma’s strong energies. This can be done with a therapist who guides us into making deep guttural sounds, encourages us to gently touch ourselves, or helps us sit with unpleasant emotions until they run their normal course and dissipate. By exploring internal sensations that erupted at the time of trauma, and by becoming familiar with our bodies release mechanisms, a mental shift occurs, from dread to awe. It is empowering to first note and then manage the body’s responses. This process is called *self-regulation*, when we no longer relinquish our power to other people or outside forces. We lay claim to our bodies and trust Creator’s brilliant design for us.

Trauma causes many people to become narrow black and white thinkers. People are seen as good or bad, evil or angelic. But shades, textures, and gray areas – the ways things actually are – get missed. Levine has noted how his trauma patients, after practicing SE, seem to develop dramatic spiritual transformations reconnecting themselves to the “Divine Whole,” wanting to remain a part of the world. He believes there is a wedded relationship between trauma and spirituality. What we take away from painful events depends, in large part, on how we consciously release paralyzing energy. Suffering, Levine contends, is a potential doorway to spiritual awakening. And with that awakening our worldview shifts from seeing things as awful to what he terms as “awe-full.” When trauma energy dissipates, victim’s lives often become enriched and more passionate.



(If you want to learn more about SE methods and how they work, read Levine’s books *Waking the Tiger* or *Healing Trauma*.)

Healing is a Process

Healing is a process. A process that varies in length of time and a process that is as unique as the individual trauma survivor. There are a many types of coping strategies and resources available to individuals who have experienced violent trauma. For the purposes of this commentary I discuss the process involved in healing from sexual violence. This is because discussing sexual assault and healing provides an opportunity to consider the interconnectedness of the physical body and the conscious mind, a connection that can often be a challenge to reconcile while a survivor moves through the healing process. It is important to highlight that this process is yours and that it may change, so try to be patient with yourself as your body and mind integrate your assault into your memory, feelings and living experience.

Healing is about reconnecting with our own sense of self-awareness, comfort and trust. When these parts of us are disrupted and damaged the challenges of coping and healing can seem insurmountable. But, there is hope.

You may experience various emotions, feelings and physical reactions as the result of your assault. These are completely normal and are referred to as rape trauma¹. The length and intensity of these reactions vary among individuals and any reaction is not ever wrong. Experiencing rape trauma as the result of sexual assault can manifest itself in three stages. Please remember that these stages can vary based on what each individual needs and experiences. Some people may experience the stages in this order, skip around or skip one entirely. However you experience your own healing process is completely fine and normal. Also, if you have been repeatedly victimized, for example incest during childhood, these stages may occur repeatedly and be intertwined. Children who are victimized also often experience disruption of progress through normal developmental stages.

*It's important to see how we can
advance in healing wounds.
~Ricardo Lagos*

Acute (Initial) Stage²

This stage can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks after the assault. Your reactions can vary and contrast greatly. No response is wrong or inappropriate. Some of these experiences may include:

- Confusion
- Shock
- Disbelief
- Fear
- Difficulty making decisions
- Numbness
- Embarrassment
- Detachment
- Helplessness
- Restlessness
- Guilt
- Self-blame
- Irritability
- Shame
- Anger
- General soreness of the body
- Bottling emotions
- Fatigue

¹*If It Happens to you...Recovering from Sexual Assault*. Brochure created by Waypoint Service for women, children and families.

<http://waypointservices.org/>

²*ibid*

Healing is a Process (continued)

Minimization:	Pretending that “everything is fine” or that “it could have been worse.”
Dramatization:	Constantly talking about the assault, which dominates your identity/life.
Suppression:	Refusing to discuss the assault and acting as if it did not really happen.
Explanation:	Analyzing what happened, what your offender was thinking or feeling, and what you could have done differently.
Flight:	Trying to escape the pain through substance use, cutting, changing appearance.

Outward Adjustment Stage³

This stage is a time during which victims attempt to return to their lives as if nothing has happened. During this phase the individual resumes what can appear to be his or her “normal” life but inside is suffering considerable turmoil. In this phase there are generally five coping techniques:

During this phase, you may also experience:

- Depression
- Flashbacks
- Indifference to sex
- Increased sexual activity
- Hypervigilance
- Denial
- Difficulty focusing
- Increased distrust
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Fears/phobias
- Isolation

Hope is not the closing of your eyes to the difficulty, the risk, or the failure.

It is trust that-
If I fail now -
I shall not fail forever;
and if I am hurt,
I shall be healed.

It is trust that
life is good,
love is powerful,
and the future is full of promise.
~ Anonymous

Reorganization Stage⁴

This stage is a time when you process the assault and the impact it has had on your life. It can be a very difficult experience at first and you may feel like you are getting worse before you feel better but, with support, you can get through this.

Everyone copes with the process in a different way and there is no wrong way to cope. Many victims may be “triggered” by events, sights, smells, etc. that remind them of the assault and continue to experience similar social, emotional, physical, and/or sexual concerns they had before. However, these experiences will become less intense as the healing process continues.

If you have never talked with anyone about what happened, you may decide that this is a good time to start.

³*ibid*

⁴*ibid*

Healing is a Process (continued)

Recovery from sexual assault is a lengthy process; the passage of time often lessens the pain. Having difficulty does not mean that you have developed serious mental or emotional problems. People recover from sexual assaults as they would recover from other crises. In the course of reorganizing their lives, some survivors become more sure of their own strengths and more confident in the power of the healing process.

You are not alone in this journey. If you need help now please call the Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline at: 1-800-284-7821 or for more information visit the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault webpage: www.iowacasa.org to find a local rape crisis center.

Kendra Malone
Information Specialist
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault

A poem of thanks submitted by “Edie” – an adult survivor of child abuse – for those who work to protect children from abuse.

MY WISH

**I wish I could have been a child
When people just like you
Put hands and hearts together
To show us what to do**

**That we might know our rights
And find the things we share
Never, ever be hushed up
Only comforted with care**

**That today we would not hide
As Eve taught us with a leaf
To cover up false shame
Taking guilt from our beliefs**

**I wish I could have been a child
I'd thank you one and all
For the love you have for children
Makes them strong and growing tall**

**Yes, I know you touch their souls
In the work that you do now
Leaving prayer the only reason
Their heads need ever bow**



By Edie
August 30, 2001

Working with Victims of Violent Crime

People often say to me “I don’t know how you do what you do” “I don’t know how you can be around such sadness all the time”. They wonder at my choice of profession that exposes me to intense grief that is seemingly insurmountable.

My answer to them is this; It is true that I sit with people in what may be their darkest hour. I do see pain, longing, frustration... sorrow that lacks the words to describe it, but...

I am witness to something more. I watch as human beings, thrown off balance by a sudden and violent impact begin to stabilize. With no control over the events that brought them to this place, individuals

families, communities begin to write a narrative of survival. As they grasp the place in their soul that hurts - a transformation begins. Carefully and lovingly, the wound is attended... it is bandaged with memories, love, support, connection, whatever coping skills that can be scraped together... and at times a bit of sheer grit. I see them being to recover. To heal. To survive. To thrive. I am witness to the emergence of hope. It is an anchor in chaos. It is something to cling to. This contagious rippling hope affects us all. It is a gift. For this gift, I am grateful.

Brenda Bash, Victim Advocate
Polk County Crisis & Advocacy Services, Des Moines
December 2010

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PREA UPDATE

How Does IDOC Approach Sexual Violence Prevention?

Detection

Before we can prevent Sexual Violence, we need to know how big the problem is, where it is and whom it affects. IDOC learns about a problem by gathering and studying data. This data is critical because it helps decision-makers use resources where it is needed the most.

Prevention

It is not enough to know that Sexual Violence affects our offender population, we also need to identify risk and protective factors, and then determine how to best address them. IDOC supports research to answer these questions. We are in the process of revising the assessment tools that determine risk factors and guide us in our prevention efforts.

Reduction

The department as a whole can reduce the number of risk factors that contribute to sexual violence by increasing awareness education to both staff and offenders. The SVP Assessment along with consistent compliance among all institutions is imperative. Institutions can reduce risk by addressing a number of concerns with regard to offenders:

- a. Offender segregation (based on offender propensity category)
- b. Housing



DEFINITIONS

Sexual Violence: *any form of unwanted sexual contact*

Sexual violence may include:

- Harassment
- sexual exploitation
- sexual battery
- penetration of anybody opening with a body part or object

Perpetrators may use:

- Threats

Continued page 8

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

PREA UPDATE (continued)

- c. Recreation / yard & meal times
- d. Staff to offender ratios
- e. Training and education for staff & volunteers
- f. Appropriate classification of offender's assessments at his or her annual review
- g. Offenders' access to reporting procedures and maintaining confidentiality.

- Coercion
- Authority
- Extortion
- physical force

Punishment

In order to effectively prevent sexual violence IDOC must take a strong approach to punishment for SV. This is the essence of the zero tolerance approach mandated by PREA law. IDOC understands that not holding perpetrators guilty of sexual violence sends a message that the behavior is condoned. Creating a zero tolerance environment and holding perpetrators accountable is the effective way to keep victims safe.

National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Standards.

NPREC released national standards on June 23, 2009, which have been revised and are now with the Department of Justice. The U.S. Attorney General is expected to release final standards by 2012.

The standards provide guidance for addressing sexual abuse behind bars, including an examination by a qualified forensic medical professional.



Victim Advisory Council – “Thank You” page....



Special Donations

Through the coordination of Amy Neisen, the 2nd District's women's group made several jewelry boxes and two bird feeders to give back to victims – to be used as gifts for victim impact speakers. The boxes were donated by 2nd District employee, Sherry Wiggins, and the women in the group did a wonderful job decorating the boxes and bird houses.

Continued page 9

Victim Advisory Council – “Thank You” page....(continued)

The Restorative Justice Program at the Iowa State Penitentiary – Ft. Madison, a program that teaches offenders construction/ carpentry skills while giving back to the community, donated speaker gifts as well. The men in the RJ program donated their time, materials and skill to make lovely wooden boxes in an effort to give something back to those who have lost so much due to crime. A huge “thank you” to the men in this program; our speakers were very appreciative of your craftsmanship and your generosity.



VAC Victim Fund Updates

We continue to be well supported through efforts of various individuals and institutions! Notably:

5K for 5Charities – thank you for including the VAC Fund again this year!!

ICIW – staff fundraiser – THANK YOU to all the staff at ICIW! Your support for victim speakers and the VI program is appreciated! A special mention to **Linda Haack** for organizing and promoting the VAC Fund.

The VAC Fund provides reimbursement to victims who participate in our Victim Impact programs, and those who participate in a Victim/Offender Dialogue. We are financially managed by the Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance (IOVA). We are solely supported by fundraising and individual donations. Please email mary.roche@iowa.gov for information on how you can support the VAC Fund!



UPDATE on Gavin - from his mother, Julie

This is in reference to the last edition of the Journey in which Julie shared Gavin’s story.

I wanted to share with you all a billboard campaign that Mothers Against Drunk Driving has done for Gavin. We are glad that we can get Gavin’s story out there to try and make a difference. These billboards went up in May and were in the area of Okoboji, Sioux City, and on hwy 60 near Orange City. There were also new billboards that went up in the Dubuque area around the 4th of July.

There is no doubt that Gavin was a little guy who knew what he wanted in life, and it’s up to us to make sure his spirit still has that purpose. All we want to do is make a difference for

Continued page 10

UPDATE on Gavin (continued)

someone out there and, at the same time, it gives us a little hope.

Thank you for all that VAC board members do. It is very inspiring to see and know that people care about victims and their survivors.

I hope you all liked the billboards. The stars were drawn by Gavin. The more people see this, the more we have a chance at making a difference. We miss him so dearly!

Sincerely
Julie

“Conflicts mark the frontiers, the places where we weaken and divide.... Conflicts probe both our innermost natures and the outermost limits of our being. They provoke cruelty and compassion, competition and collaboration, revenge and reconciliation. Mediation is the dangerous magic that moves us from one to the other.” -Kenneth Cloke, *Mediating Dangerously*

Workplace Conflict Resolution Program

Available to all DOC employees, volunteers and contract staff.

Impartial third parties trained in workplace conflict resolution assist individuals or groups to address and resolve workplace conflict in a confidential manner.

For more information or to make a referral, you may contact your supervisor, HR department, SVSS coordinator, or WCRP Coordinators
Chris Baker - 8th District
Mary Roche - Central Office

A program of the Office of Victim and Restorative Justice Programs
DOC Central Office
1-515-725-5742





A Native American grandfather, talking to his young grandson after the boy had gotten into some trouble, tells the boy he has two wolves inside of him struggling with each other.

"The first is the wolf of peace, love and kindness. The other wolf is fear, greed and hatred," he tells his grandson.

"Which wolf will win, grandfather?" asks the young boy.

"Whichever one you feed," answers his grandfather.

-Native American Proverb

THE JOURNEY

VICTIM ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Restorative Justice challenges us to design and administer a system that places the needs of the victims and the harm done by the offending behavior at the center of the process by which we sanction and hold the offender accountable. Crime is recognized as harm done to victims and the community. The goals of restorative justice are promoting understanding, accountability, and healing. Persons may contact the Victim and Restorative Justice Programs Administrator at 515-725-5742 or email mary.roche@doc.state.ia.us for more information.

VICTIM ADVISORY COUNCIL GOALS

- Expand victim outreach programs and services
- Assist judicial districts in providing victim services in community corrections agencies and other related community agencies
- Enhance public awareness concerning victim rights and services through public education programs
- Assist other agencies in the development of victim education efforts and assist in cross-training programs with allied criminal justice and victim service professionals
- Develop legislative and Department proposals to enhance victim rights, services, and programs

