Trauma in Organisations:

The impact of trauma and development of effective post trauma responses

Dr Noreen Tehrani

Chair Crisis, Disaster & Trauma Section

British Psychological Society

www.noreentehrani.com

Occupational Health Psychology

- Emergency Services
  - Police
  - Fire & Rescue
  - Ambulance
- Other Organisations
  - Social Work
  - Education
  - Accident/Incident Investigators
  - Safeguarding (youth groups, church)
  - Retail
  - Financial
- Consultancy/Support
  - Policy Development & Training
  - Disaster Planning
  - Disaster Management
  - Dealing with everyday crisis/disasters
  - Clinical Governance

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Duty of Care

Every employer shall ensure that his employees are provided with such health surveillance as is appropriate having regard to the risks to their health and safety which are identified by the assessment.

Health and Safety at Work Act (1999)

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Criteria for Developing PTSD (DSM5)

- Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence in one of the following ways:
  - Direct experience
  - Witness in person of events that happen to others
  - Learning that a traumatic event has happened to a close family member or friend
  - Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event

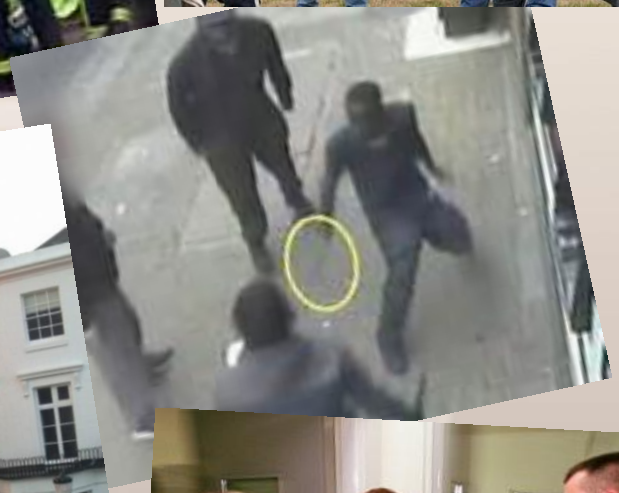
    e.g. first responders, police officers (and others) exposed to details of child abuse – must be work related

Three Types of Organisational Trauma

1. Response Trauma
   - Part of the job
   - Random
   - Unpredictable
2. Secondary Trauma/Compassion Fatigue
   - Working with traumatised people
   - Predictable
   - Duty of care
3. Crisis and Disasters
   - Unpredictable
   - Overwhelming
   - Need to maintain business as usual

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Response Trauma



Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Response Trauma Interventions

1. Psycho-Education
   - Symptoms and signs of trauma
   - Resilience building tools
2. Supervisor Support
   - Regular team time
   - Daily wellbeing checks
   - Situational risk assessments
   - Team & personal stress assessments
3. Referrals
   - Early interventions
     - Debriefing/Psychological First Aid
   - Psychological Screening, Assessments & Referral

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Secondary Trauma

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Comparisons between different groups

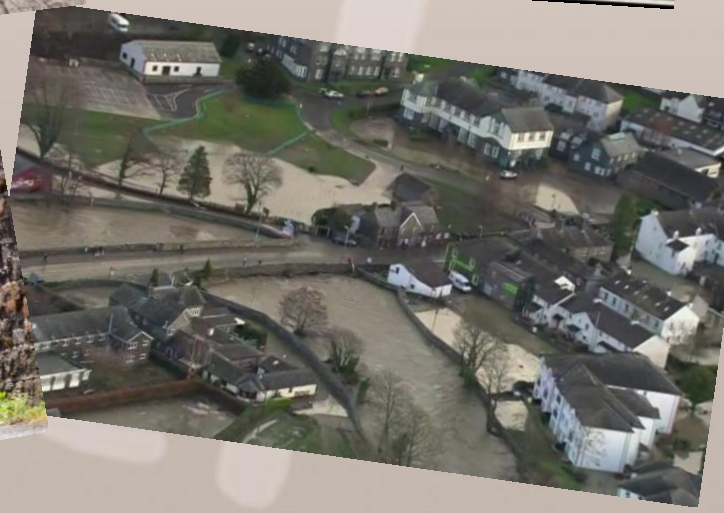
Clinical Symptom	On-line Child Abuse (n=557)	Child Abuse (n=843)	Family Liaison Officers (n=304)	Human-itarians (n=238)	Youth Safeguarding (n=217)	General Public
Anxiety	18%	28%	24%	36%	11%	3.5%
Depression	24%	29%	28%	41%	15%	8-12%
PTSD	8%	13%	7%	19%	5%	3%
Burnout	19%	23%	22%	39%	16%	NA
Secondary Trauma	14%	21%	20%	38%	11%	NA

Dealing with Secondary Trauma

1. Psychological Surveillance
   - Role Risk Assessments
   - Psychological screening
   - Referrals
   - Monitoring
2. Management Information
   - Benchmarking
   - Intervention evaluation
   - Senior Management Presentations
3. Interventions
   - Psychological Assessments
   - Referrals for Trauma Therapy
     - Short Term – organisation
     - Long Term - NHS

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Crisis & Disaster Trauma



Preparing for Crises and Disasters in Organisations

1. Risk Assessments
   - Exploring the potential risks
   - Examine the operational and employee implications
   - Define the seriousness and probability of risks and response required
2. Responding
   - Identify ways to eliminate, mitigate or reduce the risk
   - Implement any changes to systems, processes, relationships, support
   - Define disaster management team
3. Recovering
   - Plan for immediate aftermath
   - First month
   - Next six months/year
4. Learning
   - Monitor and review
   - Evaluate actions and interventions
   - Review risk assessments

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

How does trauma affect Organisations?

Copyrigh

Parallel

Organisations are living, growing, changing system with their own unique dynamics

Like individuals they are susceptible to stress, strain and trauma

Complex interactions occur between the public, clients, employees & the organisation which can lead to the use of abusive power

Process

Symptoms of a Traumatised Organisation

- Avoidance
  - Elephant in the room syndrome
  - Involvement in displacement activities
- Hyperarousal
  - Hyperactivity
  - Over reaction to information or data
- Re-experience
  - Tendency to repeat the same ineffective behaviours/mistakes
  - Reacts emotionally to traumatic triggers
- Dissociation
  - Lack of awareness of reality (operational numbing)
  - Responding to people/events without feelings or empathy

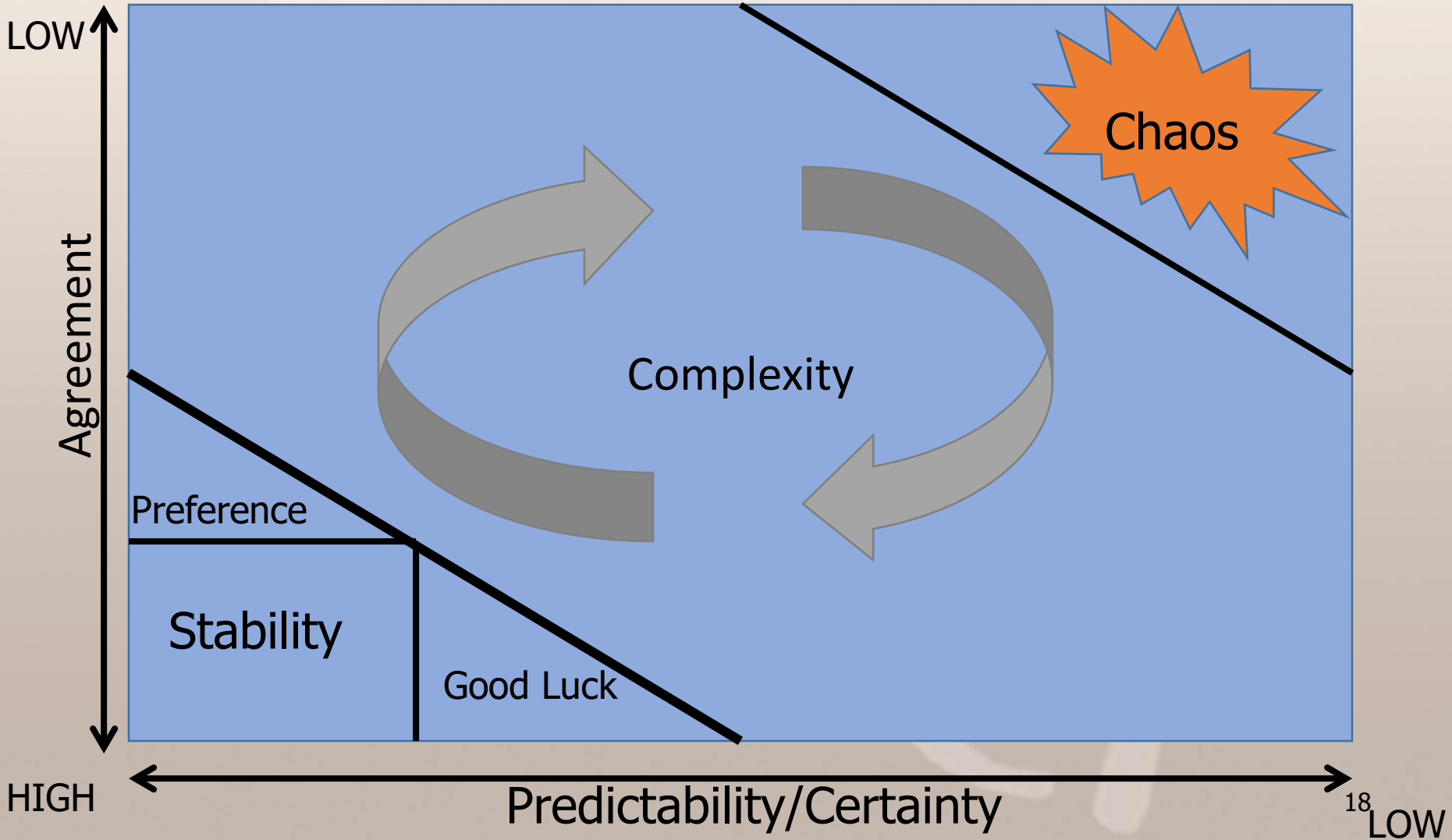
Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Trauma, Chaos and Complexity

- Traumatic events are:
  - Unexpected
  - Shocking
  - Unpredictable
  - Frightening
  - Challenging
  - Disrupting
- Trauma creates chaos and complexity

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Stability/Complexity/Chaos



Living with Chaos and Complexity

(Olson and Eoyang, 2001)

- Many variables involved in determining outcomes
- Outcomes emerge through the participation of many people
- Individual and systems behaviour is unpredictable and unknowable
- Relationships are empowering
- Each trauma is unique
- Leaders need to become facilitators and supporters

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Understanding organisational vulnerability

History – Success v Failure

Purpose – Clear v Uncertain

Structure – Formal v Informal

Responsiveness – Active v Passive

Communications – Open v Closed

Risk taking – High v Low

Relationships – Warm or Distant

Leadership – Control v Support

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Individual pain is played out

- Teams begin to engage in destructive behaviours
- Energy is used up in maintaining destructive cycles of behaviour
- Conflict becomes commonplace
- Litigation increases
- Organisational purpose is lost

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates

Essentials for Resilient Organisations

(Sandra Bloom 2013)

Provides an environment which is physically, psychologically, socially and morally safe	• Is safe and secure
Accept the expression of feelings without becoming defensive or destructive.	• Emotionally intelligent
Recognises organisational pain and loss and is prepared to learn and change	• Accepts loss & change
Has vision and looks to the challenges of the future with enthusiasm	• Future focus

Organisational Calming

Through normal problem solving, decision making and conflict resolution methods that must exist for any organisation to function effectively

The more complex the work demands , the greater the necessity for collaboration and integration and therefore the more likely that a system of teamwork will evolve

For a team to function properly there must be a certain level of trust among the team members who must all share in the establishment of satisfactory group norms

Becoming a resilient organisation

(Bloom, 2013)

- Increased emotional intelligence
- Balancing rational and intuitive problem solving
- Use of open communicate
- Democracy and involvement
- Commitment to non-violence
- Learning from success and failures

Copyright Noreen Tehrani Associates