



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Trauma and Peacebuilding: Trauma Sensitive Approaches for Working in Conflict Zones

Instructors:

Nina Sughrue, M.A, Lauren Van Metre, Ph.D., Peter Weinberger, Ph.D.
Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding

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Trauma affects individuals, families, communities, and nations. Unhealed trauma is a contributing factor to the cycle of violence in communities suffering from intractable conflict. Trauma tends to be the “elephant in the room” that is ignored because practitioners are not confident in their ability to address it. By developing trauma sensitive tools practitioners can be more aware of trauma behavior and therefore more effective in their professional capacities.

Additionally, all too often practitioners confuse trauma affected behavior with culture. While the two can be heavily intertwined, not understanding how trauma influences culture can lead to negative cultural stereotyping which in turn can result in practitioner ineffectiveness in the field. Practitioners working in conflict zones require more trauma awareness or a “trauma lens” when working in these challenging environments.

Last but not least, practitioners working in conflict zones with trauma affected populations can experience “compassion fatigue.” Practitioners need self-care strategies when working in emotionally challenging environments.

Objectives:

1. Participants will explore trauma sensitive tools and approaches for working in conflict zones.
2. Participants will become aware of how trauma physically affects the body and behavior.
3. Participants will learn to identify local resilience capacity.
4. Participants will understand why empathy is critical when working in conflict zones.
5. Participants will discover self care strategies to prevent compassion fatigue in you and your team.

NOTE: This is an introduction to trauma class *not* a trauma healing class.

Day One:

- 9:00 – 9:15 am **Introductions and course overview**
- Introductions to each other
 - Course overview
- 9:15 – 9:45 am **Icebreaker exercise**
- Video
 - Group debrief/discussion
- 9:45 – 10:30 am **Changing nature of war, civilian trauma, different levels of trauma**
- How wars have changed and affected more civilians
 - What is trauma? What are the different levels of trauma? Why does this matter?
- 10:30-10:45 am **Break**
- 10:45 – 11:15 am **Professional self-reflection exercise**
- Individual work on your experience with traumatized populations
- 11:15 – 11:45 am **Professional self-assessment exercise debrief**
- Discuss with your neighbor
 - Group discussion
- 11:45 – 12:30 pm **Why don't we just get over it? (Part One)**
Guest Speaker: Carolyn Yoder, Eastern Mennonite University
- Flight or fight or freeze response
 - What happens in the brain during a trauma. How does this affect you and influence your field work?
- 12:30-1:30 pm **Lunch**
- 1:30 – 2:00 pm **Why don't we just get over it? (Continued)**
Guest Speaker: Carolyn Yoder, Eastern Mennonite University
- Flight or fight or freeze response
 - What happens in the brain during a trauma. How does this affect you and influence your field work?
- 2:00 – 2:45 pm **Trauma sensitive communication: listening and talking**
- Lessons learned
 - Group discussion
- 2:45 – 3:00 pm **Break**
- 3:00 – 4:00 pm **Trauma sensitive communication: listening and talking**
- Exercise
 - Debrief

Day Two:

- 9:00 – 9:15 am **Review of day one**
- 9:15 – 10:30 am **Individual trauma and its affect on collective trauma**
Guest Speaker: Beatrice Pouligny, Ph.D., visiting faculty at Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
- How individual traumas affect the collective
 - Why this matters for your field work
- 10:30 – 10:45 am **Break**
- 10:45 – 11:30 am **Identifying local resilience capacity**
Guest Speaker: Beatrice Pouligny, Ph.D., visiting faculty at Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
- What is local resilience?
 - How to identify it and why this matters for your field work
- 11:30-12:30 pm **Empathy: why it is important in our work**
- What is empathy and how do we achieve it?
 - Why this matters for your field work
- 12:30 – 1:30 pm **Lunch**
- 1:30 – 2:15 pm **Self-resilience: self-care strategies**
- What is compassion fatigue?
 - How can you prevent it? Identifying self-care strategies.
- 2:45 – 3:00 pm **Team resilience: how to build a resilient team**
- How to recognize compassion fatigue in your team
 - Productive team communication and strategies for team resilience
- 3:00-3:15 pm **Break**
- 3:15-4:00 **Exercise on self- and team resilience**
- Group work
- 4:00-4:30 pm **Wrap up, evaluations, certificates**