

A woman with long blonde hair is shown in profile, looking out over a vast green field. The sky is filled with dramatic, grey clouds, and a faint rainbow is visible in the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# Trauma and Compassion Fatigue

An Introduction to Trauma, and  
the Caring Community

GASCO

September 8, 2012

# Introduction

# Traumatic Stress

is the pressure, force or strain on the human mind and body from a specific event of major dimension that shocks, stuns and horrifies.



# Have you experienced any of the following?

- ◆ unexpected death of a loved one
- ◆ observing the serious injury or unnatural death of another person
- ◆ road traffic accidents
- ◆ man-made or natural disasters
- ◆ wartime combat
- ◆ interpersonal violence (e.g., child abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, other criminal violence)
- ◆ life-threatening medical conditions

# Normal Reactions to Trauma

- ◆ emotional reactions
- ◆ cognitive reactions
- ◆ physical reactions
- ◆ interpersonal reactions

# Problematic Responses to Trauma

Less common and indicate the need for professional assistance

- ◆ Severe Dissociation
- ◆ Severe Intrusive Re-experiencing (flashbacks or nightmares)
- ◆ Extreme Avoidance (agoraphobic-like social or vocational withdrawal, compulsive avoidance)
- ◆ Severe Hyperarousal (panic episodes, terrifying nightmares, difficulty controlling violent impulses, inability to concentrate)
- ◆ Debilitating Anxiety (ruminative worry, severe phobias, unshakeable obsessions, paralyzing nervousness, fear of losing control/going crazy)
- ◆ Severe Depression (lack of pleasure in life, worthlessness, self-blame, dependency, early wakenings)
- ◆ Problematic Substance Use (abuse or dependency, self-medication)
- ◆ Psychotic Symptoms (delusions, hallucinations, bizarre thoughts or images)

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD

Is a mental disorder resulting from exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor. PTSD has a number of unique defining features and diagnostic criteria, as published in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders, fourth edition (DSM\_IV, 1994)

# PTSD Criteria include:

- ◆ Exposure to a traumatic stressor
- ◆ Re-experiencing symptoms
- ◆ Avoidance and numbing symptoms
- ◆ Symptoms of increased arousal



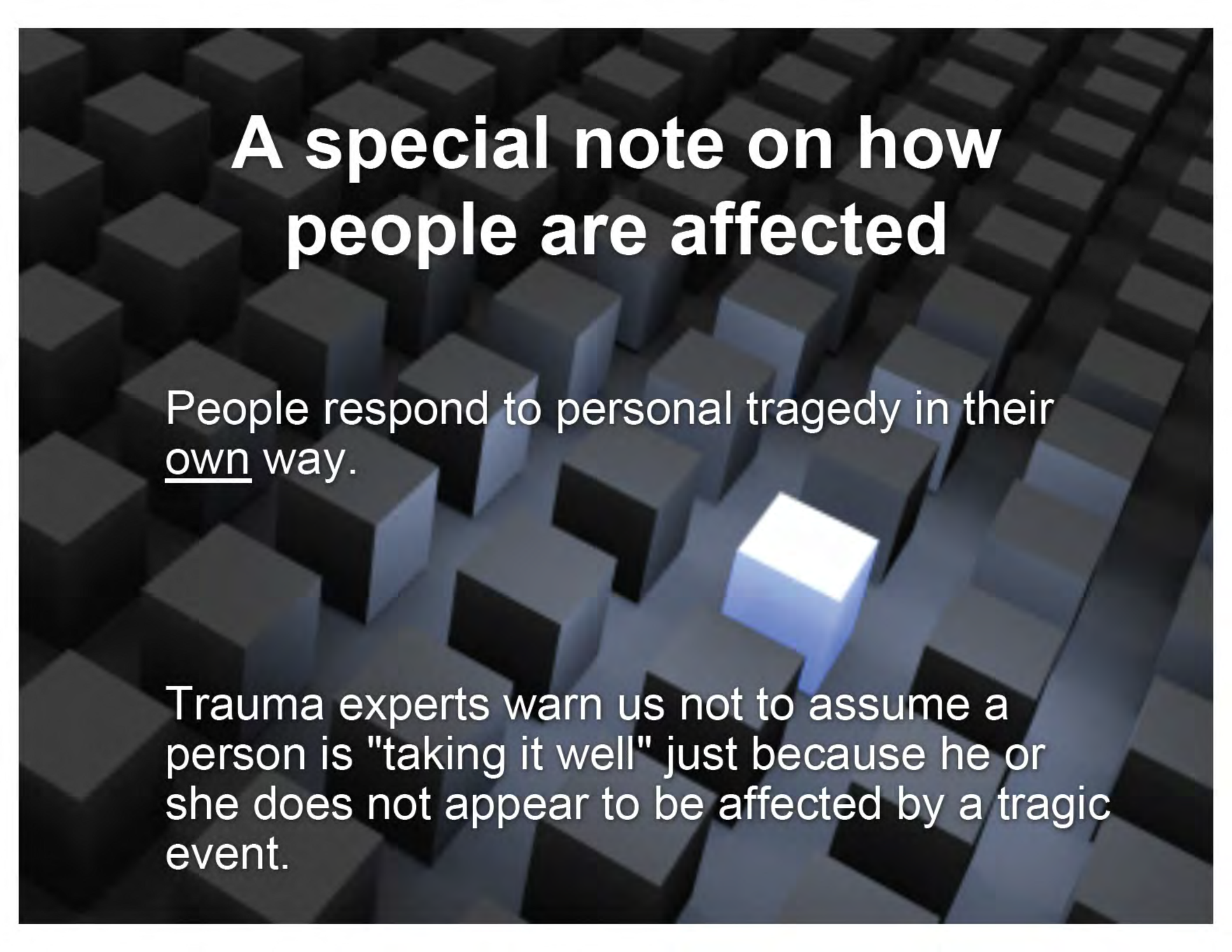
# Duration

- ◆ For a diagnosis of PTSD to be made, the symptoms must endure for at least one month.
- ◆ PTSD symptoms must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

# Important Reminder

While there are qualifying events for PTSD, PTSD in victims is not inevitable.



A close-up, high-angle view of a computer keyboard. The keys are dark grey or black, and the background is a dark, textured surface. One key in the lower right quadrant is highlighted in a bright white color, creating a strong contrast with the surrounding dark keys.

# A special note on how people are affected

People respond to personal tragedy in their own way.

Trauma experts warn us not to assume a person is "taking it well" just because he or she does not appear to be affected by a tragic event.

# Who to turn to?

- ◆ **Base support**

- ◆ Family
- ◆ Friends
- ◆ Clergy person
- ◆ Chaplain

- ◆ **Specialized support**

- ◆ **Licensed Counselors in Georgia**
  - ◆ Professional Counselor
  - ◆ Marriage and Family Therapist
  - ◆ Clinical Social Worker
  - ◆ Master Social Worker
  - ◆ Assoc. Marriage and Family Therapist
  - ◆ Associate Professional Counselor

# Advantages of Diagnosis

- ◆ Movement from unknown to known
- ◆ Movement from isolation to community
- ◆ Treatment plan can be established
- ◆ Move toward healing

# Self-care after a trauma

- ◆ **Physically** - eat right, exercise, good sleep, take personal time
- ◆ **Physiological** - journal writing, self-reflection/prayer time, personal psychotherapy, set personal boundaries
- ◆ **Emotional** - Spend time with family and friends you enjoy, allow yourself to cry, find things that make you laugh, express your outrage in positive ways like social action
- ◆ **Spiritual** - reflection, prayer, spend time with the scriptures of your faith, be aware of the many nonmaterial gifts around you

# Remember to seek medical/ mental health help if:

- ◆ you are experiencing any symptoms that are causing distress, significant changes in relationships, or are impairing functioning at work
- ◆ you are self-medicating with alcohol or drugs
- ◆ you are unable to find relief with the self-help strategies we discussed

# Health Care workers and Stress

- ◆ Burnout
- ◆ Secondary Stress
- ◆ Compassion Stress
- ◆ Compassion Fatigue
- ◆ Vicarious Trauma



# Dr. Frank Ochberg on Compassion Fatigue

Click the box to open the video

[Click to Open Video](#)

# Dart Center and NewsU, [http://www.newsu.org/courses/ course\\_detail.aspx?id=dart\\_trauma05](http://www.newsu.org/courses/course_detail.aspx?id=dart_trauma05)

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## COURSE DETAILS

**Title:** Journalism and Trauma  
**Instructor:** Dart Center

**Journalism and Trauma**

Interviewing Tips

What you will learn

Learn more

**What will I learn?** This course teaches journalists who cover violent crimes, horrific accidents, natural disasters and other traumatic events in which they witness human pain and suffering about how traumatic stress affects victims and how to interview trauma victims with compassion and respect. Learn how covering trauma affects you and how to take care of your own health.

**How long will it take?** We estimate that this module will take about one to two hours to complete. It includes some exercises to help you think about the topic.

**About the training partner:** The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma at the University of Washington developed the material in this course.

**Note:** This course requires the [Flash plug-in](#) to view.

**Cost:** This course is currently available at no cost to registered users of News University.

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    - ◆ [www.dartcenter.org](http://www.dartcenter.org)
    - ◆ [www.giftfromwithin.org](http://www.giftfromwithin.org)
    - ◆ “When Helping Hurts: Preventing & Treating Compassion Fatigue”
    - ◆ [www.newsu.org](http://www.newsu.org)
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