

Navigating Collective Trauma as a Mental Health Professional

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About Me...

- ◀ Counseling Professional
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**Danielle Render Turmaud,
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Learning Objectives:

After attending this presentation, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the topic of collective trauma and how it relates to the mental health profession.
2. Describe ways that the effects of collective trauma may present itself in individuals and within the therapeutic relationship.
3. Utilize resources and tools discussed to foster coping and promote well-being during this time of collective trauma.



Let's start with a
check in.

1. Making Space for the Mental Health Professional During A Time of Collective Trauma



Case Study:

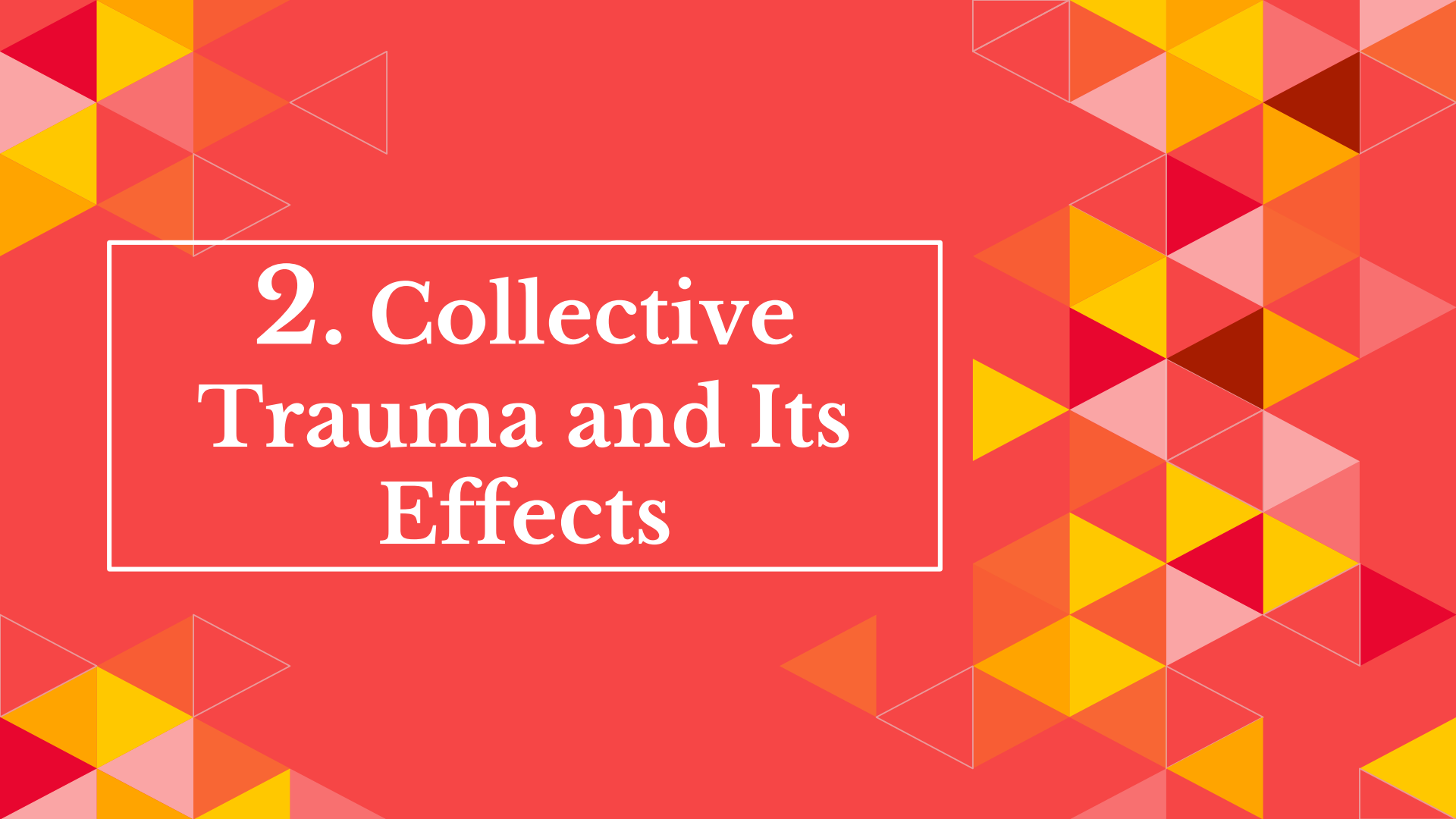
A client walks into your office and discloses that they recently endured a traumatic experience.



“

Our world overvalues productivity and others' opinions, so we learn to ignore the messages our bodies are giving us, through our emotions and physical sensations, and instead push through our pain and pretend we have it all together.”

~Aundi Kolber, 2020 Trying Softer



2. Collective Trauma and Its Effects



What is Collective Trauma?

“ Collective trauma refers to the impact of adversity on relationships in families, communities and societies at large. This includes natural and human-caused disasters as well as the cumulative effects of poverty, oppression, illness, and displacement.”

(Jack Saul, 2014)



Not only can collective trauma impact individuals, but it can alter the entire fabric of groups, communities, and societies.

How does Collective Trauma Impact Us?



- ❖ Physiologically
- ❖ Psychologically
- ❖ Relationally
- ❖ Societally
- ❖ Spiritually



Physiologically

- ▶ Fatigue/Exhaustion
- ▶ Hypersomnia/Hyposomnia
- ▶ Changes in Appetite
- ▶ Heart Palpitations/Chest Pain
- ▶ Body Aches
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Stomach Aches/Gastrointestinal Upset
- ▶ Increased Risk for Long-Term Health Issues



Psychologically/Emotionally

- ▶ Emotional distress
- ▶ Forgetfulness/Difficulties remembering
- ▶ Altered worldview, schemas, or perceptions of self/others
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Grief
- ▶ PTSD/Traumatic stress symptoms
- ▶ Feelings of helplessness
- ▶ Feeling like one is “in a fog”



Relationally

- ▶ Disruption of social networks
- ▶ Increased conflict, aggression, or violence
- ▶ Familial distress/Difficulties in parenting
- ▶ Decreased capacity for effective communication
- ▶ Increased irritability
- ▶ Increased isolation and reduced social involvement
- ▶ Difficulties in trusting others

The Therapeutic Relationship

- ❖ Structural changes in the therapeutic relationship
 - ❖ Grief
 - ❖ Over-identification with client's struggles
 - ❖ Disconnecting from Relationship
-
- ❖ Metacommunication
 - ❖ Increased empathy for client's challenges
 - ❖ Increased rapport and authenticity



3. Responding to this Time of Collective Trauma





Tips/Tools

1. Meet ourselves and others where we are with **empathy, acceptance, and unconditional positive regard**

2. Stay connected

3. The basics are important!

4. Lean into your resources

Recognizing the Impact of Collective Trauma

Worksheet

In life, we may find ourselves impacted by collective trauma. Collective trauma refers to traumatic situations and the effects that it has on a group of people, community, or society. Collective trauma may be caused human-caused or natural disasters and can include situations like hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, tsunamis, mass shootings, terrorism, war, genocide, systematic oppression, historical oppression, pandemics, displacement, or famine and severe poverty (Saul, 2014). It is important to note that a group, community, or society may experience collective trauma in response to a one-time incident, but that it may also be a response to cumulative adverse experiences (such as systematic racism and oppression).

The hope of this worksheet is to provide you with a tool to better understand how collective trauma may be impacting your well-being. As we gain an increased understanding of where we are and how collective trauma may be impacting us, we then may find ourselves more equipped to cope with the challenges we are facing and be able to seek out any resources we may need.

In this worksheet, you will work through four areas to help you identify where a collective trauma response may be surfacing in your life. These areas include 1) physiological well-being, 2) psychological and emotional well-being, 3) relational well-being, and 4) spiritual well-being. After going through these areas, you will also find space to reflect on what insights you have gained and what action steps you would like to take in response to your new insights.

References and Additional Resources to Look Into

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Physiological Impact

Our bodies are magnificent and often provide us with valuable information about how we are doing. When we endure stress, especially high levels of stress (like experienced in response to trauma), a stress response may surface in the body. This portion of the worksheet allows you to take some time to consider how collective trauma consequences may be surfacing in your body.

Before filling out this portion of the worksheet ask yourself the following question: In response to the situation that elicited collective trauma, or the ongoing situation that may be leading to collective trauma in myself, the group I identify with, my community, or my society, have I noticed any physiological changes in my body or health? If so, what are they? Brainstorm and jot any changes that you have noticed in the space below:



After brainstorming, utilize the section below to help you consider in what ways collective trauma may be impacting you.

Have you noticed any.....

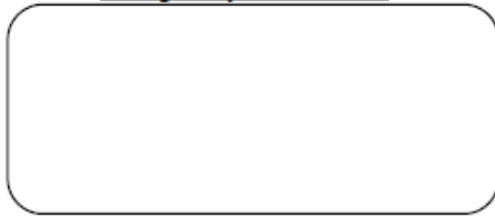
Changes in your sleep?



Changes in your appetite?



Changes in your sex drive?



Changes in your energy levels?



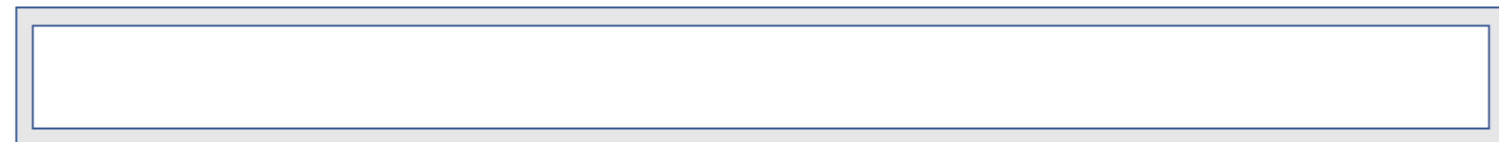
Changes in your body's typical functioning
e.g. body aches, stomach aches, headaches, etc.)?



Changes in your ability to
fight off illness?



Other physiological or health changes (e.g. sweating, heart palpitations, difficulties breathing, etc.)?



Psychological Impact

Trauma and collective trauma situations may impact the brain and our ability to cope. It is important to recognize that in response to traumatic situations, it is not uncommon for us to struggle with a number of psychological or emotional consequences in response to collective trauma. This portion of the worksheet allows you to take some time to consider how collective trauma consequences may be impacting your psychological and emotional well-being.

Before filling out this portion of the worksheet ask yourself the following question: In response to the situation that elicited collective trauma, or the ongoing situation that may be leading to collective trauma in myself, the group I identify with, my community, or my society, have I noticed any psychological or emotional changes? If so, what are they? Brainstorm and jot any changes that you have noticed in the space below:

I've been feeling really sad and down lately...I am experiencing these weird fluctuations between feeling depressed about everything that is happening and anxious about what could happen next. I'm feeling completely drained by all of this.

After brainstorming, utilize the section below to help you consider in what ways collective trauma may be impacting you.

Have you noticed any.....

Changes in your stress levels?

If so, how? What have you noticed?

Yes, I definitely feel more stressed than usual.

Changes in your emotions?

If so, how? What have you noticed?

I've noticed feeling sadder and more anxious than I usually am.

Changes in your behaviors or ability to cope?

If so, how? What have you noticed?

Yes. I have noticed that almost anything stressful is too much for me to handle and I start crying or worrying about what is happening/could happen, etc.

Circle any of the potential psychological or emotional impacts below that you relate to in your experience of collective trauma:

Anxiety

Decreased
Motivation

Feeling in a
"fog"

Feeling
Disconnected

Feeling
Hypervigilant

Spacing Out

Fear

Feelings of
Worthlessness

Addictive
Behaviors

Nightmares

Impulsivity

Grief

Depression

Confusion

Feelings of
Shock

Forgetfulness/
Difficulties
Remembering

Altered
Worldview of
Self/Others

PTSD/Traumatic
Stress Symptoms

Loneliness

Difficulties with
Substance Abuse

After going through this worksheet thus far, what insights have you gained about yourself and how collective trauma may be impacting you?

Honestly, I hadn't realized how much this had been impacting me! I kept wondering why I was in this funk, and I've been hard on myself for it.

Are you recognizing any areas where you may need extra support in this time? If so, what?

Yes, I have been feeling so so down lately. I need some help in feeling less down and finding motivation in my life again to do things.

What are some things that you can do to meet yourself where you are with kindness and support?

This is so helpful for me...to see that I am not crazy. I realize now that I am not the only one who could struggle with all of this! That really helps me feel better about myself. Right now, I want to focus on being kinder to myself when I am not doing as well as I would like to.

Relational Impact

Trauma and collective trauma may not only impact us on an intrapersonal level but may also impact us interpersonally. We may find our ability to relate to others or interact with others altered. This portion of the worksheet allows you to take some time to consider how collective trauma consequences may be impacting your relationships.

Before filling out this portion of the worksheet ask yourself the following question: In response to the situation that elicited collective trauma, or the ongoing situation that may be leading to collective trauma in myself, the group I identify with, my community, or my society, have I noticed any changes in my relationships? What about your ability to relate to others? If so, what are they? Brainstorm and jot any changes that you have noticed in the space below:



Below are some of the ways that a collective trauma response may surface in our ability to relate with others.

Circle any that you relate to:

Reduced sense of Safety and
Openness with Others

Reduced Social Involvement
or Isolation

Difficulties in Trusting
Others

Increased Conflicts

Difficulties with Aggression
or Violence

Difficulties in Parenting

Difficulties in
Communicating with Others

Difficulties in Feeling Able
to Connect to Others

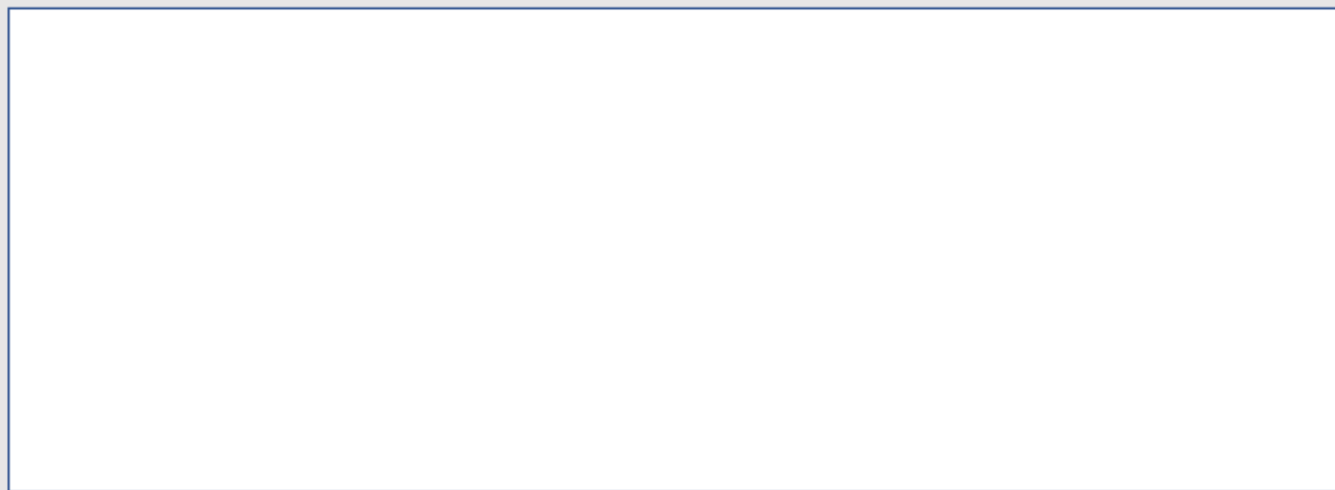
Increased Concerns about
Loved Ones' Safety and
Placing a lot of Energy in
Protecting Them

Or have you noticed any other changes in your relationships?

Spiritual Impact

The impact of collective trauma may surface in many areas of our lives, including our faith or spirituality. Regardless of our beliefs, religion, or spirituality, we may find our beliefs altered or changed in response to collective trauma (in positive or negative ways). This portion of the worksheet allows you to take some time to consider how collective trauma consequences may be impacting your spirituality.

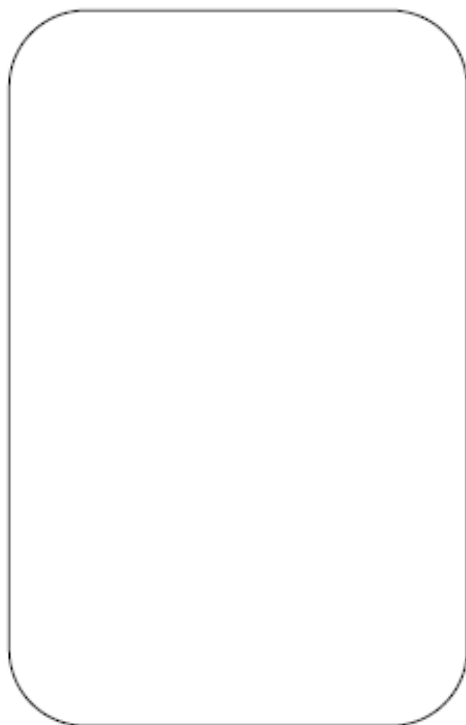
Before filling out this portion of the worksheet ask yourself the following question: In response to the situation that elicited collective trauma, or the ongoing situation that may be leading to collective trauma in myself, the group I identify with, my community, or my society, have I noticed any changes in my spiritual beliefs/faith? If so, what are they? Brainstorm and jot any changes that you have noticed in the space below:



After brainstorming, utilize the section below to help you consider in what ways collective trauma may be impacting you.

Have you noticed any.....

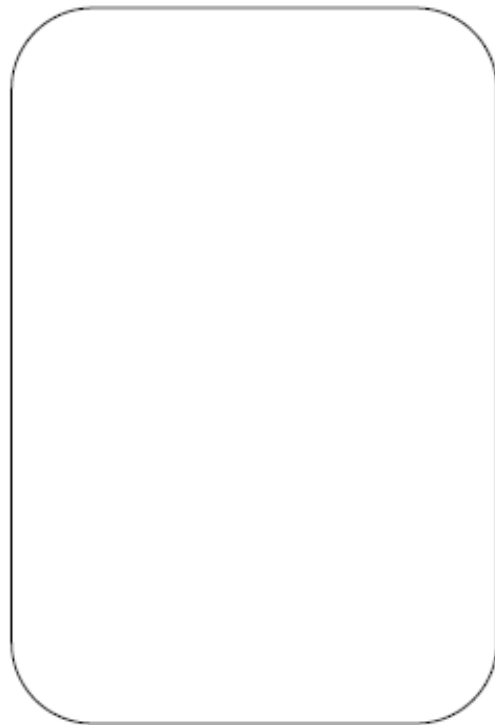
Changes in your beliefs?



Changes in the way you interact
with your spirituality/religion/deity?



Changes in the way you understand
or see the world?



After completing this worksheet, what insights have you gained about yourself and how collective trauma may be impacting you?

I didn't realize how many ways this had been impacting me!

What are some action steps you can take in the next week to meet yourself where you are and support yourself accordingly? In this section include resources you will look into, coping tools you want to utilize, etc. Be specific in your response.

In the next week, I want to meet with my therapist again to get some extra support. I realize that it's okay that I need it right now. I also think that I will try to go for a run and get some exercise, eat regular meals, spend some more time doing things I love (playing outside with my kids, dancing, etc.). I think I will also try to call my best friend. I could really use some support right now and I know she could too.

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Questions?

Collective Trauma Self-Paced Course (**FREE** registration until June 15th)

<https://catalog.multnomahplus.com/courses/when-our-world-is-turned-upside-down>

Connect with me!

- ▶ Psychology Today: Lifting the Veil on Trauma

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifting-the-veil-trauma>

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