

UKZN HOWARD COLLEGE THE PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC

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ABOUT US

The Psychology Clinic is located on the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus and is home to the **Clinical & Counselling Master's programme in the discipline of Psychology.**

The Clinic's main aim is to provide affordable psychotherapy, counselling and assessment services for both adults and children.

We offer short-term treatments for the following concerns:

- Depression
- Interpersonal conflict
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Behavioural concerns
- HIV/Aids (pre, post, and ongoing counselling)
- Personality disorders
- Couple or marriage counselling

CREATIVE MINDS PROJECT

Creative Minds is an art-based project designed by psychology students from the Psychology Department at the UKZN, Howard College Campus.

The **Creative Minds Project** involves various interactive interventions with street youth in the Durban City area. The project is being conducted at the "I Care Centre" in Greyville, Durban and involves various art-based interventions, such as mask-making, drawing, and creative expression in the form of music and dancing. I Care is a non-profit, Christian organisation that creates meaningful and sustainable solutions for street children through awareness programmes, rehabilitation, shelters, skills, and finally producing effective members of society.

For more information about I Care, visit their website:
<http://icare.co.za>



Images: Two members of the Creative Minds Project pose whilst wearing handmade masks.

RESILIENCE

Everyone is likely to experience a traumatic event in their life, it is almost unavoidable. Everyone's experience of traumatic events will be different. How people are affected, cope and recover varies greatly.

"In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways." - Dr Michael Unger.

There are many factors associated with resilience. Some of the more common aspects include the following:

General Factors:

- Assertiveness
- Empathy for others
- Having goals
- Good sense of humor

Relationship Factors:

- Appropriate emotional expression
- Parenting that meets the child's needs
- Positive role models

Community Factors:

- Safety and security
- Access to education, information, and resources
- Avoidance of violence within the home

Cultural Factors:

- Tolerance for different ideas
- Self-betterment
- Cultural/spiritual identification

TODAY'S TOPIC

TRAUMA

What is Trauma?

Psychological trauma is a type of damage to the mind that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. **Trauma** is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope, or integrate the emotions involved with that experience.

Trauma comes in many forms, and there are vast differences among people who experience trauma. The effects of trauma impact people differently. Resilient individuals are more likely to deal with trauma effectively.

Trauma may be a **single-blow event**, such as a car accident, robbery, rape, or witnessing the death of a loved one. Or, trauma may be **repeated, recurring events** such as experiencing sexual abuse by a family member over an extended period of time or experiencing years-worth of relationship violence.

Signs and Symptoms of Traumatized Individuals (*lasting more than 1 month*):

- Individuals experience intrusion symptoms - such as recurrent, involuntary recollections of the trauma (*children may express this in repetitive play*).
- Traumatic nightmares (*children may have disturbing dreams that are not related to the trauma content*).
- Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) which may occur on a continuum from brief episodes to complete loss of consciousness (*children may re-enact the event in play*).
- Intense or prolonged distress after exposure to traumatic reminders
- Marked physiological reactivity after exposure to trauma-related stimuli.
- Persistent effort to avoid distressing trauma-related stimuli after the event (i.e., trauma-related thoughts/feelings or trauma-related external reminders - such as people, places, and conversations).
- Negative alterations in thoughts and mood that began or worsened after the traumatic event (e.g., poor memory, negative beliefs, distorted blame of self or others, , shame, or fear).

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

People define relationships in many different ways, but for a relationship to be healthy you need:

1.) Safe communication

You talk openly about problems and listen to one another. You respect each other's opinions

2.) Trust

You believe what your partner has to say. You do not feel the need to "prove" each other's trustworthiness.

3.) Boundaries

Setting personal boundaries can be an ongoing process in a relationship. People and relationships evolve, and everyone has the right to change or adjust their boundaries as they see fit.

4.) Mutual respect

You value each other as you are.

Everyone deserves a relationship that is positive, healthy and free from violence. If you have concerns about your relationship, contact the **Open Door Crisis Centre** on **084 409 2679** for 24-Hour Support.



THE PROCESS OF HEALING

The Use of Adaptive Coping Strategies

Survivors of trauma - particularly early, repetitive trauma - are likely to continue to use the same self-protective coping strategies that they employed to shield themselves from psychic harm at the time of the traumatic experience. *Hypervigilance, dissociation, avoidance and numbing* are examples of coping strategies that may have been effective at some time, but later interfere with the person's ability to live the life the way he or she wants.

It is useful to think of trauma "symptoms" as adaptations. Symptoms represent the client's attempt to cope *the best way they can* with overwhelming feelings. When we see "symptoms" in a trauma survivor, it is always significant to ask ourselves: what purpose does this behavior serve? Every symptom helped a survivor cope at some point in the past and is still in the present — in some way. We humans are incredibly adaptive creatures. Often, if we help the survivor explore how behaviors are an adaptation, we can help them learn to substitute a less problematic behavior

Severe trauma can have a major impact on the course of life. Childhood trauma can cause the disruption of basic developmental tasks. The developmental tasks being learned at the time of the trauma can help determine what the impact will be. For example, survivors of childhood trauma can have mild to severe deficits in abilities such as:

- self-soothing
- seeing the world as a safe place
- trusting others
- organized thinking for decision-making
- avoiding exploitation

Therapy & Treatment for Trauma

Psychotherapy is an effective form of treatment for healing from the effects of trauma. Therapy can help people make sense of their experiences and feelings, develop plans to stay safe, learn healthy coping skills, and connect with other resources and support.

One type of therapy that is most commonly used and recognised for its effectiveness in trauma treatment is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Other types include psychodynamic therapy, hypnotherapy, and exposure therapy. Adjunctive group therapy may be used to address existential questions that may arise in the traumatic aftermath.

In some cases, medications, such as anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications, and mood stabilizers, are employed to help manage the more challenging symptoms of trauma.

For more information regarding therapy and assessments contact us:

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