

Defending Human Trafficking Victims: A Trauma-Informed Approach

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A **trauma-informed legal practice** integrates an understanding of trauma's impact into every aspect of client representation. It is grounded in both specific principles and practical strategies that prioritize client well-being, foster trust, and prevent further harm.

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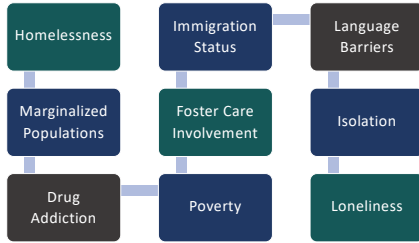
What Is Human Trafficking?

- Using force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some sort of labor or commercial sex act.
- A commercial sex act with anyone under the age of 18 is considered human trafficking.



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Exploitation of Vulnerabilities



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Methods of Control



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Forced Criminality and Incidental Crimes

Prostitution
Theft
Drug related charges
Assault

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Human Trafficking Screening Tool- Short Version

- 1) Did someone you work for ever refuse to pay what they promised and keep all or most of the money you made?
- 2) Did you ever trade sexual acts for food, clothing, money, shelter, favors, or other necessities for survival before you reached the age of 18?
- 3) Were you ever physically beaten, slapped, kicked, punched, burned, or harmed in any way by someone you worked for?
- 4) Have you ever been unable to leave a place you worked or talk to people you wanted to talk to, even when you weren't working, because the person you worked for threatened or controlled you?
- 5) Did someone you work for ever ask, pressure, or force you to do something sexually that you did not feel comfortable doing?
- 6) Were you ever forced to engage in sexual acts with family, friends, clients, or business associates for money or favors, by someone you worked for?

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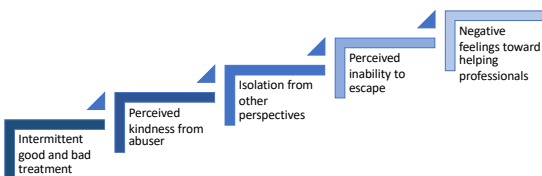
Sex Trafficking Victims May Not Identify Themselves Due To:

- Lack of understanding of trafficking
- Threats from the trafficker/pimp
- Fear of retribution against their families
- Fear of the legal system
- Despair, worthlessness, hopelessness
- Trauma bonds

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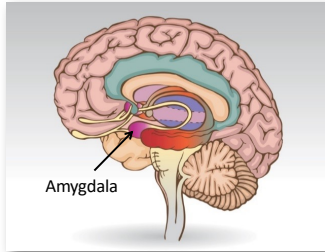
Trauma Bond

Phenomenon of survivor bonding with their abuser



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Smoke Detector and Alarm System

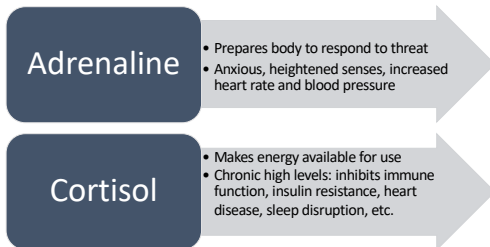


System can become sensitized and stuck

Autonomic Nervous System Arousal

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Key Hormones



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Responses To The Moment Of Trauma



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Ongoing Responses After The Trauma

FIGHT:

Anger
Intimidation
Physical Aggression
Resistance
Lying
Irritability

FLIGHT:

Avoidance
No-shows
Constantly Busy
Anxiety
Distractions
Substance Use



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Ongoing Responses After The Trauma

FREEZE:

Dissociation
Withdrawal
Numbing out
Indecisive
Substance use

FAWN:

Avoiding conflict
People pleasing
Ignoring one's own needs
Codependence
Difficulty saying "no"
Seeking attention and flattery



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Principles of Trauma-Informed Legal Practice



RECOGNITION OF TRAUMA: Acknowledging the impact of trauma and the unique responses of your client



SAFETY: Physical and emotional safety; Understanding how people perceive safety is key!



TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSPARENCY: goal is to build trust; honest communication and transparency about legal process

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Principles of Trauma-Informed Legal Practice



EMPOWERMENT AND COLLABORATION: Involving clients in decision making, respecting their autonomy, and validating their experiences



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: Recognizing and adapting to client's cultural background and unique needs



PREDICTABILITY: Clear information about what to expect; preparation for scenarios they may encounter; reminders for appointments and court dates

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Legal Defenses and Statutory Protections

- Coercion or Duress
- Affirmative Defense for victims of human trafficking G.S. 14-43.15
- Expunction of certain offenses G.S. 15A- 145.9



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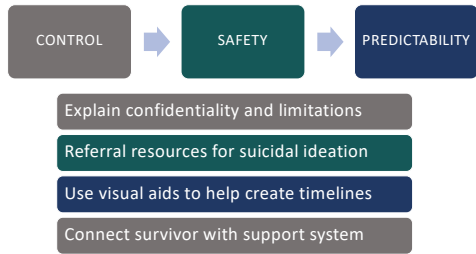
Best Practices

- Thoroughly document human trafficking experience
 - Go at client's pace
 - Utilize mental health professionals or advocates
 - Minimize the number of times a victim has to tell their story
 - Record information respectfully and sensitively
- Use expert testimony to explain victim behavior
- Prepare client for attacks on credibility



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Other Considerations



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The Hundred Movement

- Free counseling and case management services for victims of sex trafficking
- No session limits
- Serving all of North Carolina
- Training and consultation

828-782-0065 www.hundredmovement.com



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