Yarning up on trauma

Healing ourselves, healing our children and families, healing our Communities

Shaun Coade & Sandie de Wolf
Workshop overview

- Context: What is Berry Street & the Take Two program?
- The yarning up on trauma model
- Attachment & Culture
- Trauma & Culture
- Case presentation using the yarning up on trauma model
Berry Street

• The largest independent child and family welfare organisation in Victoria.
• Strong commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.
• Specific Apology for past harm (2006)
• Aboriginal Strategic Plan
• Take Two is a partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Programs & Services

• Residential Care
• Home Based Care
• Youth Services
• Therapeutic Services
• Family Services
• Education
• Community Programs
• Disability Services
Our Vision

Berry Street believes all Aboriginal children should have a good childhood, growing up in families and Communities where they feel safe, nurtured and have hope for the future.
Our Goals

Berry Street Aboriginal Plan

• Deliver quality culturally sensitive, holistic and empowering services to Aboriginal children & families

• Employ culturally aware & competent staff & carers

• Work in respectful partnerships with Aboriginal organisations & Communities
Our Goals

• Building our understanding of intergenerational trauma in the lives of Aboriginal children, families & Communities.

• Advocating for better health, education & life outcomes for Aboriginal people.
What is Take Two?

• Take Two is a program of Berry Street.
• It is a state-wide service (Victoria) providing therapeutic services to infants, children & young people who are clients of child protection (DHS)
• 90 Aboriginal children & young people accessed the Take Two program in 2008-09
• Employs a dedicated Aboriginal team providing consultation & clinical services across the state.
What is Take Two?

- The service is funded by DHS
- All children are aged between 0-18 years
- All children referred have been severely abused or neglected and are at risk of developing or already demonstrate emotional and/or behavioural disturbance.
- The children may be living at home, with relatives, or in out of home care.
Take Two Partners

- Berry Street
- VACCA
- La Trobe University (Research)
- Mindful (Training)
- Austin CAMHS
Take Two Locations & YUT training

Mildura
Ravinale
Swan Hill
Echuca
Shepparton
Wangaratta
Bendigo
Melbourne
Ringwood
Seymour
Dandenong
Geelong
Drayton
Morwell

Ballarat
Flemington Secure Welfare
Development of YUT training

• Initially developed in 2006 by T2 in partnership with VACCA & delivered to Indigenous workers & Communities working with children and families.

• The yarning up resource book was developed in 2008 at the request of Aboriginal staff in Community & closely follows the format of the training

Copies will be provided to workshop participants 😊
Why provide training?

Knowing about trauma and disrupted attachment, is critical to understanding children and their families who have suffered abuse and/or neglect and to be able to assist them to heal.
Objectives of the training

• To yarn up on the effects of trauma and attachment disruption in relation to child abuse and neglect and

• For workers to gain knowledge and understanding about the effects of trauma on
  • Their clients
  • Themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
  • Aboriginal communities
  • Their workplace environment
An introduction to the Yarning up on trauma model
Overview of the YUT model

• YUT is a model of training & Community therapeutic intervention

• Designed to assist ATSI workers recognise and deal with traumas of their own as well as those of the children and families they work with.

• Training is done over 4 days

• Delivered by 2 clinically trained facilitators (1 Aboriginal & other non-Aboriginal)
Yarning up on trauma training: Course Content

Session 1
- Exploring different types of trauma
  - Historical / cultural trauma
  - Individual trauma (PTSD)
  - Family trauma
  - Community trauma
- Exploring local Historical / cultural trauma (Lousy little sixpence DVD)
- Understanding trauma and the brain (Bruce Perry DVD)

Session 2
- Attachment
  - What infants need and what happens when they don’t get their needs met
  - Aboriginal child-rearing practices
- Culture & attachment
  - The attachment network
  - Circle of security
Course Content continued

**Session 3**
- Healing our systems
  - The care team approach
  - Working with Aboriginal families: case study
- Healing ourselves
  - Individual & organisational vicarious trauma
  - Looking after yourself

**Session 4**
- The healing process
  - Establishing safety
  - Telling your story
  - Reconnecting/creating a future
- Assessment
  - The ATSI tool
- Practical tools in working with traumatised children, families and communities.
  - Culture is healing
The yarning up on trauma model: Recovery from trauma

- Establishing safety
- Telling your story
- Reconnecting & creating a future
## Recovery from trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment of safety</th>
<th>Telling your story</th>
<th>Reconnecting &amp; Creating a future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creating physical &amp; emotional safety</td>
<td>• Creating opportunities to explore grief &amp; loss</td>
<td>• Reconnecting with others (trauma often isolates people).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing safe &amp; trusting relationships</td>
<td>• Developing a language to describe thoughts &amp; feelings</td>
<td>• Reconnecting with culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating safe Communities</td>
<td>• Developing a narrative about the trauma</td>
<td>• Individuals/families reconnecting with Community (e.g. healing old wounds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating safety within the environment- a safe place</td>
<td>• Sharing the story</td>
<td>• Reconnecting with culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remembering/mourning cultural &amp; historical trauma</td>
<td>• Linking in with Community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Creating places to share &amp; celebrate together “strong in culture”</td>
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Yarning about attachment
What is attachment?

A westernised view…

“Attachment is a general term that describes the state and quality of an individual’s emotional ties to another.”

(Becker-Weidman, 2005, p.7)
Why are attachments important?

A child’s early attachment experience influences:

1. the way the child relates to others
2. the way the child feels about themself

The child’s experience of attachment relationships leads to the development of their *Internal working model* (IWM) of relationships.

e.g. If a child experiences early abuse from an adult they will probably see other adults as unsafe.
## Internal Working Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive IWM</th>
<th>Negative IWM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of self</strong></td>
<td>I am Lovable</td>
<td>I am unlovable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am worthy</td>
<td>I am unworthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **View of the world & relationships** | Others are responsive  
Others are Loving  
Others are interested in me  
Others are available to me  
The world is relatively safe | Others are unavailable  
Others are neglectful  
Others are rejecting  
Others are unresponsive  
The world is unsafe |

Culture & Attachment

• Attachment theory has largely evolved from a Western, *individualistic* social context.

• Applying attachment theory to cultures that have a more *collectivist* base, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires CAUTION.

NB. *Collectivist cultures* are more likely to think of themselves in terms of their *connection* with other people & their Community.
Culture & Attachment

• Mary Ainsworth first completed studies in Uganda & then with American babies \(1963, 1967\)

• She found that the *attachment relationship* was applicable across cultures but recognised that some *attachment behaviours differed*, i.e. the American children hugged and kissed whereas the Ganda children clapped when their ‘attachment figure’ returned.
The attachment network

• The yarning up on trauma model uses an attachment network approach.

• In many Aboriginal communities child rearing is done by multiple caregivers e.g. a child who is cared for by different woman interchangeably such as aunts, grandparents and birth mother.

• This network of carers is what provides the child with a ‘secure base’ rather than one primary carer. This is called an attachment network.
Culture & Attachment

• When exploring the use of attachment theory cross-culturally it is important to acknowledge differences in child-rearing practices across cultures and how this impacts on how we understand and assess attachment.
Aboriginal child-rearing practice

• While all Indigenous Communities are different, the child care responsibility and financial support of a child in many Indigenous Communities may be *shared* by the extended family / Community with different members taking on different roles.

• Therefore, the whole Community plays a role in raising the child as opposed to a ‘primary’ parent raising the child (the attachment network).
CIRCLE OF SECURITY
PARENT BEING HELD WHILE HOLDING THE CHILD

I need you to

Watch over me
*Help me
*Enjoy with me

Support My Exploration

I need you to

Welcome My Coming To You

Protect me
*Comfort me
*Delight in me
*Organize my feelings

Culture & Attachment

• In most attachment assessments, exploration (going off to explore - top half of the circle) and reunion (coming home - bottom half of the circle) behaviours are watched to determine the attachment pattern.

• BUT In Aboriginal culture exploration and reunion may look very different from many Westernised cultures
How trauma impacts on attachment

• An adult’s own attachment history has a significant impact on the development of their child’s attachment.

• For many Aboriginal families impacted by the Stolen Generation their experience of being parented has been ‘interrupted’.

• Many of these children who were removed did not experience or witness any healthy parent-child interaction.

• This grief/loss impacts greatly on the parent being able to effectively parent their own children.

“**It’s hard to give it when you have never had it yourself**”
How trauma impacts on attachment

- “most forcibly removed children were denied the experience of being parented or at least cared for by a person to whom they were attached. This is the very experience people rely on to become effective and successful parents themselves”

(HREOC) 1997 Bringing them home report.
Culture & Attachment

Assessing attachment across cultures requires CAUTION:

• Be aware of the **limitations** of attachment theory
• Any observations of attachment behaviours need to be discussed with a **cultural consultant**
Culture & Attachment

- Cross cultural attachment assessments need to take into account the historical, cultural and spiritual contexts
- Be aware that infant/caregiver behaviours may have different meaning across cultures
- Be aware of cultural variance of attachment concepts of *exploration* and *closeness*
Group Discussion

• What does Attachment mean for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families?
Yarning about trauma
Types of Trauma

- **Historical/Cultural trauma**
  i.e. Stolen generation

- **Community Trauma**
  i.e. substance abuse, violence, multiple deaths

- **Individual Trauma**
  i.e. child abuse & Neglect, Vicarious trauma (complex trauma/PTSD)

- **Family Trauma**
  i.e. Transgenerational trauma, Domestic violence,
Family & Community trauma

- Trauma impacts on the individuals who experience it, but can also impact on entire families and Communities, compounding the individual effects.

- Trauma that occurs to one person will usually have a *ripple* effect and other family members, extended family, friends, colleagues and even acquaintances can suffer from the impact of that trauma.
Trauma

FAMILY

CHILD

COMMUNITY

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma
Family & Community trauma

• Indigenous families and Communities often have a collective sense of suffering due to current and historical traumas.

• Children living in traumatised communities, may be affected by the pain & suffering of the Community.

• Adults in these traumatised Communities may not always act protectively of children or provide support for recovery due to their own life difficulties.
Family & Community trauma

- Traumatised Communities *may struggle* with:
  - Internal conflicts
  - High levels of trauma-related behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse
  - High levels of violence, family and Community
  - High levels of child abuse and neglect
  - High levels of mental illness
  - High levels of incarceration/criminal activity
  - High levels of poverty
  - Disrupted relationships with the wider Community/society
Family & Community trauma

Traumatised Communities may also have strengths:

- Connectedness to Culture
- Intensive support for one another
- Humour
- Desire for the next generation to do well
- Courage
- Will to survive
- Adaptability to new environments
- Capacity to straddle two different cultures/worldview.
- Resilience
Activity: Think of a child you are working with…

1. Why might this child be behaving in the way they are? e.g. any history of abuse/ neglect?

2. What was the child’s earlier attachment experience? (e.g. attachment network and was the attachment network traumatised?)

3. What is going on for the mother/father? e.g. any family history of trauma?
Activity: continue…

4. Is the family linked in with the Community and is the Community traumatised?
   e.g. Community trauma-substance abuse/multiple, deaths/violence

5. How might trauma have been passed down the generations?
   e.g. Cultural trauma-stolen generation, racism

6. What are the points of strength or resilience in the family?
   culture is healing
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