



Centre for Forensic
Behavioural Science



Integrating Trauma-Informed Care: Improving the Validity of Forensic Assessment

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Outline

- ▲ What is trauma?
- ▲ Understanding trauma-informed care
- ▲ Benefits in forensic contexts and assessment
- ▲ Limitations in forensic assessment
- ▲ Research gaps



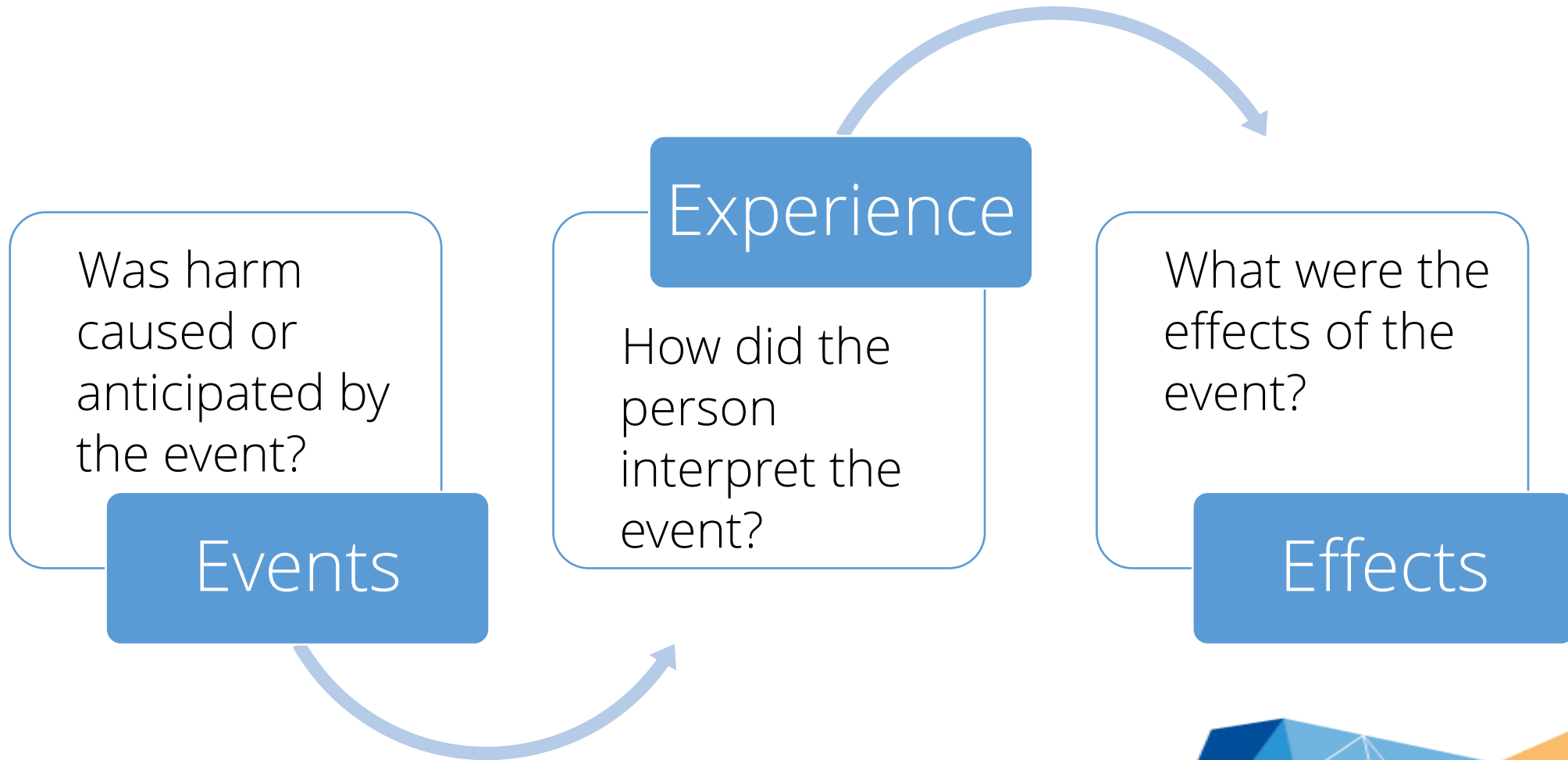
What is Trauma?

- ▲ There are many different definitions depending on the field
 - ▲ DSM-5
 - ▲ ACE's
- ▲ Could be a singular event or multiple events over time
- ▲ SAMHSA's definition of trauma

“Resulting from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that have lasting adverse effects on an individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being” (SAMSHA, 2014)



The 3 E's of Trauma



Trauma-Informed Care VS Trauma-Focused Treatment

- ▲ A set of principles to help trauma survivors feel safer in a space and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation
- ▲ Can be applied in almost any context and is not specific to a brand of therapy
- ▲ Does not require specialised training to implement

- ▲ Therapy programs specifically developed to help people process trauma experiences and develop skills to cope with or reduce symptoms of trauma
- ▲ Typically, long-term and intensive
- ▲ Administered by trained mental health providers

The Four Assumptions of Trauma-Informed Care

- 1 Realisation
- 2 Recognise
- 3 Respond
- 4 Resist Re-traumatisation



The Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



SAMSHA (2022): 6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma-Informed Approach Infographic



Emergence of Trauma-Informed Care in Forensic Mental Health Settings

- ▲ Trauma-informed care is relatively new consideration within forensic assessment
- ▲ Typically focused on data gathering to answer a specific psycho-legal question
- ▲ Trauma-informed practices can improve forensic practice



Why Should We be Trauma-Informed as Forensic Clinicians?

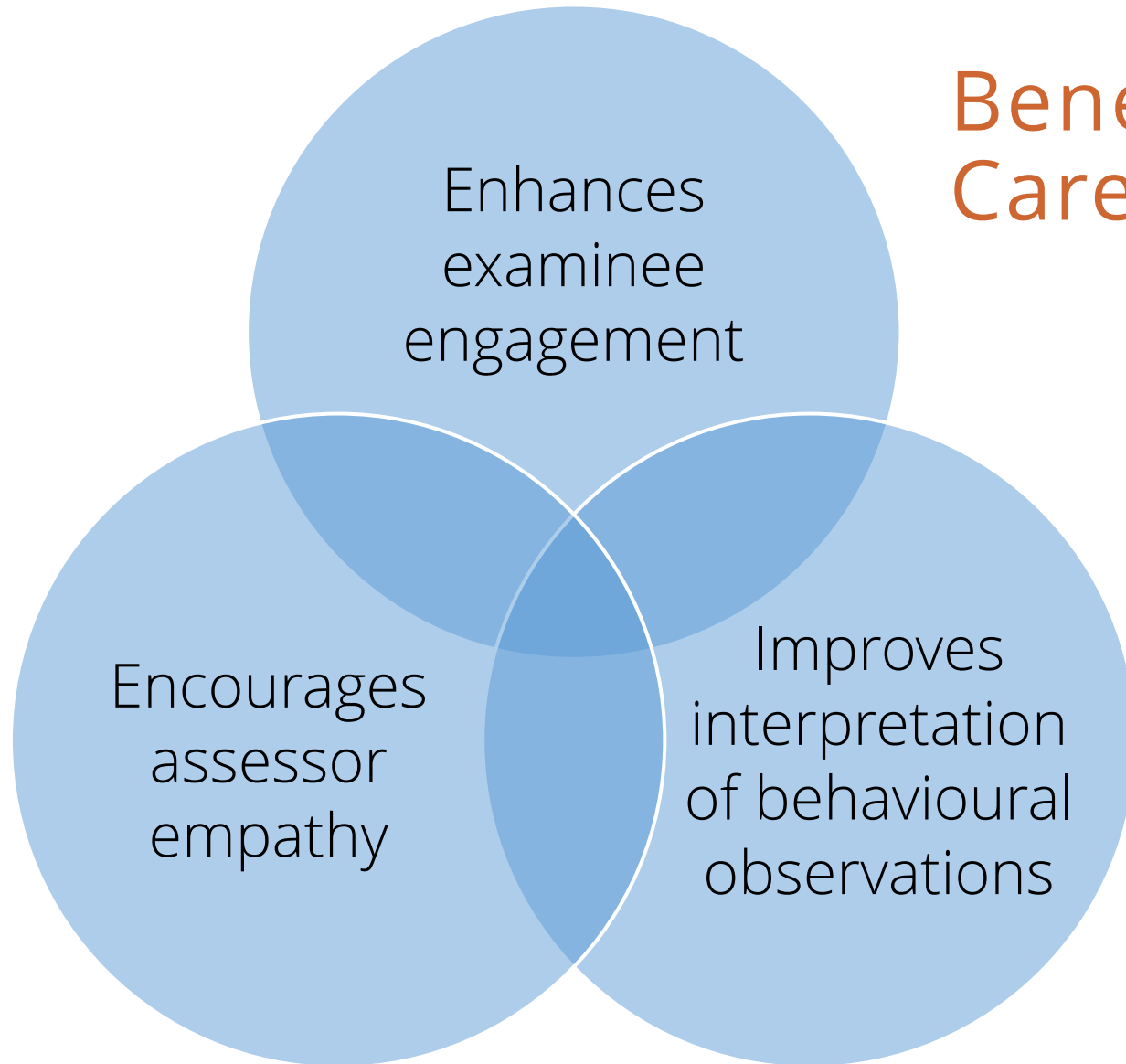
High prevalence rates of trauma in forensic settings

Increased risk of re-traumatisation

Amplified impact of power dynamics



Benefits of Trauma-Informed Care for Assessments



What Does it Mean to be Trauma-Informed as a Forensic Clinician?

- ▲ *It's not about any one person's experience of trauma; it's about creating a safe environment for all individuals regardless of their past traumas and it has to be integrated at the organisational level.*



Environment



Interpersonal Interactions



Informed Consent



Clinician Self Care



Barriers to Trauma-Informed Care Implementation in Forensic Assessment

Limitation	Potential Modifications
Mandated evaluation participation	Transparent about their choice in the extent of information shared
Lack of input in decision making	Honouring their preferences wherever possible
Restrictions on movement	Have opportunities for stretch breaks



Need for Further Research



While we can theoretically and intuitively recognise the importance of trauma-informed care, there is relatively little research for its application in forensic contexts

Questions Needing Answers

- Do trauma-informed practices effect forensic assessment accuracy
- What is the practicality of implementing trauma-informed care in forensic contexts
- Do examinees perceive their assessments to be trauma-informed



Drawing on Research in Other Mental Health Settings

- ▲ Trauma-informed care has shown positive outcomes in the general mental health field
- ▲ Improved client engagement, trust, and overall care satisfaction
- ▲ Although forensic settings pose unique challenges, adapting trauma-informed principles will likely improve client comfort and assessment validity



Take Home Messages



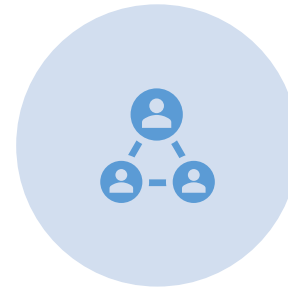
Trauma-informed care is broader than just talking about trauma



Trauma-informed care is more complicated in forensic settings



More research is needed on how to implement trauma-informed care, and how effective it is with forensic clients



Even if trauma-informed care can't map on perfectly to forensic mental health, it doesn't mean it shouldn't be done at all





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