

Study Guide

The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security Is Threatened (2020)

Donna Minter, PhD, Crixell Shell, MS and Carolyn Yoder, LPC

The Little Book of Trauma Healing contains the core concepts and models of the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) program. To deepen your understanding as you read, this study guide provides reflective questions for individual or group study. STAR concepts, models, and strategies are not merely academic and cognitive; they are affective, reflective, and experiential. They give direction for action when terrible things happen, and peace has been stolen from you and your community.

This study guide can also be used to structure individual or group learning for those curious about STAR. While writing is not required, many people find that when they write their responses to the queries, their understanding of the STAR concepts, models, and strategies deepens and enriches the applications of what they have learned. We hope you use STAR strategies to transform psychological trauma into nonviolent power to build peace within your spheres of influence.

Preface: STAR Beginnings



© Copyright Jan Jenner and STAR team at Eastern Mennonite University. Adapted by Carolyn Yoder.

1. STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience) is a peacebuilding approach to addressing trauma that includes but is not limited to psychological understandings and interventions. Peacebuilding is an academic field of study with tools and processes to non-violently “prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not led to civil unrest.” What

images does the word “peace” or “nonviolence” bring up for you? Why would “that peace stuff” be regarded as something that could retraumatize people after a violent event like 9/11?

2. Give examples you have seen of trauma information and treatment moving out of psychologist’s offices and into the public domain. What events are propelling this change?

Chapter 1. Introduction

1. From your own experience, what words would you use to complete these sentence stems?

Psychological trauma is

Psychological trauma is like.....

2. Identify traumatic events you have experienced, witnessed, or observed in the media that have caused harm and possibly led to subsequent violence either by individuals or groups.
3. Considering the above examples, what does the phrase: “hurt people hurt people” mean?

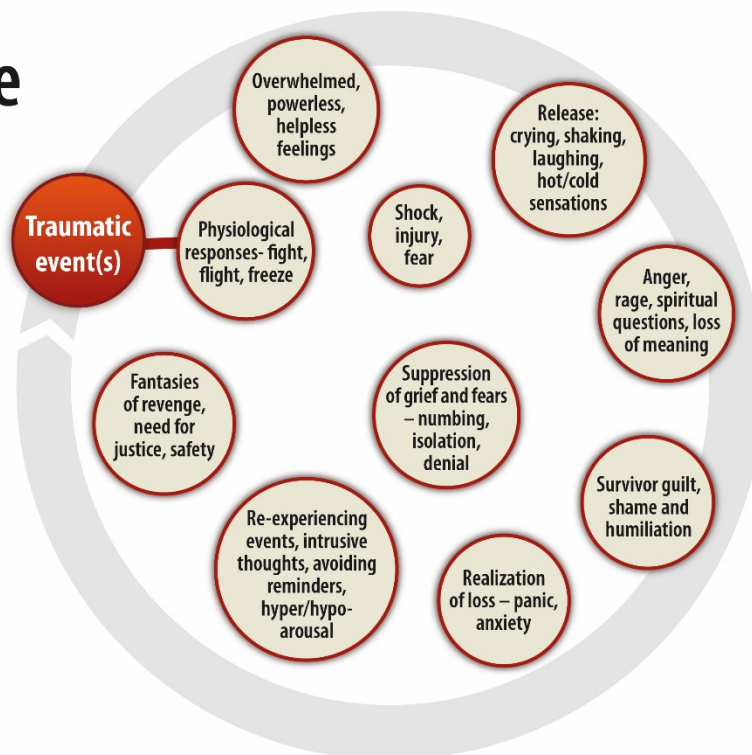
Chapter 2. Definitions, Sources, and Types of Trauma

1. The word “trauma” comes from the Greek word for wound. What other ways can you describe psychological trauma without using the word “trauma.”
2. Review the definition of “traumagenic” (page xiii and page 7) Reflect on something that you have experienced that you did not consider traumagenic but others might experience it as traumatic.
3. Name all the types of psychological trauma discussed in Chapter 2 and provide examples from your own life that illustrate these types of trauma.
4. List examples of collective trauma.
What are the ways we harm others at the collective level?
How does collective trauma harm others and ourselves emotionally, spiritually, and relationally?

5. What issues does MacNair raise regarding perpetration-induced trauma? How do these issues apply to individuals, communities, groups and nations? How does facing or denying perpetration-induced trauma affect our politics?
6. Consider examples of secondary trauma that you experience personally, professionally, and in your community?
7. What are Cunningham's four key elements to terrorism? How does psychological trauma relate to terrorism?
8. Would you add or delete anything from the list of common traumatic events and situations listed at the end of Chapter 2?

Chapter 3: The Trauma Experience: STAR Model Part i

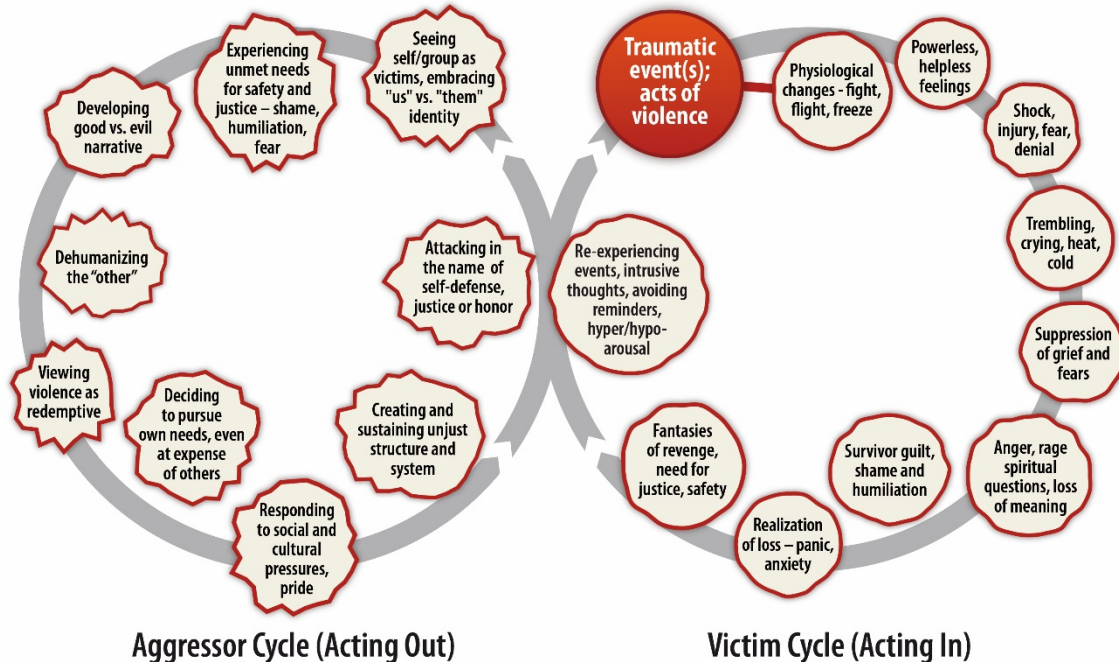
Trauma Experience



1. What body sensations did you experience when you read Lam Cosmas' story? Why do you think you felt bodily sensations from simply reading this story?
2. Based on what Chapter 3 explains about how trauma affects us physiologically, describe a stressful or traumatic event that happened to you by using the three regions of the brain.
3. What are the three common nervous system instinctual responses when a person experiences stress or trauma? Describe each one.
4. The Trauma Experience cycle describes normal trauma reactions. Compare it to your own (or your community's, or nation's) responses. Does it describe what you experienced? Have you experienced or observed something that is not on the trauma experience model?
5. Describe ways the tornado-like energy generated by mobilization (fight/flight) to help us survive impacts our thinking, emotions, and behavior after a traumatic event if it is not released.
6. What examples of meaning-making statements are common in your life and community? What happens when these beliefs are disrupted by traumatic events?
7. What is the meaning of the statement: "Trauma creates needs"? Name and reflect on the justice needs that occur after trauma,
8. What happens when these justice needs are unmet for an extended period of time for individuals? For communities and large groups? How might the effects of unreleased trauma energy add to the pain?
9. Judith Herman says (page 33) that those who experience single traumas feel like they have lost their minds, but those who experience multiple traumas feel like they have lost themselves. If you or your group have experienced ongoing or multiple traumas, does this description feel accurate?
10. Chosen traumas (page 35) become part of an individual or group's identity. Have you seen this happen? Do you have a chosen trauma? What are the results?

Chapter 4. Cycles of Violence from Unaddressed Trauma: STAR Model Part II

Cycles of Violence



© Carolyn Yoder and the STAR Team at Eastern Mennonite University.
Based in part on the writings of Olga Botcharova, Peter Levine, Vamik Volkan and Walter Wink.



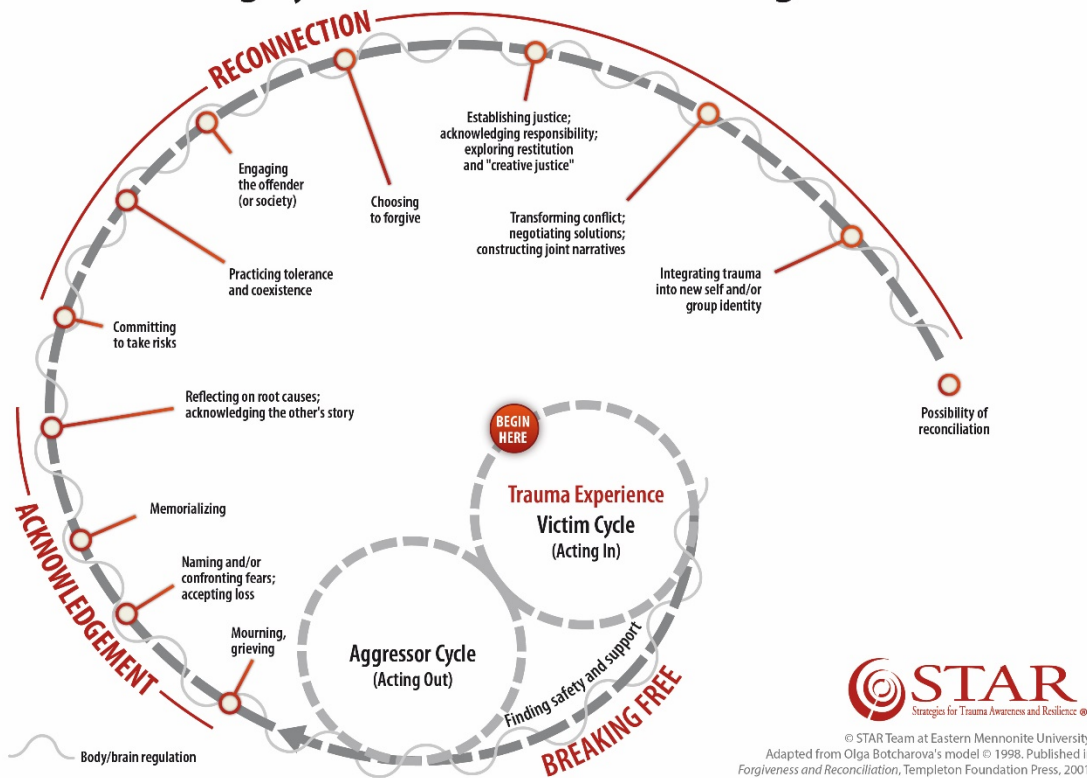
1. What does the statement: Pain that is not transformed is transferred, mean to you?
2. What is the importance of and difference between safety for individuals and security for communities?
3. Why is the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) framework and other western medical model diagnostic categories limited for understanding psychological trauma?
4. What do you know about the landmark public health Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study? For ACE Study details see: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html> What is the possible connection between ACEs and the cycles of violence from unaddressed trauma?

5. Review and reflect on STAR's Cycles of Violence Model.
What are the likely behaviors experienced by people who are caught in the victim cycle? And in the aggressor cycle?
How and why are the victim and aggressor cycles linked?
6. The chart on page 44 lists some of the common ways individuals and societies re-enact trauma. Often families, organizations, and societies treat or punish the behaviors themselves rather than recognizing trauma as a root cause and providing interventions that address the trauma and/or underlying injustice. Sustainable change is often brought about by grassroots advocacy moving up to impact leaders. If we viewed these behaviors through a trauma lens, what changes would be needed in families, schools, the legal system, prisons, etc.
7. Compare and contrast the likely mental and emotional experiences of individuals, communities, and nations when they get stuck in the Cycles of Violence?
8. How do the descriptions of Martha Cabrera's and Vamik Volkan contribute to a broader, more inclusive understanding of the Cycles of Violence?
9. What role do tears and crying play in trauma healing? What interferes with mourning and grieving?
10. What in your culture supports---or does not support---healthy grieving and mourning? What could be done at family, organizational, or community levels to lend support to those who have experienced trauma and need to grieve and mourn? Have we recognized the consequences of ignoring grief work?
11. What role do meaning-making narratives have in keeping people stuck in Cycles of Violence?
12. Why do you think individuals and groups so easily accept good versus narratives without looking deeper?
13. Do you believe that the "myth of redemptive violence" is really a myth, or do you believe there are times when violence does save us, not only in the short term but in the long term? Tell the story from your life history that explains your position.

14. After reading Chapter 4, how would you answer: Aren't some things truly evil? And why do you believe this answer?
15. According to Volkan, what are the role of leaders and why are leaders pivotal in either keep people stuck or helping people break free from the Cycles of Violence?
16. Is the statement: "Time heal all wounds," true or not true? Explain your answer in relation to generational trauma.

Chapter 5. Breaking Cycles of Violence and Building Resilience: STAR Model Part III

Breaking Cycles of Violence • Building Resilience



1. According to Peter Levine, what are the four things that people who address, heal from, and transform psychological trauma experience?

2. How does the award-winning research of Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan contribute to an understanding that redemptive violence is a myth? What did they find is a key reason for the success of nonviolent movements?
3. Do you know persons who “act well in spite of threat?” How would they explain their courage and strength?
4. What are STAR’s strategies for Breaking Free from the Cycles of Violence and how can they be practiced in your family and community?
5. What will likely happen if people don’t deliberately practice self-regulation and co-regulation strategies when they are attempting to Break Free from the Cycles of Violence?
6. What role do reparative leaders play in helping people Break Free?
7. What are STAR’s strategies for Acknowledgement from Cycles of Violence and how can they be practiced in your family and community?
8. When would the strategy of recognizing the other’s story be inappropriate?
9. What are STAR’s strategies for Reconnection from the Cycles of Violence and how can they be practiced in your family and community?
10. Compare and contrast the primary Retribution Justice questions and the primary Restorative Justice questions. Consider a personal situation that illustrates the difference between these two approaches.
11. What role does Restorative Justice play in forgiveness?
12. Forgiving is a sensitive and conflicted subject. What does your culture, religion, or spiritual practice teach about forgiving?
13. Why does STAR state that reconciliation is a possibility but not guaranteed?
14. Do you think the STAR Breaking the Cycles of Violence: Building Resilience model is realistic? Do you believe we can find ways to heal and reduce or stop cycles of violence? What will happen if we don’t? What other options are there?

Chapter 6. 9/11 and Breaking the Cycles, 2005 and 2019: Applying STAR

1. Reflect on the “What if” responses to 9/11 written in 2005. Notice your thoughts, emotions, and body sensations as you do,
2. Reflect on the “what if” questions at the end of the chapter. Again, notice your thoughts, emotions, and body sensations. What do they tell you?

Chapter 7. How Then Shall We Live?

1. How can your perspective change by applying the STAR model in everyday life?
2. How can you use your voice against violence?
3. What is in your trauma release toolkit?
4. What structures and systems would you like to change? What can you do now to begin this change?
5. What role can strategic nonviolent interventions play in your sphere of influence?
6. How can you stay informed about current events and remain healthy, whole, and resilient?
7. What relationship connections can you strengthen and cultivate so that you always know you are not alone in this peacebuilding movement?