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ECAY5005: Health and Social Care: Disability and Wellbeing Anti- Oppressive Practice 2023

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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**WHAT DO YOU
THINK OF WHEN
YOU HEAR**

**'ANTI-OPPRESSIVE'
PRACTICE?**

*Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives*

Understanding Oppression

(Thompson, 1993 *cited in* Nzira and Williams, 2009, p. 18)

Thompson (1993) introduced the 'PCS' model of oppression and discrimination

P: personal and psychological level

- Interactions with others/thoughts/beliefs/values/stereotypes/prejudices

C: cultural level

- Patterns of shared values/behaviours stemming from consensus and conformity within a particular society or culture

S: the structural level

- How power and resources are used in society to maintain or tackle divisions

The **P**, **C**, **S** levels interact to maintain and influence each other

What is 'anti-oppressive practice?'

Respect and welcome diversity

Rid ourselves, as far as possible, of stereotypes and prejudices through gaining accurate knowledge of people or groups

Use any power and privilege we have to benefit people and 'wound' them through social devaluation

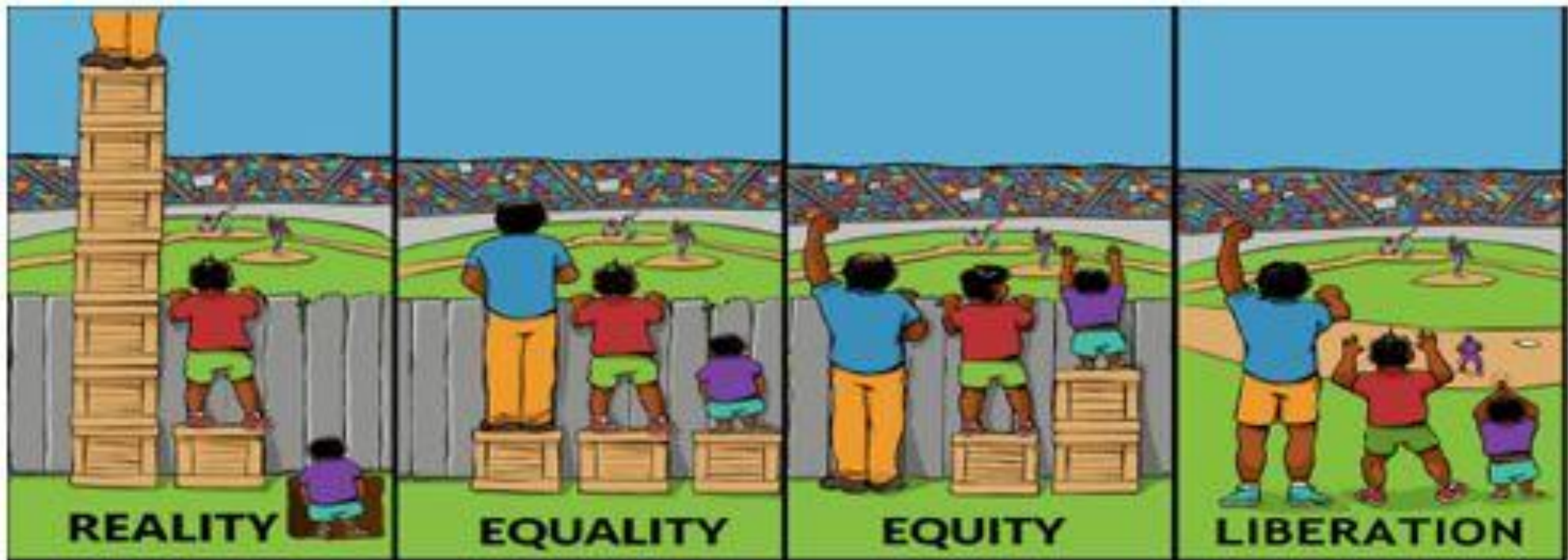
Work for communality, sharing and equality

Be aware of negative aspects the culture and structures in society in which we live and try to change them

Recognise the perviousness and seriousness of oppression in the world, and commit ourselves to positive action to remedy this

Study first-hand accounts by those who experience oppression, to understand its reality, nature and prevalence, and to gain authentic knowledge for tackling it

(Nzira and Williams, 2009, p. 39)



ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE IN MENTAL HEALTH: 'POWER THREAT MEANING FRAMEWORK'

The following slides have been adapted from Johnstone and Boyle (2019)

Contributors to the project over a 5-year period

- Lucy Johnstone, Mary Boyle, John Cromby, Jacqui Dillon, Dave Harper, Peter Kinderman, Eleanor Longden, David Pilgrim, John Read, with editorial/research support from Kate Allsopp
 - Consultancy group of service users/carers
 - Critical reader group to advise on diversity
 - Other expert contributions including examples of good practice

The Power Threat Meaning Framework

- An attempt to outline an alternative to the diagnostic model of distress and unusual experiences
- A set of ideas and a conceptual resource, not formal recommendations or 'how to' manual
- Funded by the Division of Clinical Psychology of the British Psychological Society but not an official DCP or BPS model
- Co-produced with experts by experience, both within the core project team and as an advisory group
- Not a replacement for all current models and practices. It offers a wider overall framework to support and enhance them...
- as well as suggesting new ways forward, both within and beyond services

The Power Threat Meaning Framework

- Relevant to a wide range of stakeholders, for e.g., public health, social policy, mental health, acute healthcare, education, criminal justice settings, social care, peer supporters, experts by experience, carers, health commissioners, researchers, voluntary sector workers, teachers and trainers, policy makers, academics, journalists, and the general public
- The documents are a first stage, subject to ongoing development in the light of evaluations and feedback from particular settings.
- The PTMF has attracted national and international interest, although controversial in some quarters

The PTM Framework and trauma-informed approaches

Draws on this research (ACEs, neurobiology of stress etc) but also on a much wider range of philosophical, sociological and psychological literature

Non-diagnostic ('PTSD', 'Complex Trauma' etc..)

Prefers 'adversity' (less risk of decontextualised shorthand)

Suggests patterns of distress not only related to obvious 'trauma events' but also to more insidious factors including inequality, social exclusion, discrimination, devalued identities etc..

Explicit links to wider institutional and organisational contexts, macro political and socioeconomic structures and ideologies

Importantly, suggests non-diagnostic alternatives for welfare access, commissioning, legal work, research....etc..

Moving beyond the 'DSM mindset'... i.e., the medical model

Away from medicalisation – assuming that models designed for understanding bodies can be applied to people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Instead, a framework that understands people in their relational, social and political environments....

.....and sees them as people acting and making meanings, within their life circumstances.

The Power Threat Meaning Framework

Going beyond non-diagnostic ways of working one to one (such as formulation) ...

.... to suggest a framework for describing wider evidence-based patterns of distress and unusual experiences....

.....which help to construct individual/family/group/social narratives, inside or outside services, supported or not by professionals.....

...as well as suggest alternative ways of fulfilling the other functions of diagnosis.

As well as fulfilling the expected functions of diagnosis, these are the aims of the PTMF:

Recognising that emotional distress and troubled or troubling behaviour are, ultimately, understandable responses to a person's history and circumstances

Restoring the link between distress and social injustice

Increasing people's access to power and resources

Creating validating narratives which inform and empower people, groups and communities by restoring these links and meanings

Promoting social action

The Power Threat Meaning Framework poses these core questions

'What has happened to you?'

- (How is Power operating in your life?)

'How did it affect you?'

- (What kind of Threats does this pose?)

'What sense did you make of it?'

- (What is the Meaning of these experiences to you?)

'What did you have to do to survive?'

- (What kinds of Threat Response are you using?)



- In one to one clinical, peer support or self help work this then leads to the questions:
- 'What are your strengths?' (What access to Power resources do you have?)
- and to integrate all the above: 'What is your story?'

What do you think of the concept of the PTMF?



"What has happened to you?" (How is POWER operating in your life?)

Power is everywhere in human affairs, yet explicit definitions are rare. PTMF defines power as:



The means of obtaining security and advantage



Being able to influence your environment to meet your own needs and interests

'What has happened to you?'
(How is Power operating in your life?)

Power can operate in many different ways:

Legal power - coercion, or rules and sanctions supporting or limiting other aspects of power, offering or restricting choices

Economic and material power - the means to obtain valued possessions and services, to control others' access to them and to pursue valued activities

Interpersonal power - power within close relationships, the power to look after/not look after or protect someone, to leave them, to give /withdraw /withhold affection etc

Coercive power or power by force - any use of violence, aggression or threats to frighten, intimidate or ensure compliance

Power can operate in many different ways

Biological or embodied power - the possession of socially valued embodied attributes e.g.,: physical attractiveness, fertility, strength, embodied talents and abilities, physical health

Social/cultural capital – a mix of valued qualifications, knowledge and connections, often related to class, race and gender, which ease people's way through life and can be passed indirectly to the next generation

Ideological power - involves control of language, meaning, and perspective

Ideological power

- Probably the least obvious and least acknowledged form of power
- Part of every other form of power
- Operates when our thoughts, beliefs and feelings are manipulated, ignored, or disbelieved, and alternative interpretations are offered or imposed
- In everyday life, it shapes the sense we make of our circumstances. In mental health and criminal justice systems it can:
 - turn social problems into individual ones
 - diagnose or define people as 'bad or mad'

Ideological Power

- Many people, especially those in less powerful positions, may be deprived of sound alternative frameworks to make sense of their own and others' distressing or unusual experiences
- This 'epistemic injustice' is experienced by groups who lack shared resources to understand their experiences, due to unequal power relations (Miranda Fricker, 2007)
- From the PTMF perspective, the imposition of a diagnosis, with no alternatives offered, is an example of epistemic injustice.

Power

- The less access you have to conventional or approved forms of power, the more likely you are to adopt socially disturbing or disruptive strategies
- Power also operates positively and protectively
 - friends, partners, family, communities, material resources, social capital, positive identities, education and access to knowledge

Some consequences of the negative operation of power . . .

- Unpredictability and lack of control over your life
- Feeling trapped in damaging environments
- Conflict: internal, relationships, social
- Negative views and stereotypes about you and/or your social group
- Repeated exposure to many forms of abuse and violence, along with humiliation, criticism, racism and other forms of discrimination etc.

'How did it affect you?'
(What kind of Threats does this pose?)

Threats

Relationships:

- threats of rejection, abandonment, isolation

Emotional:

- overwhelming emotions, loss of control

Social/Community:

- loss of social roles, social status, community links

Economic/material:

- threats to financial security, housing, meeting basic needs

Threats

Environmental

- threats to safety and security, or to links with the natural world e.g. living in a dense urban or high crime area

Bodily

- threats of violence, physical ill health

Value based

- threats to core beliefs and principles

Meaning making

- threats to ability to create your own valued meanings, imposition of others' meanings

Threats

The threat (or operation of Power) may be less obvious because it is subtle, cumulative, and/or socially acceptable.

The threat is often distant in time.

The threats may be so numerous, and the responses so many and varied, that the connections between them are confused and obscured.

There may be an accumulation of apparently minor threats and adversities over a very long period of time

The threat response may take an unusual or extreme form that is less obviously linked to the threat; for example, apparently 'bizarre' beliefs, hearing voices, self-harm, self-starvation.

‘What sense did you make of it?’
(What is the Meaning of these experiences to
you?)

"What sense did you make of it?" (What is the MEANING of these experiences?)

- We actively make sense of our world, and our behaviour is purposeful and meaningful. We cannot understand any aspect of Power, Threat or Threat Response separately from their meanings.

But what do we mean by 'meaning'?

- Meaning is never just freely chosen, it is always both 'made and found' (Shotter, 1993)

Being powerless is uncomfortable and often highly distressing.

Common feelings ('meanings') that arise from lack of power include:

Box 3: Meanings.

MEANING – what is the Meaning of these situations and experiences to you? ('What sense did you make of it?')	
Unsafe, afraid, attacked	Trapped
Abandoned, rejected	Defeated
Helpless, powerless	Failed, inferior
Hopeless	Guilty, blameworthy, responsible
Invaded	Betrayed
Controlled	Shamed, humiliated
Emotionally overwhelmed	Sense of injustice/unfairness
Emotionally 'empty'	Sense of meaninglessness
Bad, unworthy	Contaminated, evil
Isolated, lonely	Alien, dangerous
Excluded, alienated	Different, 'abnormal'

Some of these may be seen as 'normal' or even desirable (overwork, perfectionism, ruthlessness with colleagues, etc..)

They are likely to be to some degree culture-specific (self-starvation in Westernised countries; so-called 'culture-bound syndromes'.)

Threat responses are there for a reason, and it makes more sense to group them by function – what purpose do they serve? than by 'symptom.'

Both the function and the meaning of the response vary over time and across cultures, but there are common themes.

Meaning

- Personal meanings are never purely individual
 - Language is shared with others
 - Memories reflect lived experience
 - Bodily reactions and feelings are shaped by learned habits
 - Environments differ, and resources are unequally distributed
 - How we 'should' feel is shaped by cultural norms
 - Thus, meanings are shaped by adverse power relations, threats, social norms, ideologies, cultural assumptions etc.

Personal perceptions of meanings

The person in distress may not be aware of the link themselves, since memory loss, dissociation and so on are part of their coping strategies.

The person in distress might have become used to overlooking possible links, because acknowledging them felt dangerous, stigmatizing or shaming

Overlooking or ignoring the links may be encouraged by:

Messages about personal blame, weakness, culpability etc.

Messages about personal responsibility, not complaining, being strong etc.

Restoring the link between Threats and Threat Responses – a main purpose of the Framework

The Power Threat Meaning Framework shows how we can restore the links between threats and threat responses as an alternative to the diagnostic lens which obscures them.

At one level this is common sense. We all know that people living in poverty are more likely to feel miserable ('depression'); we recognize that abuse and trauma makes it more likely that people will hear voices ('psychosis' or 'schizophrenia'); and that Indigenous people have many reasons for despair.

But a number of factors combine to conceal these links – from the person and from society as a whole.

‘What did you have to do to survive?’
(What kinds of **Threat Response** are you using?)

Some examples of Threat Responses

Preparing to fight,
flee, escape, seek
safety

Giving up ('learned
helplessness', apathy,
low mood)

Being hypervigilant

Having flashbacks,
phobic responses,
nightmares

Experiencing rapid
changes in mood
and emotions

Amnesia/fragmented
memory

Hearing voices,
dissociating, holding
unusual beliefs

Restricting our
eating, using alcohol
or drugs, self-harm

Denial, avoidance

Overwork,
perfectionism

Threat responses and the medical model

- The use of diagnosis by professionals obscures the link between threats and threat responses, and imposes a narrative of individual 'illness' instead
- There is widespread resistance to recognizing the reality and impact of threats and the negative impacts of power
- There are many vested interests (personal, family, professional, organizational, community, business, institutional, economic, political) in disconnecting threats from threat Responses - and thus preserving the diagnostic model.

Summary

- The Power Threat Meaning Framework can be seen to challenge the biomedical understanding of mental health
- By linking it to the individual's response to systemic issues
 - A person has experienced unequal POWER
 - This posed a THREAT and a THREAT RESPONSE
 - People may struggle to make MEANING between their experiences of powerlessness, threats and their threat responses
 - The medical model individualises and pathologizes the threat response and disconnects it from the systemic circumstances





What are your thoughts of the PTMF? Could you imagine using it?

Group Discussion

References

Johnstone, L. and Boyle, M. (2019) *The British Psychological Society: Documents and Training Materials*. Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/power-threat-meaning-framework/resources-training/training-materials> (24th June 2020)

Nzira, V. and Williams, P. (2009) *Anti-Oppressive Practice in Health and Social Care*. London: Sage