

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN FAMILIES & STAFF AS WE MOVE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Yona Lunsky, PhD CPsych
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Cultivating
Community
Wellness

A partnership between CAMH and the Provincial Network on Developmental Services; funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

AT THE END OF THIS SESSION,
PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE
TO:

- ① Be familiar with stressors experienced by families during the pandemic, from the family perspective
- ② Consider how trauma informed care can be inclusive of work with families
- ③ Identify practical strategies to build bridges with families during pandemic recovery

After a punishing year of pandemic restrictions, families struggle to rebuild relationships with loved ones in group homes

CHANTELLE LEE

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UPDATED 6 HOURS AGO

1 COMMENTS

SHARE



Ari Zaretsky and Mona Taylor are greeted by their son, Daniel Zaretsky, during a visit to his group home in Vaughan on June 27, 2021.

EDUARDO LIMA/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

SOME OF YONA'S LESSONS (PRE-PANDEMIC)

- » Lesson Number 1: There is no such thing as difficult families. There are just families with difficulties.
- » Lesson Number 2: Family perspectives may be different but that doesn't make them wrong.
- » Lesson Number 3: There are no easy answers. If there were, we would not have these challenges.

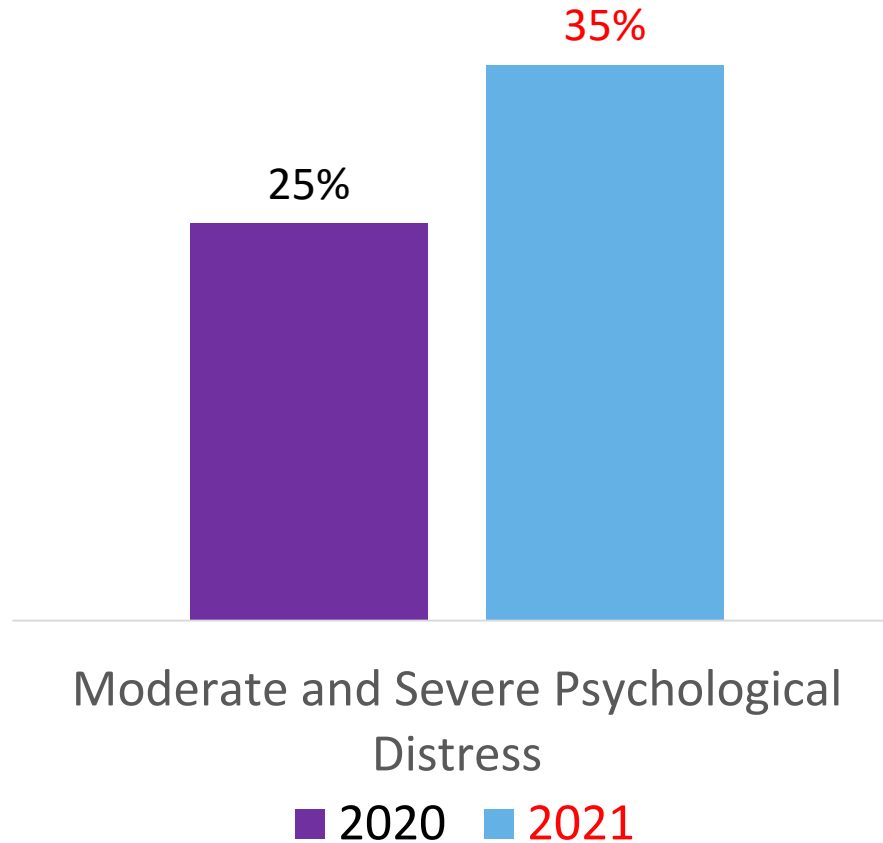
THE PRE-PANDEMIC CONTEXT

- » System where families and agencies do not always work closely together
- » Different types of families
- » Sudden change / crisis

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

- » Families locked out or locked in
- » Families powerless – very difficult choices
- » Constant struggle to balancing safe and well
- » Rules rolled out in a confusing way
- » Trauma experienced by everyone involved

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DSP MENTAL HEALTH



Moderate and Severe Psychological Distress

■ 2020 ■ 2021

Based on PHQ-4 Ratings – Ontario DSP study

TRAUMA : THE 3 E'S

» Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

TRAUMA INFORMED ORGANIZATIONS: THE 4 R'S

- » A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively **resist re-traumatization**.

https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE FOR FAMILIES TO TRUST & BE ABLE TO WORK ALONGSIDE SUPPORT PROVIDERS?

- » Families feel CONFIDENT
- » Families feel SAFE
- » Families feel INVOLVED
- » Families feel RESPECTED
- » Families feel their own needs and wants are CONSIDERED, RESPECTED & SUPPORTED
- » A feeling of FREEDOM to be a family

WAYS IN WHICH SUPPORT PROVIDERS CAN CHECK & DEMONSTRATE HOW THEY ARE GETTING IT RIGHT

- » Staff are valued
- » There is a personalised, proactive approach to recruitment.
- » There is a no blame culture within the organisation, staff can talk about and learn from when things go wrong.
- » The organisation and the people within it are emotionally intelligent.
- » Family support is an explicit and formal part of the provider offer.
- » There is evidence of people and families influencing the organisation from an individual to a strategic level.

YONA'S LESSONS (COVID STYLE)

- » Lesson Number 1: There is no such thing as difficult families. There are just families with difficulties.
- » Lesson Number 1b: There is no such thing as difficult staff. There are just staff with difficulties.
- » Lesson Number 1c: There is no such thing as difficult clients. There are just clients with difficulties.

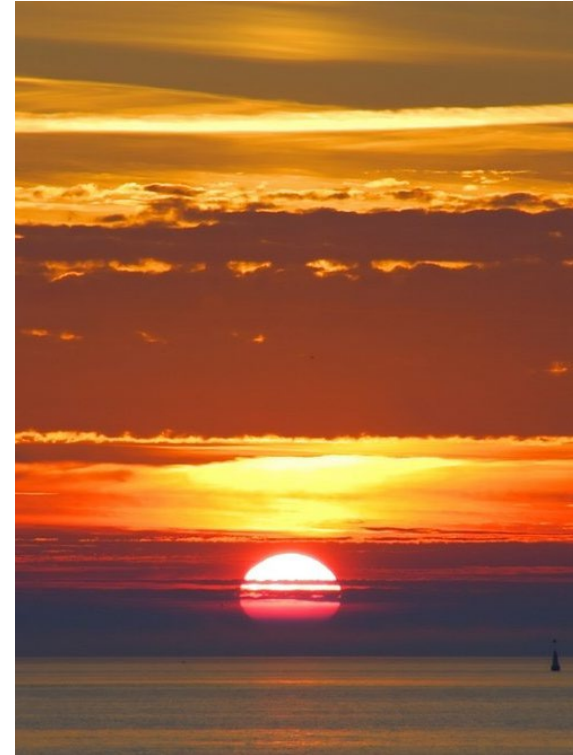
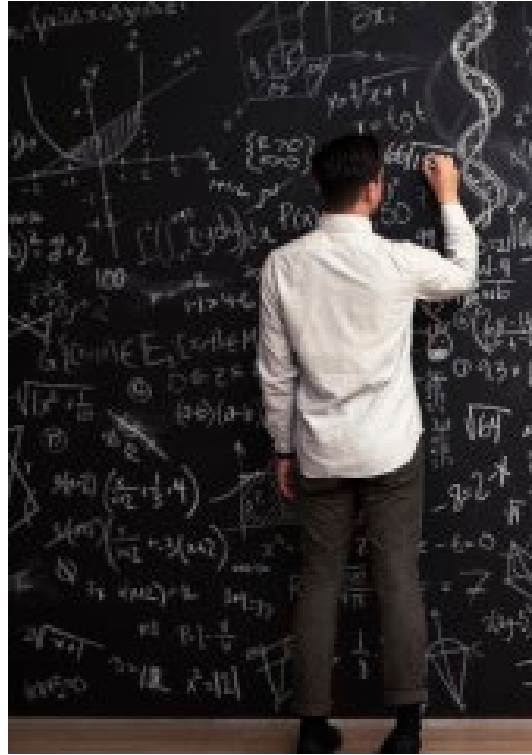
SOME OF YONA'S LESSONS

- » Lesson Number 2: Family perspectives may be different but that doesn't make them wrong.
- » Lesson Number 3: There are no easy answers. If there were, we would not have these challenges.
- » Lesson Number 4: Recognizing our shared trauma can help us support one another

SOME OF YONA'S THOUGHTS

1. Keep families in the loop when things are going well, and not just when there are big problems.
2. If there is something to say, and it isn't good, be available to talk about it.
3. If the situation concerns you as well, you can share that feeling with family.
4. Avoid judging (*this goes for everyone*)
5. Get to know families *and perhaps help families to get to know staff as well*

A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED? OR A SUNSET TO BE APPRECIATED?



WHAT ARE SOME LITTLE THINGS YOU
CAN DO TO WORK TOGETHER?

SUMMARY

We are living in fragile times and being truly trauma informed must be inclusive of families

Working with families, especially in difficult times takes skill and effort and needs support

We need to balance safety with wellness in all of our approaches

We can figure out how to do this by learning from when things go well & when they do not, together with families

REFERENCES

- » Families & staff: how to move from competing to complementary perspectives https://www.vitacls.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/volume_4_2.pdf
- » Family Charter report: <https://bringingusttogether.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Family-Charter-Stronger-Together-Nov-2019.pdf>
- » Document on Trauma informed care: https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf
- » [Family matters piece on family visit policies](https://inclusioncanada.ca/2020/07/29/family-matters/)
<https://inclusioncanada.ca/2020/07/29/family-matters/>
- » [Video on mental health and families from November 2020](https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2084807&jwsourc=twi)
- » <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2084807&jwsourc=twi>