HOW MIGHT COVID-19 HAVE AN IMPACT?

A global pandemic is a time of great uncertainty. It causes feelings of confusion and anxiety for all of us and can be an overwhelming experience. We are all likely to have had to make significant changes to our normal routines and habits. These can often be a source of comfort and consistency. It is also likely that you have been surrounded by others sharing their own thoughts, feelings, emotions and reactions to what has been a very stressful episode. When these are added to our own thoughts and feelings the result can be that we are “marinated” in stress and emotional dysregulation constantly (Treisman, 2018).

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

It’s important to make certain that you understand the situation for a person as fully as possible before attempting to intervene. Dr Karen Treisman (2018) has three important observations relevant here:

1. Each person and their circumstances are unique so there can be no ‘cookie cutter’ approach. You shouldn’t take down any fences until you know why they were put up’. In other words a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support.
2. Have I considered all the ways that a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support?
3. How can I ensure that all staff are equipped to support our service users/each other?
4. Have I considered all the ways that a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support?
5. It’s important to make certain that you understand the situation for a person as fully as possible before attempting to intervene. Dr Karen Treisman (2018) has three important observations relevant here:
6. Each person and their circumstances are unique so there can be no ‘cookie cutter’ approach. You shouldn’t take down any fences until you know why they were put up’. In other words a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support.
7. Have I considered all the ways that a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support?
8. How can I ensure that all staff are equipped to support our service users/each other?
9. Have I considered all the ways that a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support?

WHAT CAN ORGANISATIONS DO?

Translating awareness into a sustained response is vital. Working to create a feeling of safety and belonging throughout the staff and service users can be achieved by best practice in being ‘trauma-informed’. The 5 key principles are safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. If organisations aim to embed these principles into everything they do this can provide much needed support.

HOW TO DO IT

For more specific guidance on how to implement trauma-informed practice or hold conversations with young people see our other guides/briefings on this.

Generally speaking it is important to be considerate, to be kind and to make allowances for individuals showing difficulty regulating their emotions. Attempt to absorb what might be quite raw emotions and aim to help the person to stay grounded and present in the situation by working through grounding and breathing techniques that involve some physical movement as well as mental focus. Use active listening to help the person feel understood. Make sure that you are open, consistent, honest and create a safe space.

Questions to consider and discuss for managers/leaders

- How can I reduce unnecessary sources of stress/tension across my organisation/service?
- How can I ensure that all staff are equipped to support our service users/each other?
- Have I considered all the ways that a person may have been impacted by COVID-19 and spoken with them at length before deciding together on support?
- Have I accessed training on trauma?

The Potential Impact of COVID-19

Free ACEs e-learning

www.acesonlinelearning.com

Twitter:
@WestMidsVRU
@ACEsBarnardosBC

3. Golding, K. (2014), Connective Before Corrective; Supporting parents to meet the challenges of adversity before trauma, world rise in domestic violence