

# PARALLEL PROCESSES OF TRAUMA

## INDIVIDUAL



## ORGANIZATION



The central nervous system is activated even when there is no threat. The individual feels anxious, angry, or overwhelmed.

### HYPERAROUSAL

Tensions run high and staff feel unsafe. The organization operates from a place of threat and scarcity, rather than opportunity and collaboration.

The individual relies on maladaptive skills to manage their intense emotional responses.

### LOSS OF EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

Staff do not have the skills to manage or acknowledge their emotions. Relationships and problem-solving suffer.

When the brain is in "threat mode," it de-prioritizes learning and long-term memory. Thinking becomes black-and-white.

### COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

Decision-making is reactive and short-sighted, compounding existing problems. Dissent is silenced and service delivery is fragmented.

The individual is unable to successfully communicate their emotions and relies on acting out.

### MIS-COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT

Communication breaks down. Conflicts escalate and an increasing number of topics become "undiscussable."

The individual engages in unhealthy power dynamics, either as the victim or perpetrator.

### USE & ABUSE OF POWER

Leaders become more controlling and authoritarian, paving the way for abuses of power. The staff acts out a reciprocal "learned helplessness."

The individual becomes preoccupied with vengeance for real or perceived wrongs.

### INJUSTICE

The organization becomes more punitive, attempting to bring staff and clients under control. Unjust practices evoke a desire for vengeance.

The individual becomes worn down and struggles to imagine a different future for themselves.

### UNRESOLVED GRIEF

Staff are burned out, gaining less meaning and satisfaction from their work. The organization is unable to imagine change and becomes trapped in this cycle.

ADAPTED FROM

RESTORING SANCTUARY  
BY SANDRA BLOOM



LENAWEE COMMUNITY  
MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY