Understanding the relationships between personality and trauma

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Learning objectives

- Define “personality”
- Identify at least one personality trait involved in each the risk and resilience of developing PTSD
- Explain one reason why personality is relevant to the treatment of PTSD
- Name and describe modern personality measures that are useful for the diagnostic process involved with PTSD
What is personality?

“A dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person’s characteristic patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings”

Carver & Scheier, 2004
Trait theory of personality

- Individual, unique personality constructs (traits) exist on dimensions
- Major personality models
  - Big 5
  - PSY-5
  - HEXACO

Personality & PTSD – Why does it matter?

- Provides the lens through which the client sees and experiences the world

- Identify factors that increase RISK of and RESILIENCE to developing PTSD after trauma exposure

- Certain traits - active contributors to the identity and maintenance of PTSD
Vulnerability/Risk factors

- ↑ Neuroticism
- ↑ Negativity & “Psychopathology”
- ↑ Externalization of behavior, Anxiety, & Detachment
- ↑ Harm-avoidance and persistence, ↓ Self-directedness

Bramson et al. (2000), Daud et al. (2008), Egeress et al. (2009), Jakšić et al. (2012)
Resiliency/Protective factors

- ↑ Extraversion
- ↑ Comprehensibility
- ↑ Manageability
- ↑ Frustration Tolerance
- ↑ Hardiness
- ↓ Neuroticism

Edwards et al. (2005)
Personality and the treatment of PTSD

- Helpful:
  - Therapeutic alliance
  - Psychoeducation
  - Therapeutic Assessment?

- Potentially disruptive:
  - Personality disorders
  - Resistance to treatment

Assessing personality

- Self-report
- Broad: Not PTSD/trauma specific
- Most widely used assessments:
  - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2 & Restructured Form (MMPI-2/MMPI-2-RF)
  - Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)

Ben-Porath & Tellegen (2008)
Morey (2007)
Using the MMPI-2-RF

**Restructured Clinical**
- Demoralization (RCd)
- Low Positive Emotions (RC2)
- Ideas of Persecution (RC6)
- Dysfunctional Negative Emotions (RC7)
- Aberrant Experiences (RC8)

**Specific Problems**
- Self-Doubt (SFD)
- Inefficacy (NFC)
- Helplessness/Hoplessness (HLP)
- Stress/Worry (STW)
- Anxiety (AXY)
- Behavior Restricting Fears (BRF)

**Interpersonal**
- Social Avoidance (SAV)
- Disaffiliativeness (DSF)

**PSY-5**
- Negative Emotionality/Neuroticism (NEGE-r)
- Introversion/Low Positive Emotionality (INTR-r)

Ben-Porath & Tellegen (2008)
Sellbom et al., 2012
Using the PAI

Clinical Scales
- Anxiety (ANX-C, ANX-A, ANX-P)
- Anxiety Related Disorders (ARD-T)
- Paranoia (PAR-H)

Treatment Scales
- Stress (STR)
- Treatment Rejection (RXR)

Morey (2007)
Conclusions

- Personality is a complex, organized, and active psychological phenomenon
- Many traits are risk and resilience factors for the development of PTSD
- Understanding the client’s personality can be beneficial for treatment
- Personality measures contain a wealth of clinically useful information
Questions?


References


Image References

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