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**Cwm Taf University Health
Board – Psychological
Therapies Department**

Introduction to the stabilisation pack: Overcoming trauma

Stabilisation Pack

What is this manual about?

People who use mental health services have often been through very difficult experiences in their lives. Some of the events that have the most devastating effects are referred to as traumas. This manual will help you to learn what trauma is, why it has such a big impact on mental health and what you can do to cope with the difficulties you face on a day to day basis. Understanding how you have been affected will help you to work out the reasons for your distress, and the best path to recovery.

You may not have recognised that difficult life events have contributed to your mental health difficulties, and you may not have used the word 'trauma' to describe them. The manual will help you to work out whether this kind of explanation seems to fit your experiences. It also contains a number of sections about different kinds of coping and recovery strategies. Some of these will apply to you and your particular difficulties and others may not, but we hope that everyone will be able to find something that fits their situation and is helpful to them.

What will I learn?

We now know a great deal about how to help people recover from trauma. It is useful to think of recovery in 3 stages:
Stage 1: education about trauma and its effects. Learning to cope with the effects and keep yourself safe.
Stage 2: talking about and coming to terms with what happened.
Stage 3: taking up your life again and moving beyond the trauma.

These stages are not completely separate from each other. Learning how to cope with the effects of trauma is likely to involve talking a bit about what happened. However, it is essential that you are able to keep yourself safe and develop some ways of coping before you start to look at the traumas more closely.

It is important to note that some people find that it is enough to be able to cope better, and they do not want to re-visit the trauma at all. This is fine. It is your decision. You may wish to stop after you feel you have completed Stage

1, or you may wish to have a break and perhaps come back to Stage 2 in the future.

This booklet is mainly about Stage 1. After you are reasonably confident with the Stage 1 skills, your mental health worker will discuss with you whether you want to do any Stage 2 work, and what the options are.

How to use the manual

The manual has been written so that you can use it for self-help if you wish. You can ask to have copies of the sections that sound as if they will be most useful to you, and you can then work through them on your own.

Most people will find it easier to put the ideas into practice if they have some support from others. This could be friends or family. Your mental health worker will be very happy to work alongside you and advise and encourage you.

The manual is divided into sections. Some of them will be relevant to you but not all of them. Please ask your mental health worker to print off any that interest you.

We suggest that everyone reads 'Introduction: What is trauma?' and 'Introduction: How does trauma affect the mind and body?' first. After that, you have a choice of the following sections:

GENERAL COPING IDEAS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

(These can be used alongside each other)

Self-care
Mindfulness
Soothing and safety
Crisis planning
Distraction and distancing
Compassion
Grounding

INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC PROBLEMS THAT MAY BE A RESULT OF TRAUMA

Self-harm
Shame and self-forgiveness
Dissociation
Flashbacks and nightmares
Hearing voices
Mood swings
Unusual beliefs

Will it work for me?

Learning to cope with the effects of trauma is not easy. It needs time, determination, and often support from others. Not all the resources in this booklet will be right for you and it may take some time before the strategies seem to help you. Recovery often happens in small steps, and sometimes things may get worse before they get better. However, even severely traumatised people can eventually recover and move on in their lives.

Good luck!

This pack has been developed by Shelley McCann, Lucy Johnstone, Phil Brawn, Caroline Durrant, Jenna Ivey, Lucie James, Elanor Maybury, Hazel Mills, Jenny Nam, with support from Charlie Cowtan. This was achieved through feedback from Exeter SAGE, and in consultation with Jen, Jon and Wendy from Interlink Rhondda Cynon Taf.