

## RESPONDING TO THE UNSEEN VICTIM OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: HELPING WHEN HIS SEXUAL DECEPTIONS TRAUMATIZE HER

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## INTRODUCTION AND DISCLOSURES

- Assistant Professor & Core Faculty, Liberty University (Online) Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program
- Board member, former President of Association of Partners of Sex Addicts Trauma Specialists (APSATS)
- Owner Safe Passages Counseling (retired) & Safe Passages Consulting & Coaching
- LPCC-S and Board Certified Coach (BCC)
- Certified Clinical Partner Specialist (CCPS) and Certified Partner Coach (CPC)

## GOALS FOR THIS TALK

- Increase awareness of this population of potential clients
- Encourage you to carefully assess clients for compulsive sexual behavior and for betrayal trauma
- Introduce you to a model of treatment/support for betrayed partners/spouses
- Consider how you can respond to these clients in ethical ways

## ABOUT LANGUAGE

- Use of female/male pronouns
- Terms for out of control sexual behavior:
  - Compulsive Sexual Behavior
  - Problematic Sexual Behavior
  - Sexual Addiction

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & ABUSE

- “Sexual exploitation - any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, threatening or profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another ” (WHO definition from Policy & procedures, March 2017).
- Sexual abuse- “unwanted sexual activity with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and perpetrators know each other. ..Long term symptoms include anxiety, fear, or post-traumatic stress disorder.” (Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/topics/sexual-abuse>, February 27, 2019)

## COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR DISORDER

- Recently added to ICD-11 as a mental disorder (6C72) under Impulse Control Disorders
- “Persistent inability to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in recurring sexual behavior. This pattern manifests over an extended period (6 months or more) negatively affecting familial, social, educational/or occupational areas of functioning” (Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wps.20499> on February 27, 2019)
- Since the 1980's, most common term use is “sex addiction”



## HISTORY

- Patrick Carnes (1980's)- courage to identify and address the issues related to compulsive sexual behavior or sex addiction
- Model based in addiction or “family disease” model
- Neglected to view the responses or symptoms of betrayed partner/spouse from a mental health perspective
- “Co-addiction” or ”Co-addict” model (borrowed from codependency model)
- 2005-2006 began to advocate for a mental health/trauma informed model and conceptualization of the partner/spouse



## BETRAYAL TRAUMA

- Birrell & Freyd (2006, 2016), Freyd (1999, 2001) Gomez, F., Lewis, J., Noll, L, Smidt, A, & Birrell, P. (2016).
- “Traumas that occur in the context of interpersonal relationships can be particularly detrimental because of the betrayal involved in the violation of basic assumptions of interpersonal and social relationships (Birrell & Freyd, 2006, p. 50).
- Steffens (2005) 69.9 % of partners/spouses met the criterial for PTSD in direct response to discovering their loved one’s sexual behaviors and secrets.

## WHAT MAKES SEXUAL ACTING OUT OR EXPLOITATION OF OTHERS TRAUMATIC FOR THE PARTNER OR SPOUSE?

- Inability to give full informed consent in the committed sexual relationship
- Shattering of the individual's own perception of their reality and history of the relationship
- Learning of behaviors of a loved one that violate commitments and/or values
- Fear of direct physical, financial, relational, safety effects of loved one's behavior on the partner (i.e. exposure to STIs, exposure to financial loss/ruin, criminal consequences, fear of loss of committed relationship, fear children may have been exposed...)
- Sexual trauma
- Traumatic life event

## TRAUMATIC EVENT

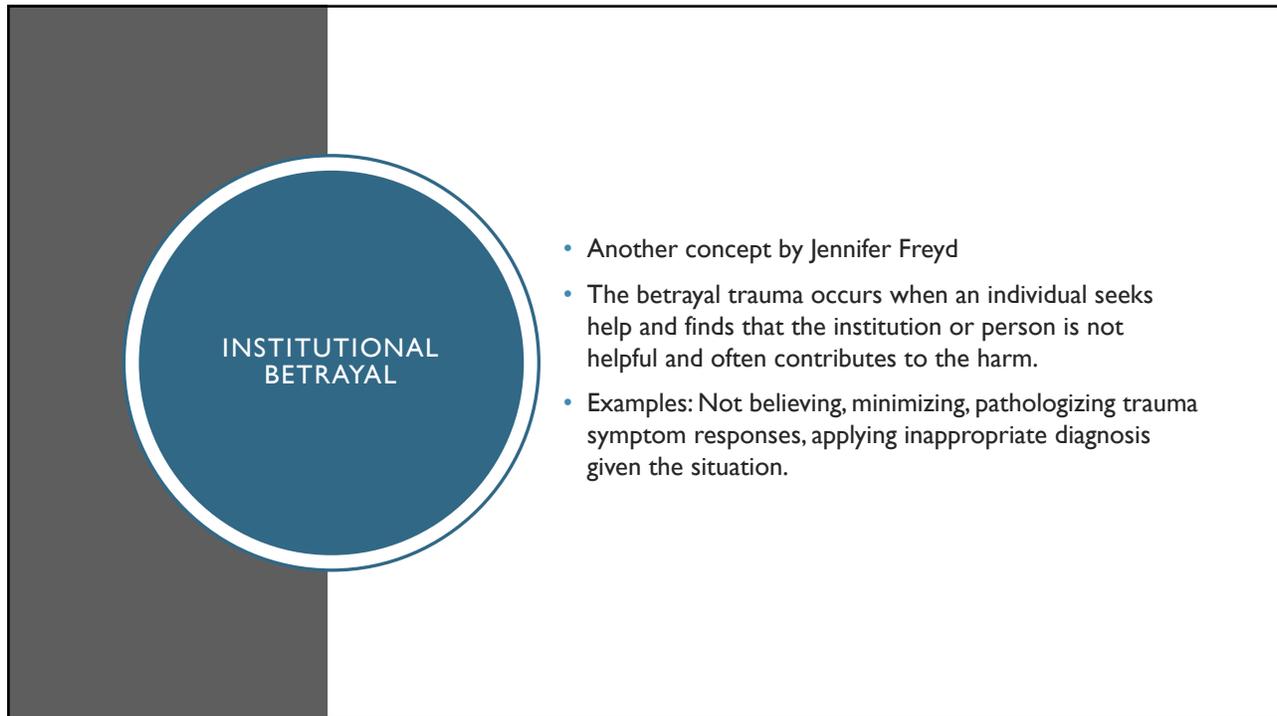
- Is a "point in time"- called "discovery"
- Steffens (2005) 84% discoveries were not planned
- 75% of those it was the partner/spouse who discovered
- Can also occur through third parties, through other consequences such as legal or work consequences

## COMMON SYMPTOMS/PRESENTATIONS OF PARTNERS/SPOUSES

- Hypervigilance
- Shock
- Intrusive thoughts
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Triggers
- Confusion/foggy “trauma brain”
- Sleep/eating disturbances
- Flashbacks
- Sexual issues
- Depression
- Shame/self blame

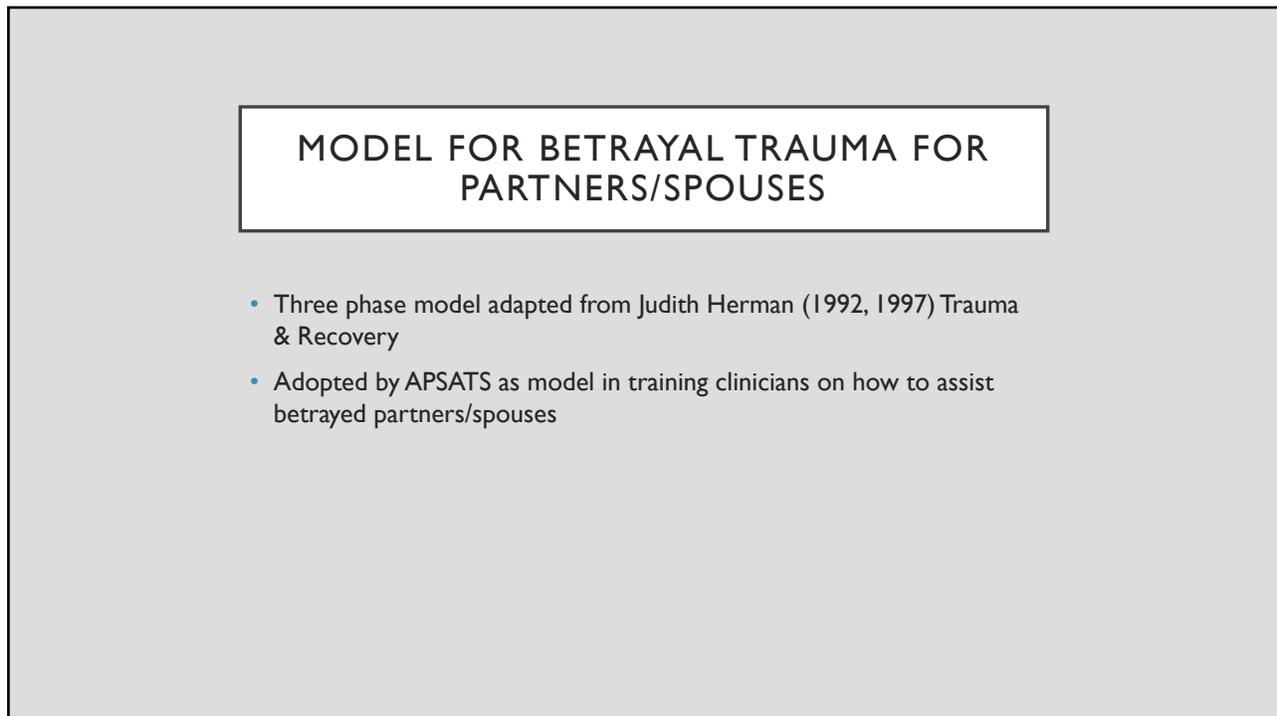
## COMMON HELP- SEEKING BEHAVIORS

- None (fear, shame, no access)
- Friends/family
- Marriage counseling
- Support groups
- Individual counseling
- Faith community/clergy



The slide features a dark blue circle on the left containing the text 'INSTITUTIONAL BETRAYAL'. To the right of the circle is a list of three bullet points.

- Another concept by Jennifer Freyd
- The betrayal trauma occurs when an individual seeks help and finds that the institution or person is not helpful and often contributes to the harm.
- Examples: Not believing, minimizing, pathologizing trauma symptom responses, applying inappropriate diagnosis given the situation.



The slide has a light gray background. At the top center, a white rectangular box contains the title 'MODEL FOR BETRAYAL TRAUMA FOR PARTNERS/SPOUSES'. Below this box is a list of two bullet points.

- Three phase model adapted from Judith Herman (1992, 1997) Trauma & Recovery
- Adopted by APSATS as model in training clinicians on how to assist betrayed partners/spouses

### MPTM

#### Primary Areas of Focus in the Three Phases

Phase One: Safety	Phase Two: Remembering & Mourning	Phase Three: Reconnecting
Discovery	Empirically supported trauma treatments	Rebuilding trust
Disclosure	Relational trauma repair	Vision for future
Relational Abuse	Grief work	Move into any Family of Origin Work
Stabilization (managing emotions and triggers)	Address any ongoing safety issues	Relationship & intimacy building
Treatment induced trauma		Moving on, helping others



The Association  
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Trauma Specialists

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- Assess the needs of the betrayed partner/spouse.
- Approach in trauma-informed manner.
- Do not do traditional couples therapy when there is active addiction (including sexual addiction), affairs (acting out) and abuse (including emotional or sexual abuse).
- Avoid globally applying codependency or other addiction-related models to the betrayed partner/spouse (or to anyone!).
- Obtain specialized training.

## APPLICABLE ACA ETHICAL STANDARDS

- A.1- "...to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients"
- C.2 a & b "Counselors practice within the boundaries of their competence."  
"Counselors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training and supervised experience."
- E.5.a "Counselors take special care to provide proper diagnosis of mental disorders..."
- E .5.c. "Counselors recognize historical and social prejudices in the misdiagnosis and pathologizing of certain individuals and groups..."

## RESOURCES

- APSATS.org
- SASH.net
- Steffens & Means (2009) *Your Sexually addicted spouse: How partners can cope and heal*
- Skinner (2017) *Treating trauma from sexual betrayal*
- Freyd & Birrell (2013). *Blind to betrayal: Why we fool ourselves, we aren't being fooled.*

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