



Working with first responders: functioning mode and deal with emotions

Interventions with first responders: functioning mode, talking about experiences,
getting "rid" of some part of weight of emotional charged experiences
Responders during the coronavirus pandemic

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Background

- Police
- Prison Staff
- Waldschlösschen-Klinik Dresden (Traumaklinik)
- St. Irmingard Klinik

Theories influencing my work:

- Fischer & Riedesser (Trauma)
- Krampfl, Andreatta (first responders)
- Stamm, Pearlman, Figley (Secondary Trauma)
- Arndt (Police secondary Trauma)



Overview

Part 1)

- Help understand first responders context...
- Selfconcept, resources, Functioning mode (robot mode), Feeling

Part 2)

- We „therapist“ can approach first responders

Interventions and skills

- - for first responders after events
- - for triggered people



Who?





1st question

How many of you work (or have worked) with First Responders?

- Yes I work(ed)
- No

2nd question

- What kind of incidents have emotional impact?
- What can be a relevant burden to them?

Regardless from if you have worked them, know them in person or just guess.

Please just think about it.



Emotional Burdens Traumatizations

- A – being attacked physically
- B – seeing a dead body
- C – loss of control:
I can't help enough or anymore





What can be traumatizing?



Primary Traumatization:

Own life and body is in danger or at risk

Own vulnerability

Fear or feared to death

Secondary Traumatization:

Other people are hurt, infected, instabil
Be emotional affected by suffering of people
(especially: children, or similarity to victims)

own helplessness

horror or dismay

despair

loss of control



- **Secondary Traumatic Stress**
- Beth Stamm (2002 german book), Charles Figley
- Pearlman & Saakvitne (1995)

- **Vicarious traumatization**
- social work connection

- **Compassion fatigue**

- **Shattered Assumptive Worlds (Janoff-Bulman, 1989)**



How like First Responders see and FEEL about themselves?

- Strong
- In Control
- Hero/ine
- Supports and Saves other People
- Feels strong enough to attack danger and furious situations
- Able to protect themselves
- She or He Does not feel scared



Selfconcept



Strength +
security

Leader

„Hero/ine“

Self-effiancy

Can rely on himself or herself

Stability-Center



Corona

- See?
- Control?
- Attack?
- Control?

- Perception

Ressources behind that

- Self effiancy
- Sense of Invulnerability
- Selfconcept



Emotional Clockwork

- Get in „Function mode“ (robot mode): functioning, putting feelings beside, just working, being focused, be a strong-reliable „worker“, getting necessary tasks done, be in emotional distance while you can't be in physical distance
- „Function mode“ - It helps me to be protected (from emotional stress)
- Realize after the finishing the job what happened, realizing, mind releases the emotional stress, having pictures in head
- Thinking about what happened, why it happened, injustice and how to prevent it
- Repeated experiences of people getting worse

Social Distance:

- Stop talking about it at home
- Even moving out from home – to protect the loved ones
- Be alone – safer for others?
- Be alone and keep relatives in distance – Loneliness: bad for the soul, Believing that their loved ones are safe: good for the soul



What happens...?



Trigger
can
push

Emotional incidents are piling up.
They accumulate.
Subtraumatic and traumatic
experiences piling up.



The more it gets the less you want
to get close to it.



Overview

- Part 1)
 - Why
 - Help understand first responders context...
 - likely selfconcept, resources & robot mode
 - Feeling

 - Part 2)
 - We „therapist“ can approach first responders
- Interventions and skills
- - for first responders after events
 - - for triggered people



Overview: Challenges

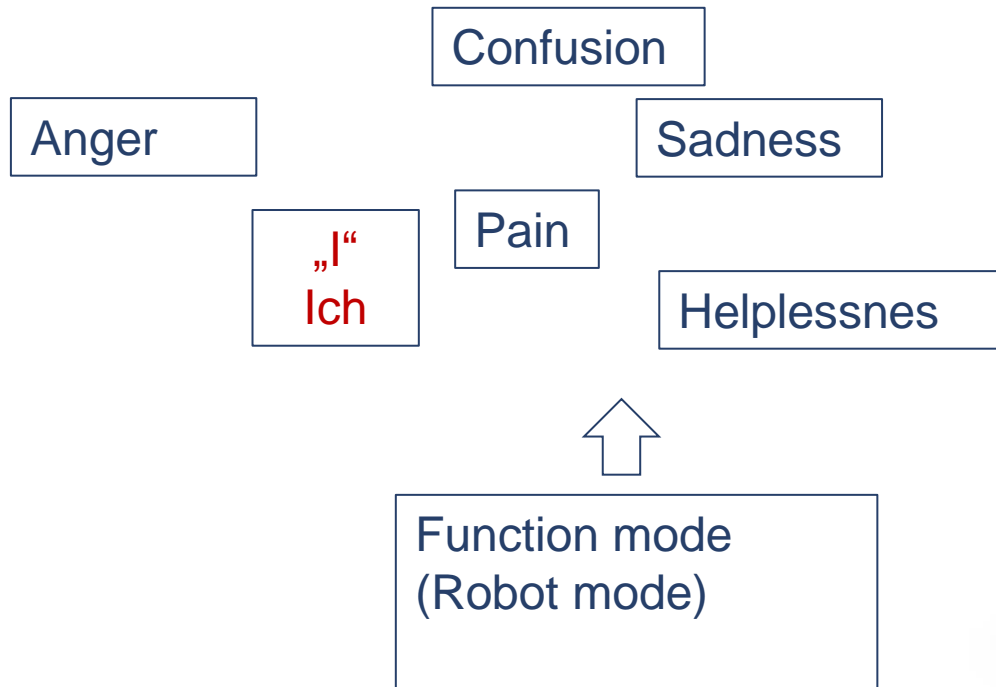
- Instead to be the hero - To be the risk
 - Having control by controlling feelings
 - Switch to „Function mode“ (Robot mode)
 - „Be strong“- longing or it, they don´t want to feel weak and pain
 - They push beside negative feelings after incidents
-
- INSPIRE: People are be „allowed“ to feel
 - because necessary prevention of accumulated burdens building up
 - INSPIRE: How to get out of Function mode



Skills: How to get out of „Function mode“ Creating Motivation

- By asking: Would just tell me all present feelings you have got?
- By giving them these feelings on cards...

- Anger
- Confusion
- Helplessness
- Sadness
- Pain
- Overwhelm
- Fear
- Function mode (Robot mode)
- Want to run away / want to get rid of emotions → „Why?“



Taking Cards and let them choose what not

- No – I didn't feel Overwhelm
- No – I didn't feel Fear



Anger

Confusion

I am

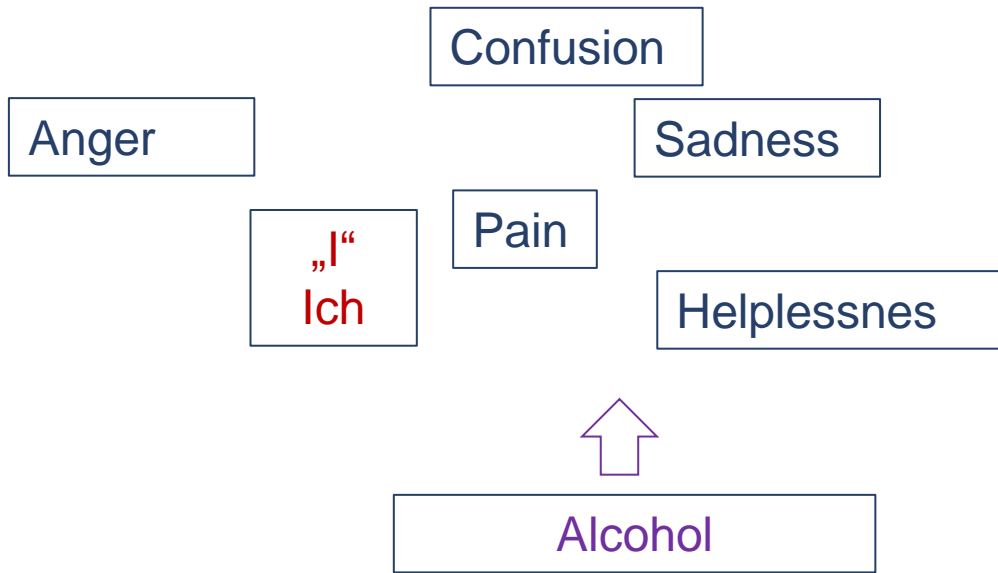
Function mode
(Robot mode)

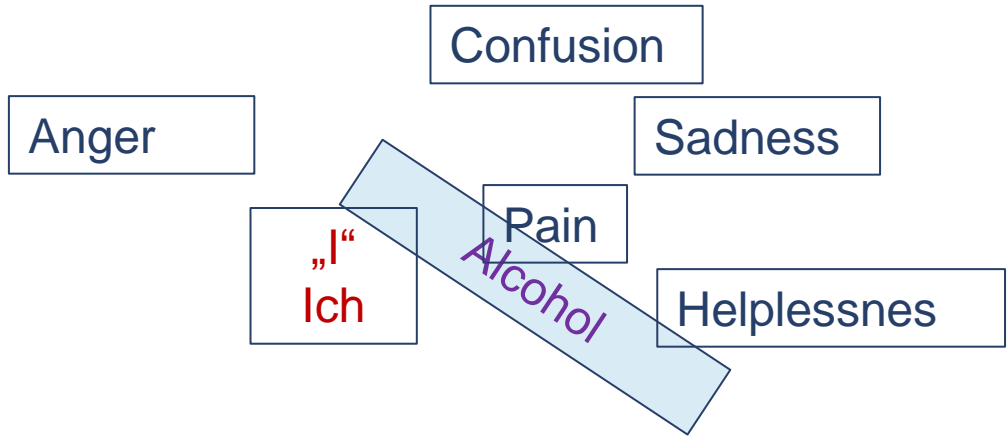
How did you
lay the
feelings?
(Process-
orientating)

My function
mode is
covering
the sadness.

What do you see?
reflexion-cognitive-orientation









What to ask? or reflect

- Sometimes Function mode (Robot mode) is on top:
 - *How does it feel? (Good, because it ...)*
 - *How long you think you can live like that?*
 - *How long do you think, you can work like that and what happens then?*
- Reflect side-effects: „Negative“ feelings are emerging when they are triggered and suppression gets overruled
- Reflect side-effects: Numbing > Depression, shut down all feeling



Create moments of safety

- Create with client ideal environment adapting their needs
- Place: Where would you feel safe...?
- Imaginery exercise: “Haven”
 - Safe space: Freedom, overview vs. protection and saferoom
 - If you create an inner safe space, you can make a copy of it

- Activate body: What do you feel in your toes... just let it be. Breathe. Observe. Listen to your body (Gendlin)
- Feelings: How do you feel in your body...?
What feeling is right now living or a guest in your stomach?



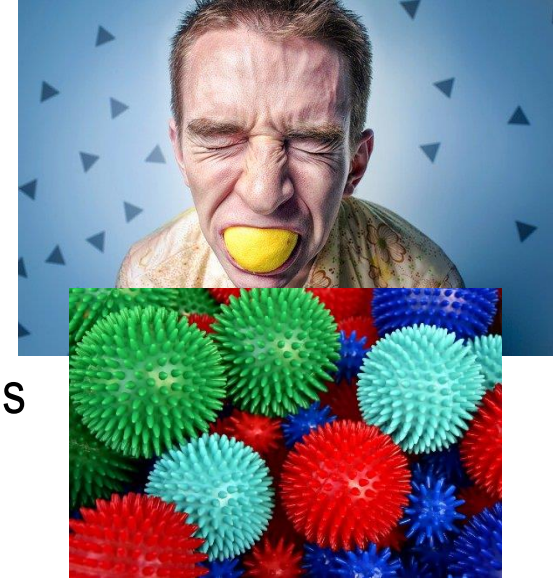
Present focus interventions (skills)

- „Sensory Skills“ based on
 - Dr. A Jean Ayres (1920 – 1988) Sensory Integration Therapy + Sensory Integration Approach
 - Martin Bohus and Martina Wolf Arehult (2012) Skills Training for Complex PTSD
- For First Responders
- (New) Frontline Workers
 - Supermarket workers
 - Pharmacists
 - Farmers
 - Care workers (elder homes, staff in training centers for people with disabilities etc.)
 - A lot people have been put on frontline + they haven´t expected it



Present focus interventions

- Present focus creating > stop arousal of fear, panic or flashback, anger
- Smell: Citron Oil (aroma-oil), fruits, parfum or aftershave smells, Amoniak appullens
- Taste: Lemons
- Skin feel: Massage ball, ice cube, rubbing with hands
- Breath: Tactical breathing
(1,2,3,4 so 4s breathing in, 4 hold breath, 4s breathing out. Repeat)
- Body feeling: body scan or ressoucre energy
- Grouding exercise: Tree exercise
- Freedom exercise: Flying bird





Nice to have been with you. Thank you



Feuervogel

means firebird, phönix

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