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Original Article | [Published: 18 December 2018](#)

Trauma-informed care and practice for eating disorders: personal and professional perspectives of lived experiences

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[Eating and Weight Disorders - Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity](#) **24**, 329–338 (2019)

1953 Accesses | **19** Citations | **4** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Abstract

Background

Learning about the life stories of patients who have experienced a severe eating disorder (ED), but also traumas that led to PTSD, dissociative disorders, and other comorbidities, has great value to clinicians in their efforts to deliver trauma-informed care (TIC). Many investigators have been researching and writing about these issues for years, and strong scientific evidence has emerged, indicating that trauma is a significant risk factor for the development of EDs, particularly in its bulimic forms.

Purpose

Peer-reviewed literature contains scarce input from people with “lived experiences”. Hearing and “sitting with” such individuals are extremely useful in clinical practice and research. Further, encouraging patients to put words to their pain has recognized therapeutic effects. These lived experiences are often demonstrative of key elements of what professionals need to know about evaluating and treating patients with EDs and co-occurring trauma-related disorders.

Method/results

The principal author invited two courageous recovered ED advocates and writers (June Alexander and Jenni Schaefer), who have gone public about their ED–PTSD experiences, to recount their life stories and treatment experiences (both positive and negative). Dr. Brewerton then offers his professional perspectives on the course of their treatment experiences put in the context of ongoing relevant clinical research.

Conclusion

Their and other patients’ experiences have great power to guide professionals toward trauma-informed care, more integrated practice, and theoretically improved outcomes.

Level of evidence

Level V.

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Ethics declarations

Conflict of interest

Dr. Brewerton, Dr. Alexander, and Jennifer Schaefer receive book royalties from authored/edited books.

Dr. Brewerton is a consultant for Monte Nido & Affiliates. Jenni Schaefer is a consultant for The Meadows.

Ethical approval

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent

All identifying information included in this article is that of the authors. For this type of study formal consent is not required

Additional information

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About this article

Cite this article

Brewerton, T.D., Alexander, J. & Schaefer, J. Trauma-informed care and practice for eating disorders: personal and professional perspectives of lived experiences. *Eat Weight Disord* **24**, 329–338 (2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-018-0628-5>

Received	Accepted	Published
26 September 2018	11 December 2018	18 December 2018

Issue Date

01 April 2019

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-018-0628-5>

Keywords

Eating disorders **Anorexia nervosa** **PTSD**

Dissociative disorders **Patients**

Professional–patient perspectives

Comorbidity **Treatment**