



CCHT Logo

The Necessity of Authentic Engagement:  
5 Ways to Build Connection with Youth Facing Adversity

**Risa Rehmert**

Wichita State University

**Center for Combating Human Trafficking**

RHYTTAC Grantee Training November 2020

# ■ Risa Rehmert

- **Director of Program Development, CCHT**
  - Direct Services
  - T&TA Provider
- Over **23 years** in the field serving RHY and survivors of RV, SA, HT, etc.
- 20 years of managing Street Outreach (Drop In-Center), Basic Center, Safe Place
- On call for 20 years 😊



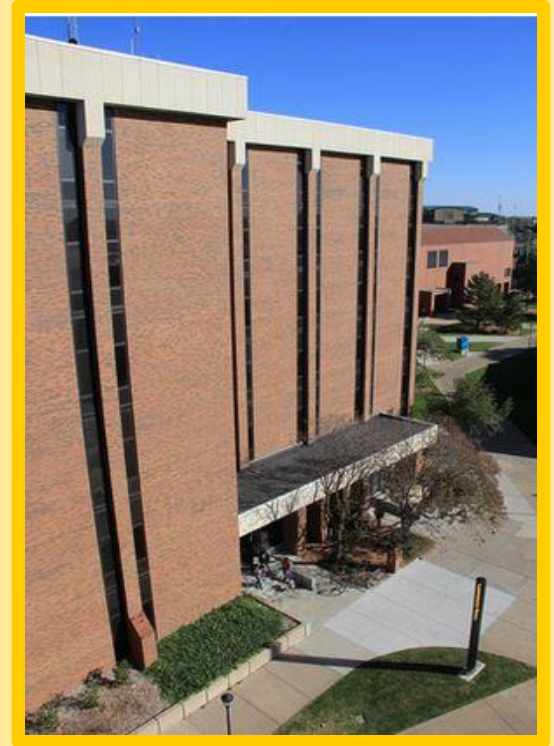
WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# WSU CCHT:



- Created due to personal, direct-practice, academic experiences.
- **Survivor-Founded, Led, and Operated.**
- As a not-for-profit, dedicated to **shifting paradigms, fighting injustice, and promoting holistic prosperity.**



WSU Building



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

*CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING*

Empowering OUR nation's capacity to provide effective prevention, intervention and prosperity promoting responses through the provision of **6 METHODS:**



**Direct Service**



**Education**



**Training**



**Consultation**



**Research**



**Policy  
Development**

# The *Lotus Model*<sup>TM</sup> creates culture

- Guiding Principles
- Foundational Principles
- Beliefs
- Values
- Practices

# *Lotus*<sup>TM</sup> Operating Principles



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# Objectives

1. Understand reasons why the practice of authentic engagement is so necessary to RHY work.
2. Discover 5 ways staff can strategically engage youth facing adversity.
3. Learn to promote resilience and protective factors by incorporating evidence informed/based practices.
4. Design engagement strategies for SOP, BCP, TLP/MGH programs.



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING



# Engagement-

- 1.) The act of intentionally pursuing an authentic connection with another person
- 2.) To attract, captivate, draw, involve someone's attention or interest

**Every engagement is OPPORTUNITY.**

(BTW, we aren't the only ones who know this.)



# Activity

## 3 Reasons

# Why the need for strategic engagement?

1. Communicating value to the young person, no matter how they may interact with us.
2. We believe we have something of value to offer young people—intentional engagement is an “invitation” to consider accepting services.
3. If we don’t engage...someone else will...often someone with bad intentions.
4. Research confirms social connection/relationships are a strong protective factor.
5. You can’t work with someone who won’t have contact with you.
6. Youth have no mandate to accept services.
7. We must answer the often unasked question...



# The Often-Unmasked Question...

“What’s in it for me to accept what you have to offer?”

Is this a fair question?  
Why or why not?

# Setting the Stage:

The impact of toxic stress and trauma reinforce the need for “intentional engagement strategies”

**Stress Response**- The body's response to stress/threat that overwhelms our resources; an emergency mechanism the body mobilizes to deal with dangerous situations:

- Increased adrenaline
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Release of stress hormones triggering fight/flight/freeze response

# Trauma Consequences Impact

## Biological

Triggered Stress Response

Prolonged stress response can change brain architecture

Overly alert, jittery, excitable

Difficulty reading faces and social cues

Appetite change, digestive issues, and/or stomach aches

Sleep disturbances (insomnia, night terrors, etc.)

Persistent fatigue or weariness

Increased muscle tension



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# Trauma Consequences Impact

## Psychological

Decreased ability to think, learn, concentrate  
Shift in ability to regulate emotions, affect, impulses  
Hypervigilant/on the lookout for potential dangers  
(jumpiness, nervousness)  
Shift in self-perception, self-image  
Self-harm, self-hate  
Dissociation (freezing) when feeling unsafe  
Emotional numbing, detachment  
Anxiety, fearfulness  
Depression, despair  
Anger, irritability, resentment and/or rage  
Unsettling memories, flashbacks



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING



# Trauma Consequences Impact

## Social

Avoiding activities/places they may be triggered

Social isolation, withdrawal, decreased activity

Difficulty connecting with others and/or maintaining relationships

Low social supports

Tolerating abusive behavior in exchange for a semblance of protection

Dating/domestic violence, coercive relationships

Use of drugs and alcohol (including smoking)

Early initiation of sexual activity

Risky sexual behavior/multiple sexual partners

Life domain difficulties (family, financial, vocational)

# Trauma Consequences Impact

## Spiritual

Loss of identity, security, trust, sense of peace

Long held faith/beliefs are challenged or lost

Questioning value system

Questioning the presence of God/higher power

Questioning or has lost their “sense of purpose”

Feeling life has no meaning

Hopelessness

Feeling the world is unsafe, unpredictable, out of control

(Feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability)

Increased cynicism, disillusionment

Feeling “dead” or “dark” inside

Negative, self-disdaining narrative/self-talk

# How can we engage youth in a way that:

1. Increases the likelihood of accepting services
2. Is responsive to toxic stress and trauma
3. Increases protective factors and strengthens resilience

Practice-Based Evidence



Evidence Informed & Evidence  
Based Practice

# *Lotus*<sup>TM</sup> Operating Principles



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# **1. Be Glad to See Me Every Time You See Me.**

- The Practice of Co-Regulation
- Unconditional Positive Regard

# “NEXT...”

Ever met someone who began the job with good intentions and practices but somewhere along the way...*they got lost?*



## **2. Be a sense of safety and calm.**

- Toxic Stress Response
- Trauma Informed Practice

**Think holistic safety.**  
(Bio/Psycho/Social/Spirit)

# Impact on Mind and Body: Threat Continuum

Sense of Time	Extended Future	Days Hours	Hours Minutes	Minutes Seconds	Loss of Sense of Time
<b>Primary Brain Areas</b>	<b>Neocortex</b> Subcortex	<b>Subcortex</b> Limbic	<b>Limbic</b> Cerebellum	<b>Cerebellum</b> Brainstem	<b>Brainstem</b> Autonomic
Thought Process	Abstract	Concrete	Emotional	Reactive	Responsive
Mental State	CALM	ALERT	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR
IQ	100-110 Average	90-100 Average	80-90 Low Average	70-80 Borderline Intellectual Disability	60-70 Mild Intellectual Disability

# Safety, Calm and Predictability

- Helps calm a triggered stress response
- Predictability sets the stage for safety
- Safety is needed for bio/psycho/social/spiritual healing to occur
- When those we serve feel safe, it transfers to helpers
- Safety and predictability prevent burnout and turnover

# 3. Meet Me Right Where I Am in My Journey.

- Stages of Change
- Motivational Interviewing
- Harm Reduction

# Stages of Change “Flyover”



# Motivational Interviewing Basics

Spirit	Principles	Process	Skills
Collaborate	Express Empathy	Engage	Open-Ended Questions
Compassion	Develop Discrepancy	Focus	Affirmation
Evoke, Awake	Roll with Resistance	Evoke, Awake	Reflection
Autonomy	Support Self-Efficacy	Plan	Summarize



## **4. Build Trust**

- Transformational Relationships
- Strengths Based Practice



# Building Trust

## Transformational Relationships

- Hurting happens in relationships AND healing happens in healthy relationships
- Connection is a powerful protective factor
- Youth often come from a place of mistrust
- It increases a youth's capacity to trust and build connections

# Strengths & Resilience Focus

- Reminds individuals they are more than a trauma survivor
- Trauma responses without a strengths & resilience focus are deficit-based
- Resilience is needed to bounce back from adversity and resulting trauma
- Decreases suspicion and hostility in those we serve



WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMBATING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# 5. Provide Choice & Autonomy

- Self-Efficacy
- Positive Youth Development
- Harm Reduction

# Choice and Autonomy

- Choice has often been taken away from those who have experienced complex trauma
- Choice fosters and restores respect, efficacy, agency, dignity

# Self-Efficacy

is the belief in your own capability to perform a behavior needed to achieve a certain task. (Bandura, 1977, 1982)

## 4 Ways to Build Self-Efficacy

1. • Develop opportunities to perform tasks successfully.
2. • Create opportunities to witness others successfully performing tasks.
3. • Reinforce the belief that they have the skills and capabilities to succeed.
4. • Teach self-care & self-regulation: moods, feelings, physical reactions and stress affect self-efficacy.

# Activity

## Engagement Strategy Implementation

- SOP
- BCP
- TLP/MGH