

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Thursday November 7 | 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

T-46

Developmentally-Informed Treatment or Trauma-Informed Treatment: A Conversation

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A contemporary approach to the treatment of juveniles who engage in sexually abusive behavior often involves trauma-informed treatment. However, in recognizing developmental adversity and other developmental challenges as important factors to understand in our clients, trauma-informed models are also always inherently embedded with the larger model of developmental psychology, in turn recognizing the importance of early and ongoing attachment processes and experiences. Whereas a trauma-informed framework necessarily requires “trauma,” and thus risks over-inflating or over-generalizing the concept, assessment and treatment informed by developmental and attachment theory is far broader, encompasses trauma, and recognizes that behavior, psychology, and psychosocial functioning are influenced by a broad array of circumstances, and troubled behavior is the product of many factors, rather than trauma alone. Indeed, the trauma-informed concept has itself been “medicalized,” in which it offers a precise “cause” for troubled behavior, rather than a greater ecological understanding of psychology and behavior, as an intersection between the environment and the individual, most fully understood through the lenses of developmental and social psychology. A larger and more encompassing model by which to assess and understand client behavior is more specifically informed by developmental and attachment theory, recognizing trauma-informed treatment as a subset of this larger model.

Learning Goals:

Upon completion of this educational activity, learners should be better able to...

- Consider the nature and meaning of “trauma”
- Understand the role and approach of trauma-informed care
- Recognize a developmental and attachment-oriented pathway to sexually abusive behavior

Phil Rich presents, trains, and consults nationally and internationally, specializing in work with sexually abusive youth. Phil holds a doctorate in applied behavioral and organizational studies and a master’s degree in social work and has been a licensed independent clinical social worker for over 36 years. He was the Clinical Director of the Stetson School for 13 years, a large residential treatment center in Massachusetts treating children, adolescents, and young adults who have engaged in sexually abusive or sexually

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troubled behavior, and is the author of several books that describe the assessment and treatment of sexually abusive youth, as well as multiple chapters, papers, and articles that address work with adult and sexually abusive youth and forensic work in general, and the four “Stages of Accomplishment Workbooks for Sexually Abusive Youth.” He is a Fellow of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, the juvenile practice representative on the ATSA Executive Board, and the chair of ATSA’s Juvenile Practice Committee.