

Stress- and traumasensitive approach medica mondiale STA®



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“ The core experiences of psychological trauma are **disempowerment** and **disconnection** from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. **Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships**; it cannot occur in isolation.”

(Judith Herman, 1992, Trauma and Recovery)



Why STA – stress- and traumasensitive approach?

Individual level

People who are traumatized ...

- come faster in tension states (may react in a very strong way in seemingly harmless occasions, so-called trigger situations)
- are faster overwhelmed and can handle stress less easy
- are having a hard time with interpersonal trust
- do not want to give up control

Especially strong when traumatizing events are not over - for example in ongoing conflicts / wars!

Why STA – stress- and traumasensitive approach?

On the level of collective trauma*

Trigger and escalation of existing conflict dynamics occur e.g.:

- **Loss of empathy:** a consequence of trauma **and** conflict escalation
Loss of empathy on a group level feeds into a culture of violence.
- **Defensiveness or aggressiveness:** serves to ensure the existence of the own identity group.

Keywords: victimhood, and competition of victimhood, victim-perpetrator dynamics, strong emotions and manipulation impacts group dynamics.

Why a Stress- and Traumasensitive approach?

- High risk of retraumatization and reactivation of trauma symptoms for those affected (including during health care, press interviews, legal proceedings)
- Stress- and trauma dynamics are transmitted to
 - next generations
 - staff
 - teams and organisations

Why STA – stress- and traumasensitive approach?

Sources of burden for professionals (among others)

- Traumatic stress, among other things witness violence
- Secondary or indirect traumatisation (through direct contact to trauma stories)
- Stress due to one's own unresolved personal experiences of conflict, trauma, helplessness

Why a Stress and Trauma Sensitive Approach?

1. Post traumatic effects counteract gender equality

- Men: ↑domestic violence, ↓role models
- women: ↓voice-participation-leadership, ↓reproductive health, ↓education, economic empowerment...
- Women are mainly affected by trauma related effects, hence essential for gender equality

2. The probability of developing post traumatic effects is particularly high after sexualised and war related violence

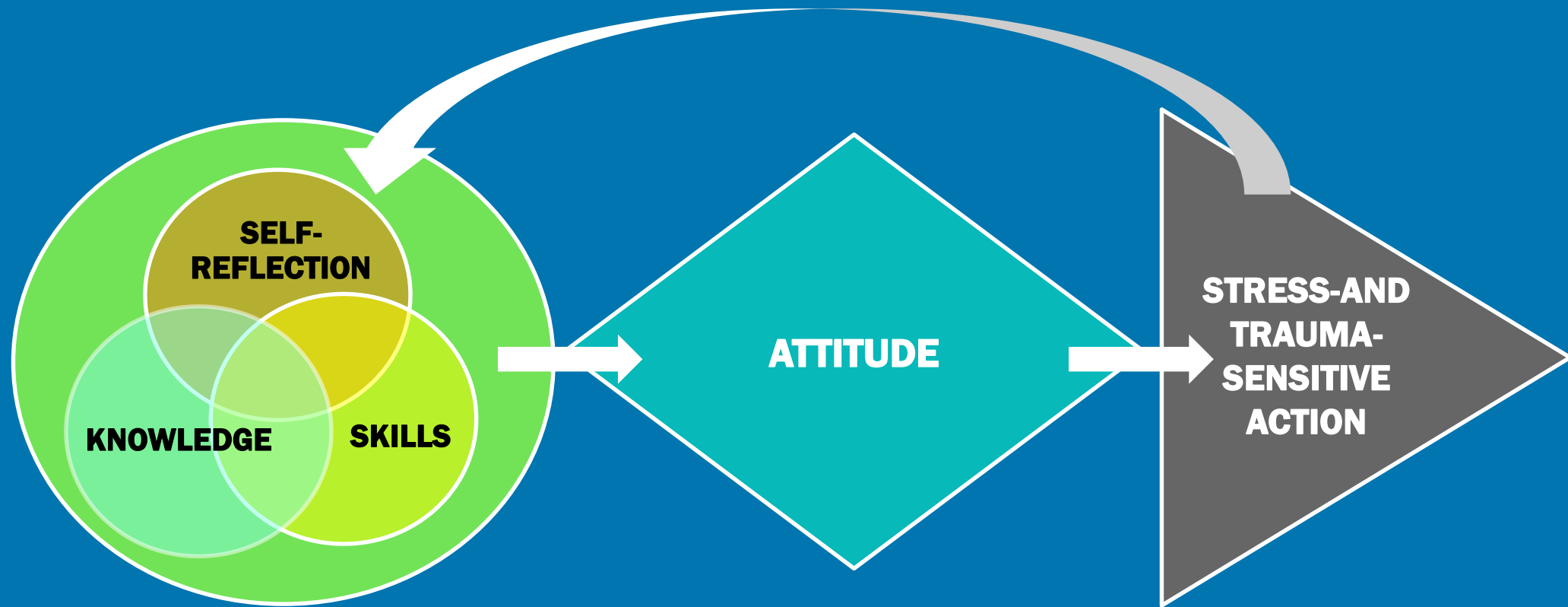
Goals of a Stress and Trauma Sensitive Approach

1. Professionals demonstrate an **action leading orientation/attitude** even without clinical-therapeutic knowledge →
2. **Development projects are planned, implemented, evaluated in such a way that they ...**
 - Promote self-efficacy and self-esteem
 - Reduce stress and anxiety
 - Prevent the reactivation of trauma symptoms
 - Strengthen resilience

Related to target groups, professionals and organisations

The STA - stress- and traumasensitive approach: basic principles

Consequences of human rights violations as traumatic sequence	Basic principles in dealing with affected persons and for supporters as well as organizations
<p>threat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental insecurity • Shattered confidence in oneself, others and the world • Increased vigilance 	<p>1.) SECURITY: reduce stress and fear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Materially, psychologically and physically safe rooms ✓ Influence and control ✓ Transparency and reliability ✓ Governmental responsibility to protect
<p>powerlessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helplessness • Feeling of vulnerability • Oppression • Discrimination 	<p>2.) EMPOWERMENT: strengthen self-efficacy and self-worth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spaces for agency and initiative ✓ Focus on resources ✓ Political participation and access to rights ✓ Power- and gender sensitivity
<p>isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shame and guilt • Polarization and marginalization • Denial • Group-focused enmity 	<p>3.) CONNECTION: strengthen each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Solidarity and networking ✓ Multiperspective view on everyone involved ✓ Informed dealing with negative group dynamics ✓ Political and individual acknowledgement of injustice and suffering
<p>stress- and trauma dynamics in the support system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased exposition to stress • Risk of indirect traumatization • Transmission of trauma to group dynamics • Overload and boarder transgressions 	<p>4.) mindful organizational culture and self-care: implementation of STA-principles individually and organizationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mindfulness, self-reflection, self-protection ✓ Supervision, Intervision, further qualification ✓ Stress- and traumasensitive working conditions ✓ Political commitment to a responsibility to protect for employers



BASIC PRINCIPLES

SAFETY

EMPOWERMENT

**SOLIDARITY AND
CONNECTION**

**ORGANISATIONAL
CARE/
SELF-CARE**

STAFF AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Psychosocial
Work**

**Advocacy and
Sensitization**

**Legal
Support**

**Health Care
Work**

**Support in
Securing
Livelihood**

STA - STRESS- AND TRAUMASENSITIVE APPROACH

The STA - stress- and traumasensitive approach by *medica mondiale e.V.*: basic principles

