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## Bridges to Recovery Addresses Trauma's Ripple Effect

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Trauma, like a pebble falling into still water, can create ripples throughout a person's life. A challenging aspect of working with trauma patients is sifting through the complex ripples of psychological symptoms and physical complaints that bring patients into residential care. At Bridges to Recovery, trauma services were implemented after recognizing that patients presenting with chronic, treatment-resistant diagnoses also identified traumas that were unaddressed in previous treatment but created overall functioning difficulties. To address this challenge, the residential treatment program integrated a holistic approach that filters out symptoms to uncover and treat underlying trauma in a peaceful, small therapeutic milieu.

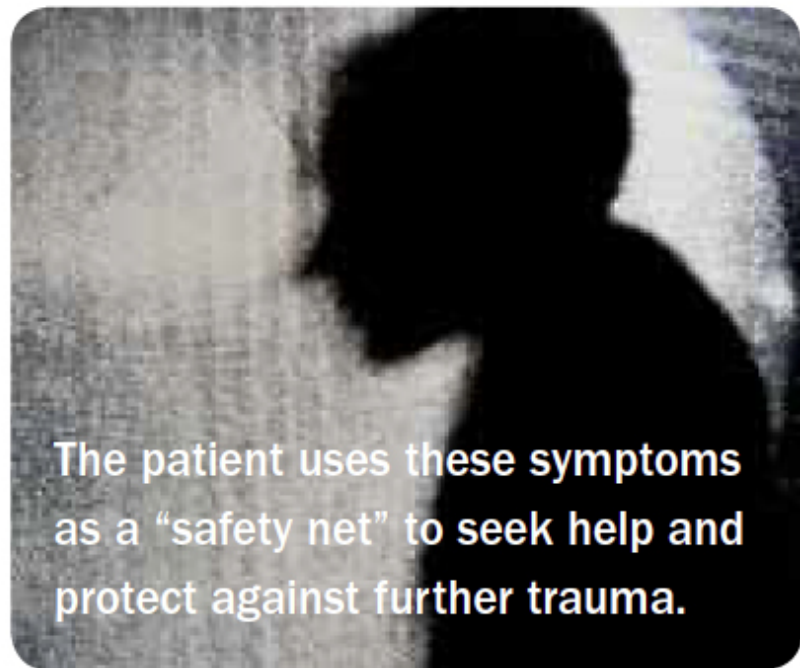
In initial stages of treatment, Bridges to Recovery obtains extensive collateral information to determine an accurate treatment plan. An individual's therapist helps each patient understand trauma's impact by shedding light on symptoms, and explaining how the patient uses these symptoms as a "safety net" to seek help and protect against further trauma. A detailed psychiatric evaluation then considers medications to guide the patient toward recovery, while assessing organic or substance abuse issues possibly complicating treatment. When the individual uses drugs and alcohol to manage overwhelming feelings, a substance abuse recovery plan – along with a careful medication approach – is required.

Individuals experiencing guilt and shame may not verbalize traumatic experiences, thereby complicating trauma work. In these cases, patients may develop maladaptive symptoms, including social withdrawal, aggression, and poor impulse control, to manage feelings and actions. As validation from others can support an individual's move toward growth, Bridges to Recovery implements group psychotherapy to explore trauma in a supportive, empathetic environment. Anger management, grief and loss, and dialectical behavior therapy are also used to holistically approach trauma. Family therapy is another important element of trauma work; relatives are often critical members of the treatment team that supports individuals after they leave residential treatment.

Somatic and eye movement desensitization reprocessing therapy teaches how aspects of trauma “store” within the body, often existing in individuals with unexplained and complex physical complaints. Somatic and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapists complement psychotherapy by seeking to uncover stored information that may prove valuable for individual growth.

Bridges to Recovery’s holistic approach has proven to be a highly effective trauma model to help individuals return to high functioning levels. While outcomes are often complicated to study, patients have decreased the use of psychiatric medications and increased their ability to emerge from old behavior patterns following discharge from this type of program.

Providers looking to implement trauma-informed care may want to follow a treatment-focused program that includes individual and group psychotherapy, and ensures a similar holistic approach to help individuals move toward full potential. Patients can then transition back to a still, quiet place without the ripples of disruption they struggled with prior to admission.



**The patient uses these symptoms as a “safety net” to seek help and protect against further trauma.**