



Support for Performers' Mental Health Before, During, and After COVID-19

Professional Society of Canadian Intimacy Coordinators and Directors

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Content Warning

Our conversation will touch upon sensitive topics including trauma, suicide, and abuse.



What is an Intimacy Coordinator?

- Movement coaches
- Actors' advocate
- Liaison between production and performers



When an IC is encouraged:

- nudity or partial nudity
- consensual sex between two or more people
- non-consensual sex between two or more people (i.e. assault scenes)
- consensual and non-consensual sexual acts (i.e. oral sex, manual stimulation, intimate touching)
- sexual violence (consensual and non-consensual depictions)
- self-stimulation (i.e. masturbation)
- kissing
- any intimacy between youths or between youths and adults
- scenes of, or that demand, a heightened state of emotion from performers (i.e. trauma, hysteria) that may put the performer at risk



Trauma: Esther Giller, Sidran Institute

Trauma = extreme stress that overwhelms a person's ability to cope.

No clear divisions between stress, trauma, and adaptation.

Stress reactions from psychological trauma are also physiological.

It is an individual's subjective experience that determines whether an event is or is not traumatic. Trauma is defined by the experience of the survivor.

An event itself is not traumatic. The *experience* of that event is what is traumatic.

What Is Psychological Trauma? Esther Giller, President, Sidran Institute, 1999



Trauma: Esther Giller, Sidran Institute

Single Blow vs Repeated Trauma (natural disasters, technological disasters, criminal violence)

Natural vs Man-Made Trauma (natural disasters, pandemics, war, assault, etc)

“As traumatic as single-blow traumas are, the traumatic experiences that result in **the most serious mental health problems are prolonged and repeated.**”

What Is Psychological Trauma? Esther Giller, President, Sidran Institute, 1999



Trauma: Esther Giller, Sidran Institute

- human caused
- repeated
- unpredictable
- multifaceted
- sadistic
- undergone in childhood
- perpetuated by a caregiver

What Is Psychological Trauma? Esther Giller, President, Sidran Institute, 1999



Trauma: Esther Giller, Sidran Institute

- substance dependence and abuse
- anxiety (including post-traumatic stress disorder)
- personality disorders (especially borderline personality disorder)
- dissociative disorders
- depression
- eating disorders

What Is Psychological Trauma? Esther Giller, President, Sidran Institute, 1999



A history of trauma can give you a high tolerance for emotional pain. Just because you can take it doesn't mean you have to. Someone needs to see this.

@f.a.s.t1



Trauma: Shelley Duvall in "The Shining"

- Principal photography took over one year; filming took 500 days.
- 127 takes for the baseball bat scene with wounded hands, dehydration, and throat hoarse with genuine crying
- The "door scene" with Duvall was shot over 3 days, using almost 60 doors.
- Duvall would cry for up to 12 hours a day
- Kubrick unexpectedly cut lines and instructed the rest of the crew to ignore Duvall to further isolate her
- As of 2016, Duvall admitted to suffering from mental health issues and has not been in the public eye since



"Shelley Duvall is one of Hollywood's most tragic cases of a film leading to eventual ruin."



Trauma: Sarah Polley in Road to Avonlea"



@realSarahPolley
@realsarahpolley



And here is photo of Jaimz Woolvet and I. I think around the same time. So I'm around 13 or 14 I think. He's 26. Another kissing scene. What on earth??? This is all coming back to me now... Super creepy Road To Avonlea stuff.... Was this legal???



Ezt a Pinteresten találtam
Fedezz fel magadnak még több ötletet
pinterest.ca

11:58 AM · Sep 7, 2020



209 29 people are Tweeting about this



@realSarahPolley @realsarahpolley · Sep 7, 2020



Replying to @realsarahpolley

I'm having some kind of former child actor Twitter meltdown... Excuse me... but this is so gross...



@realSarahPolley
@realsarahpolley

Sadly these incidents would still rank very low on my list of the many damaging and inappropriate things that happened while making that show... but still...

12:18 PM · Sep 7, 2020



293 34 people are Tweeting about this



The neuroscience of Romeo and Juliet: an fMRI study of acting

Brain imaging study finds that actors' sense of self fades away while they are performing.

"The imaging results showed that acting led to deactivations in brain areas involved in self processing, with a focus on the dmPFC/SFG and vmPFC. This might suggest that acting, as neurocognitive phenomenon, is a suppression of self processing."

"The neuroscience of *Romeo and Juliet*: an fMRI study of acting." Steven Brown, Peter Cockett, Ye Yuan. Royal Society Open Science



Returning to Work Amidst COVID-19: CMHA Ontario & CDC

- The body uses a surprisingly similar set of responses to a broad array of stressors.
- If stressors go on for too long (i.e. chronic), they can make you physically sick.
- 70% of Ontarians believe the province is headed for a “serious mental health crisis.”
- 25% of respondents report consuming more substances
- 25% of respondents report drinking more
- 80% of Ontarians worry about what a post-outbreak future looks like.



Reducing Trauma on Set

- Mental Health First Aid through all Intimacy Coordinators
- Readily-available resources for anyone involved: hotlines, chat forums, open clinics, on-site trauma counsellor if needed
- Reasonable scheduling to allow for decompression and closure
- Open communication between actors and support personnel
- Open conversation about performing trauma sustainably
- Make space for wellness and humanity



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Set Life During COVID-19

- Uncertainty about current protocols and how the way we did things before COVID fits into the current working practices
- Lack of basic communication
- Slower, sluggish pace and process
- Exhaustion
- Detachment, disassociation
- Resistance, irritability, anxious outbursts
- Lack of decision-making skills

"Pandemic pivot fatigue"

As creatives we are so used to shifting, adapting and making it work. But wow if it isn't tiring factoring a pandemic into it.

Take care of yourselves 💜💜💜



Set Life During COVID-19

Issues around performer safety have expanded into COVID-19-related issues.

Considering performers' boundaries was considered a "new thing" just before COVID-19. Now, there is an added danger to coercing performers into performing choreography they don't feel comfortable with and could have lasting repercussions for their loved ones.



Reducing Trauma on Set, COVID Edition

- Better pre-planning, well in advance of shoot day
- Better communication
- Allowing for more time for performers to consider the risks
- Having a Plan-B the team is aware of
- Accommodating extra time for scene shooting
- Added safety meeting at the beginning of every day
- Make space for wellness and humanity



Why?

- Prolonging the careers and lives of performers and crew
- Reduction of burn-out periods
- Sustainability leading into post-pandemic life
- Stronger support system that will impact the broader industry
- Reduce the likelihood of delays caused by stress- and trauma-related illness and injury
- Lawsuits are expensive
- It's easier to be a good person



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For more information, please contact us at info@intimacysociety.com