

Massage Therapy:

A resource for reintroducing safe touch to clients with traumatic touch histories




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To touch
is to give
life

~Michelangelo



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Learning Objectives and Agenda for this session:

- Some definitions
- Explain the outcomes of employing safe touch for clients with trauma histories
- Describe the parameters of trauma-informed massage therapy
- Identifying indications and contraindications for referral



What is massage therapy?

- ▶ Working with soft tissue and joints of body
- ▶ Restoring function
- ▶ Reducing pain
- ▶ Well-being
- ▶ Education: self-care, exercises, modifications to ADL

- ✘ NOT within scope to delve into emotional processing

Definitions:

Safe touch



MT as resource





Definitions cont'd...

Touch History

- ▶ An individual's experience with touch from birth to present
- ▶ We all have one!

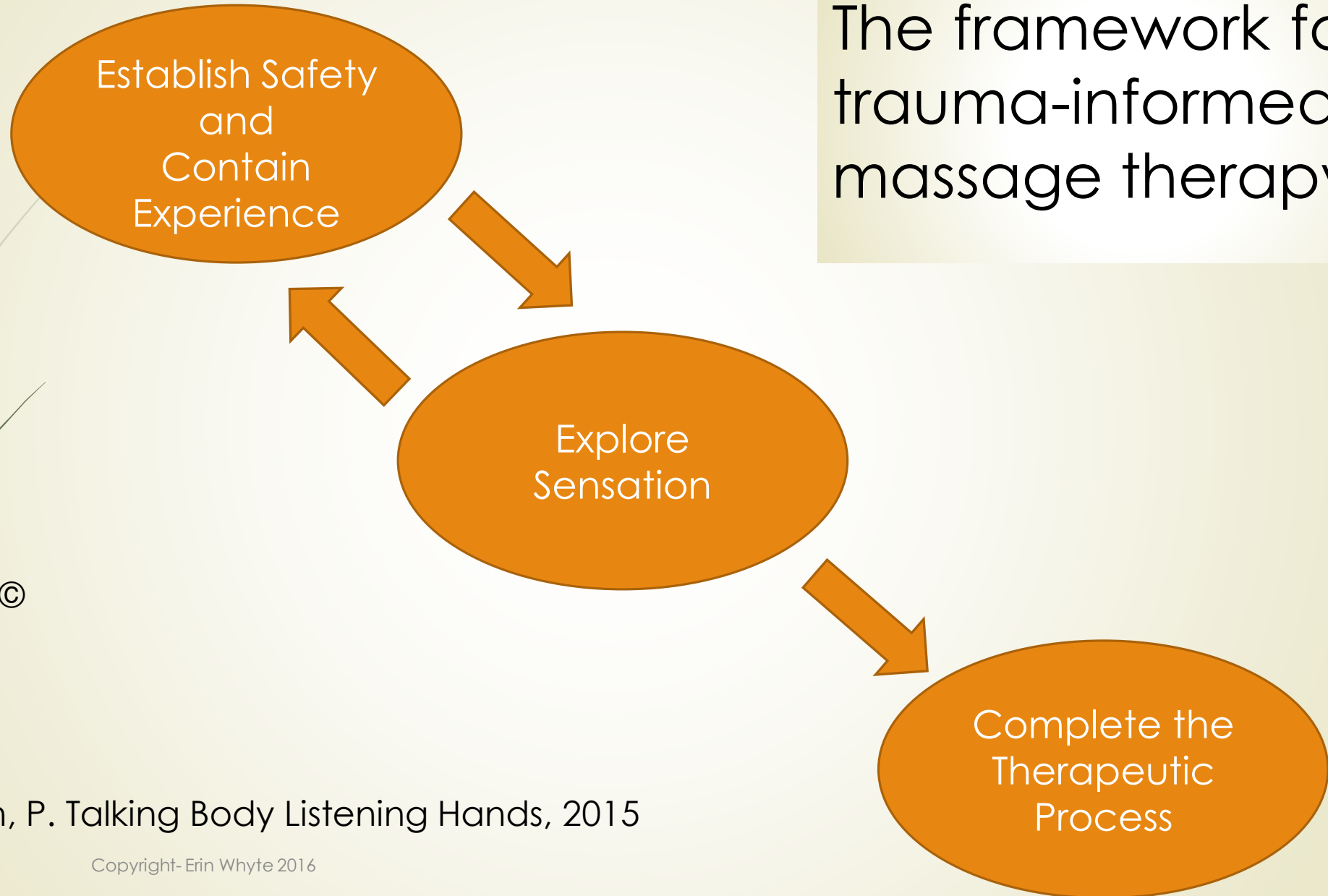
Traumatic Touch History

- ▶ A negative, unpleasant, fearful, or violent association with touch
- ▶ Childhood or adult sexual abuse
- ▶ Domestic violence
- ▶ Physical abuse
- ▶ Neglect

Goals and Outcomes

- New relationship between touch and trust
- Self-regulation
- Connection with the body and bodily sensation
- Learn to notice and relax muscle tension
- Management of physical impairments
- Self-care strategy for depression and anxiety
- Empowerment: **making choices and refusing touch**
- Experience of healthy boundaries

The framework for trauma-informed massage therapy



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Fitch, P. Talking Body Listening Hands, 2015

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It is contraindicated when...

- A person is early in their journey of emotional processing
- Lack the resources to self-regulate
- Goals of receiving massage therapy cannot be articulated
- Expectations of treatment are unreasonable or unachievable
- Person exhibits concerning behaviour

It is appropriate to refer when...

- person is stable in their emotional processing
- person has the capacity to self-regulate
- physical complaints that could be alleviated by manual therapy
- the person requests it
- person is ready to integrate touch and body awareness
- no other source of physical contact



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References and Resources


<http://www.cmta.com/find-a-registered-massage-therapist/>

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