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Kerka, S. (2002). *Trauma and adult learning*. Columbus, OH:
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Article Critique #3

In her article, Sandra Kerka, reveals to her readers that the process of adult learning can be demanding. What makes the process even more demanding is when the adult learner has experienced a traumatic event in his or her life. She allows her readers to know that some forms of trauma may include "psychological or physical abuse, rape, war, forced relocation, diagnosis of a terminal illness, job loss, death or suicide of a loved one, divorce, robbery, natural disasters, and terrorism" (p. 1). The article shows how trauma may affect learning and provides ways in which adult educators can ease the process.

If an adult learner has experienced trauma at one point in his or her life, he or she may display certain symptoms. Kerka explains to the readers that "difficulty beginning new tasks, blame, guilt, concern for safety, depression, inability to trust (especially those in power), fear of risk taking, disturbed sleep, eroded self-esteem/confidence, inability to concentrate, or panic attacks" may be symptoms the adult learner may experience during the process (p. 2).

The author then goes on to provide six ways in which the adult educator may respond in certain situations. A holistic perspective is the first response provided for the readers. The holistic perspective targets the "mind, body, emotions, and spirit" (p. 4). Using cooperative inquiry (sharing stories, art, movement, songs, co-counseling, poetry, theatre, and dance) allows the adult learner to heal.

Kerka goes on to relate that establishing a place of safety will also aid in the learning process. Establishing a place of safety must be for emotional, physical and psychological needs.

The next way in which an adult educator may respond is by allowing the adult learner to tell his or her story. This is a "fundamental vehicle for meaning in adult education" (p. 4-5). The adult learner may tell his or her story through narrative, journal writing, art, poetry, song, and or ritual.

Another way the adult educator can respond is by being collaborative. He or she should have basic knowledge of where to send his or her students in times of need. Collaborative partners may include counselors, government officials, social service agencies, shelters, health care, clergy, etc. Keeping this networking system very broad would be considered a plus.

An adult educator must take care of him or herself. When an adult educator is in good physical and psychological health then he or she can better aid their adult students. Adult

educators should be able to speak to someone regarding issues that he or she is currently facing (counselor, supervisor, colleague). Doing this will prevent burnout and stress in the future.

Lastly, Kerka notes that adult educators should be aware of institutional policies. When aware of policies adult educators can serve as advocates and be knowledgeable in this arena and this in turn will serve the adult learners.

Trauma can truly hinder the process of learning for adults. There are certain symptoms one may exhibit, but adult educators should be keen and should be on the look out for the aforementioned symptoms. When noticing certain symptoms as signs of trauma adult educators should also be aware of how to respond in certain situations.