



TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES



Building a **Sexual Harassment-Free Workplace** in Electricity

Safe Space
Mentoring Tool

Trauma



“An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf accessed December 11, 2020.

A Threat Is a Threat!



- The brain does not distinguish between physical threats or toxic stress and either of these can trigger this alarm system.
- This system works well when we face physical threat, such as a fire or a bear chasing us in the woods.



Prolonged Stress Response



- Experiences of multiple and/or prolonged trauma can cause an individual to become hyper-alert and easily triggered.
- Things associated with the original trauma or painful experience, such as colour or smell, sounds, can re-trigger memories, feelings, reactions, even if the actual threat is no longer there.

Trauma & Memory



Memory loss is a natural survival skill and defense mechanism humans develop to protect themselves from psychological damage.



Traumatic situations such as violence, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment, and other emotionally traumatic events can result in survivors suppressing or disassociating from the event, which helps a person cope by allowing them to temporarily forget details of the event.



However, it can cause confusion and memory loss for survivors when recounting or trying to recall the details of the incident.

Becoming Trauma Informed



- **Realize** the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery.
- **Recognize** the signs and symptoms of trauma in employees, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- **Respond** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Actively **resist** re-traumatization.

Strategies for Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Organizations



- **Awareness:** Organization becomes aware of how prevalent trauma is and its impact on workers, clients, and business outcomes.
- **Sensitivity:** Organization begins to understand trauma-informed principles, causes, expressions, and possible ways to overcome problems that affect workers and business.
- **Response:** Organization begins to implement changes that affect culture, routines, and human resource processes to eliminate triggers.
- **Informed:** Organization begins to implement trauma-informed practices and monitors the impacts of changes made to policies and practices.

Why Should Organizations Understand Toxic Stress and Trauma?



- Organizations can support the creation of trauma-free workplaces. In the workplace, trauma's effects are expressed through a change in work behaviours or physical health, and impaired thinking.
- If the source of trauma is the workplace itself, organizations have an opportunity to change their organizational culture by creating practice and procedures that are trauma informed.

Principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches



SAFETY



Ensuring physical and emotional safety

Common areas are welcoming and privacy is respected

CHOICE



Individual has choice and control

Individuals are provided a clear and appropriate message about their rights and responsibilities

COLLABORATION



DEFINITIONS

Making decisions with the individual and sharing power

Individuals are provided a significant role in planning and evaluating services

TRUSTWORTHINESS



Task clarity, consistency and interpersonal boundaries

Respectful and professional boundaries are maintained

EMPOWERMENT



Prioritizing empowerment and skill building

Providing an atmosphere that allows individuals to feel validated and affirmed with each and every contact at the agency

PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE



Resources

- The Impact of Trauma on Adult Sexual Assault Victims
<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/trauma/p4.html>
- Trauma and Memory Fact Sheets
<https://blueknot.org.au/resources/blue-knot-fact-sheets/trauma-and-memory/>
- Trauma and Violence—Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>
- How to conduct a Trauma Informed Investigation in Bullying, Discrimination or Harassment
<https://resources.whispli.com/blog/how-conduct-trauma-informed-investigation>
- Trauma-Informed Interviewing in Workplace Investigations
<https://piila.com/trauma-informed-interviewing-in-workplace-investigations/>