Being Trauma-Informed

What is trauma?

Trauma is a physical and psychological response to events that threaten safety and survival. Trauma can arise from various traumatic experiences such as abuse, violence, neglect, loss, natural disasters, or chronic adversity. Trauma overwhelms one's ability to cope.

What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

- Acknowledging that trauma is pervasive and that it is more likely than not that individuals will have some history with trauma
- Normalizing the impacts of trauma and interpreting coping skills and behavioral challenges with an empathetic awareness
- Prioritizing safety, trustworthiness, and empowerment in our interactions

The Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care
(CDC & SAMHSA, 2020)

Safety
Create spaces and interactions that feel physically and emotionally safe.

Trustworthiness & Transparency
Build trust through honesty, transparency, and reliability in your interactions with individuals.

Peer Support
Provide opportunities for individuals with shared experiences to learn from and support each other.

Collaboration & Mutuality
Treat others as collaborative partners in decision-making, viewing individuals as the experts of their lived experience.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice
Promote individuals' autonomy by making space for feedback and providing choice related to one's own care.

Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues
Recognize and address the diverse factors that influence trauma experiences and seek to mitigate bias in your interactions.

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Examples of How to Apply Trauma-Informed Practices

Safety

- Meet in a comfortable and private space.
- When possible, provide comfort items such as sensory toys, tea, or snacks.
- Mirror individuals' language, validate their feelings, and listen non-judgmentally.
- Model consent before touching an individual or their belongings.
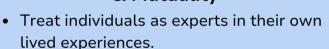
Trustworthiness & Transparency

- Describe the logic behind decisions, and inform individuals about relevant policies.
- Provide justification when asking an individual personal questions.
- Narrate tasks and processes as they are occurring.
- Explain the limits to your confidentiality when applicable.

Peer Support

- Regularly update and share information about available mental health resources.
- Model healthy self-care practices and encourage colleagues to utilize resources.
- Create safe spaces for informal peer discussions and inform colleagues of available peer support spaces.

Collaboration & Mutuality

- Treat individuals as experts in their own lived experiences.
- Ask individuals about their hopes and expectations of your working relationship.
- Offer opportunities for individuals to ask questions.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice

- Establish feedback mechanisms, like surveys, to gather input from individuals.
- Regularly review feedback and tailor services to reflect individuals' input.
- When possible, provide individuals with options.

Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues

- Offer ongoing training for colleagues on the impacts of oppression.
- Routinely assess policies and processes for bias and structural inequities.
- Be aware of personal biases and ask questions rather than making assumptions.