



# Beyond the Case File: Building Trauma-informed Practices

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1



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3

## Obectives

1. Define trauma-informed care and its principles.
2. Apply trauma-informed communication strategies.
3. Recognize burnout and secondary trauma.
4. Describe elements of trauma-informed organizational culture.



4

What comes to  
mind when you  
hear the term  
“trauma-  
informed”?



5

## What is Trauma?

Trauma is an experience, series of experiences, or set of circumstances that an individual perceives as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening. This can have lasting negative effects on a person’s functioning and overall well-being, including their mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual health.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

6

## What is Trauma?

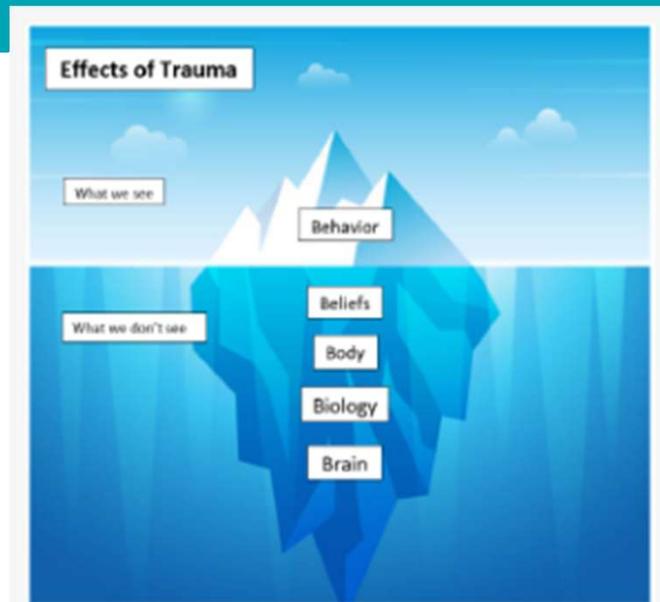
Have you worked with parents who...

- Always forgot things
- Had extreme reactions – too big or too small
- Always angry or complaining
- Detached and uninterested
- Always on edge
- Never followed through
- Avoidant
- Had trouble trusting you
- Overly protective and controlling
- Could not set boundaries



7

## What is Trauma?



8

**Trauma as Context**

How trauma appears in legal settings

- Repeating unwanted memories of the traumatic event/abuse
- Resisting conversations about the event – making it difficult to testify
- Trouble staying present in the moment
- Loss of interest



9

**Trauma as Context**

Behaviors clients may exhibit

- Angry outbursts
- Easily frightened or jumpy
- Trouble concentrating
- Refusal to be in the same physical location of the abuser/virtual appearance with abuser



10

## Why Understanding Trauma Matters



11

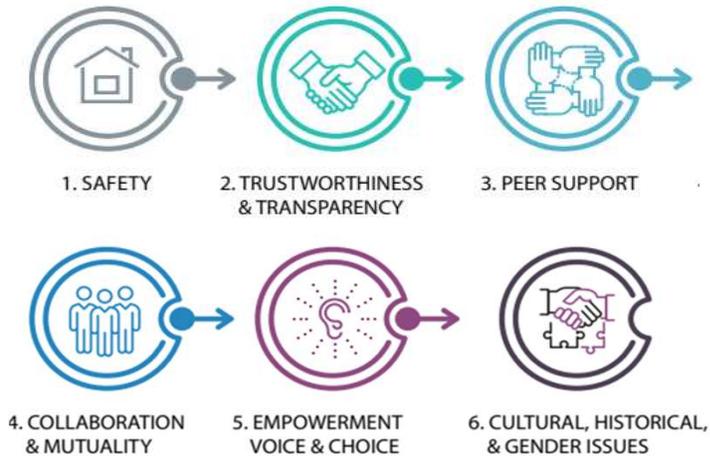
## Common Trauma Triggers



12

## Trauma-informed Care

### Principles of trauma-informed care



13

## How to Respond to Survivors in a Trauma-Informed Way

### Create a safe and stable context

- Ask what helps the client feel physically and emotionally safe
- Provide opportunities for the client to have control over the situation

### Restore power and recognize their resilience

- Give space for processing and grieving
- Empower clients to make their own choices

### Reconnection

- Build trust through transparency, respect, compassion and acceptance
- Only make promises you can keep

14

**What is one  
trauma-informed  
strategy you've  
used?**



15

## Empathy Building Exercise

In the following scenario, identify exhibited triggers and say how you would respond to the situation

Type your answer in the chat, or come off mute to give your response

16

## Empathy Building Exercise

Chris was referred to child support through TANF/Medicaid but never returned the case opening form. After a follow-up letter and phone call from their caseworker, Chris shared they were in the middle of moving and didn't have a new address yet. The caseworker asked them to come in the following Tuesday to avoid a TANF sanction, but Chris didn't show.

Several weeks later, Chris shows up at the child support office extremely upset, yelling about how unfair the process is and blaming child support for TANF cutting their benefits. Chris is now facing possible homelessness with two children and feels the system is failing them.



17

### What would you do?

1

Call security immediately and avoid engaging with Chris due to their anger.

2

Firmly tell Chris that their noncompliance caused the problem and that they should have followed the original instructions.

3

Remain calm, validate Chris's frustration, and offer to reschedule a time to talk through the case in detail, ensuring Chris knows their voice matters in the process.

4

Ask Chris to leave and come back when they are calm enough to speak respectfully.



18

## Secondary and Vicarious Trauma

Even when you're not directly affected, trauma symptoms can develop from indirectly experiencing violence or from hearing about or working with people who have directly experienced violence.



19

## Secondary and Vicarious Trauma

### Secondary Trauma

- Emotional stress that happens after hearing or witnessing someone else's trauma
- Can be triggered by a single, sudden event

### Vicarious Trauma

- A deep, lasting change in how someone thinks or feels
- Caused by ongoing exposure to others' trauma stories and experiences



20

## Signs of Secondary or Vicarious Trauma

	<b>Physical</b>	Headaches, body aches, fatigue, heartburn or rashes
	<b>Emotional/ Psychological</b>	Emotional volatility, mood swings, hopelessness, disengagement, grief, anxiety
	<b>Cognitive</b>	Cynicism, feeling like a failure, preoccupation with client's situation, feelings of disconnect, loss of purpose or hope
	<b>Interpersonal</b>	Conflicts with teammates, social withdrawal, disrupted personal relationships
	<b>Behavioral</b>	Difficulty separating work and home, addiction, irritability
	<b>Spiritual</b>	Experiencing existential questioning or crisis

## Signs of Vicarious or Secondary Trauma

21

## Individual strategies for managing and preventing vicarious trauma

-  Know how the work affects you
-  Set healthy work/life boundaries
-  Stay connected with others
-  Make time for hobbies and creativity – think mindfulness, journaling, yoga
-  Keep learning and growing

22

## Benefits of Addressing Vicarious Trauma in the Workplace

-  Prevention
-  Performance
-  Cost Savings



23

## Organizational strategies for managing and preventing vicarious trauma

-  Create policies to reduce risk and support staff well-being
-  Share mental health resources and supports – including the encouragement of work/life boundaries
-  Train leaders to spot and respond to trauma in staff
-  Celebrate wins and appreciate staff regularly
-  Foster space for team reflection and connection



24

## Creating a trauma-informed organization: what does it look like?

- 1 Policies centered on safety and dignity.
- 2 Leadership modeling trauma-informed values.
- 3 Continuous learning and feedback loops.



25

What is one small step your workplace can take to build a trauma-informed culture?



26

## Key Takeaways

- 1  
Trauma-informed care helps survivors and staff.
- 2  
Systemic and personal practice both matter.
- 3  
Everyone plays a role in shifting culture.



27

**What is one thing from the training you will implement in your day-to-day?**



28

# Questions?

BWJP

29

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30