

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Learner Action Guide

Defining Trauma

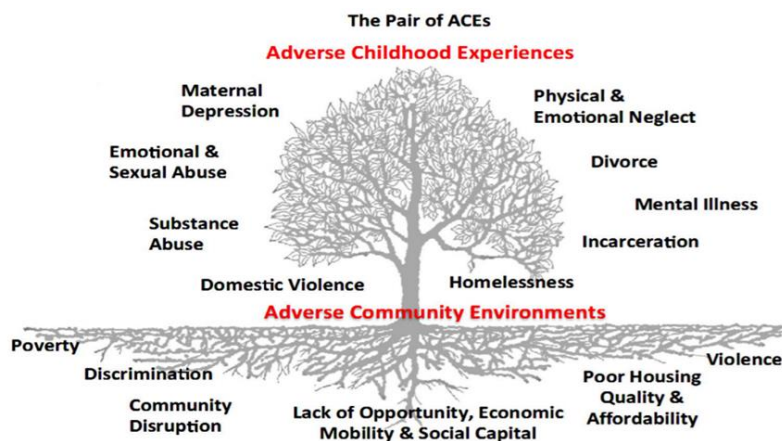
Trauma

- Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Types of Trauma

- Large-Scale Events: The things you see in the news. This might include things like war, or natural disasters.
- Interpersonal Events: This category involves events in which we have been hurt by other people- and also includes things that aren't physical, such as divorce or loss of a loved one.
- Historical Trauma: The cumulative, multigenerational, collective experience of emotional and psychological injury in communities and in descendants.
- Systemic Trauma: Institutional action and inaction that can worsen the impact of traumatic experience. Systemic trauma regards the contextual features that give rise to, maintain, and impact trauma-related responses.
- Secondary Trauma: Indirect exposure to trauma through firsthand account or narrative of a traumatic event.
- Racial Trauma: Complex trauma resulting from the ongoing experience of oppression and subordination. Mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACEs): One of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and household challenges and later-life health and well-being.



Tree image: Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011. License held by Building Community Resilience, Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University.

Trauma Affects the Whole Family: When trauma affects one person in a family, the whole family unit is affected. A family is thought of as a unit – one whole made of many parts.

Trauma in families can show up in many ways:

- Sympathy or Empathy
- Anger or Resentment
- Sadness, Depression, or Grief

Impact and Effects of Trauma

Trauma, including one-time, multiple, or long-lasting repetitive, affects everyone differently. Some individuals may clearly display criteria associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but many will not. The impact of trauma can be subtle, insidious, or outright destructive.

What Might Trauma Look or Feel Like?

- Estrangement
- Feelings of powerlessness or helplessness
- Changes in one's view of self
- Devastating fear, loss of safety or trust
- Feelings of shame, blame, guilt or stigma

Examples of activating events that may retraumatize clients, tenants or staff:

- Reminders of living in different systems (foster care, shelters, institutions, etc)
- Reminders of a past abuser
- Reminders of systemic racism
- Reminders of combat or conflict during active service

How to address signals that can lead to traumatization:

- Be sensitive
- Help people address them
- Can't eliminate them altogether – but can work to reduce them whenever possible

What if I am Triggered?

- Name It
- Take Space Appropriately
- Shift Your State
- Deal with the Situation

Trauma-Informed Practices and Cultural Humility

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC): adoption of principles and practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing.

A programs, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Safety: This isn't just physical safety – but also emotional safety.
2. Trustworthiness and transparency: People feel safe when they know what to expect, and also that people will follow through.
3. Peer support: By connecting those we work with to peers, it can help folks to flourish and gain support in a way that we are unable to provide.
4. Collaboration and mutuality: walking with a person side-by-side, instead of walking behind or in front of a person. Your clients' goals should be exactly that: theirs!
5. Empowerment, voice and choice: By providing even the smallest of choices, we can help to bring back some dignity as well as agency to people.
6. Culture, history and gender: Culture, gender identity, and what's happened in our past shapes who we are; it's important to be sensitive to these things and incorporate them so that people feel comfortable.

Cultural Humility: A lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities

3 Things to Know about Cultural Humility

- We move between several different cultures- often without even thinking about it
- Cultural Humility is distinct from cultural competency and reflexivity
- Cultural Humility requires historical awareness

Critical Moves for Practicing Trauma-Informed Care

- Reduce the harm of ongoing trauma
- Build resilience
- Reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization

Resources

[SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#)

[Historical trauma and cultural healing | UMN Extension](#)

[CDC: Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)

[AP News: US health officials link childhood trauma to adult illness](#)

[Understanding Traumatic Triggers](#)

[Hogg Foundation for Mental Health: 3 Things to Know: Cultural Humility](#)

[Rethinking Cultural Competence: Shifting to Cultural Humility](#)

[How Trauma Affects Families](#)

[Managing your Triggers Toolkit: A practice for being resilient in challenging circumstances](#)

[Pocket Card – Caring for Yourself in the Face of Difficult Work](#)

[How Microaggressions are like mosquito bites \(video\)](#)