



# From Being Trauma Aware to Trauma Informed Organizations

Exploring the Process for Sustainable Change

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# Learning Objectives

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- »»» **Being Trauma Aware:** The first rung on the ladder to Trauma Informed Systems & Organizations
- »»» **Defining Trauma- Informed Organizations:** Looking at more than trauma informed client interventions.
- »»» **Working on What's Possible:** exploring the toolkits and resources available.



# Laying the Foundation: Being Trauma Aware

[ABOUT | Being Trauma  
Aware](#)




- Being Trauma Aware is a free, self-paced, e-learning course that is intended to equip participants with the skills to:
  - Gain an understanding of trauma
  - Learn how trauma impacts childhood development, and
  - Recognize when trauma may be affecting a child's behaviour
- This is only the initial 'rung' on the trauma-informed ladder.
  - More needs to be done to become a Trauma Informed Organization

WATCH FOR THE  
EFFECTS. BUILD  
RESILIENCE.  
SUPPORT HEALING.



# Three Elements of Trauma Informed Approach

SAMHSA, 2012, p. 4

 **1** | Realizing the prevalence of trauma.

 **2** | Recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, **including its own workforce.**

 **3** | Responding by putting this knowledge into practice.



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# Stages of Creating a Trauma Informed Organization



A blurred background image showing several people sitting around a long wooden table in a meeting or conference room. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or working together. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting an indoor setting with windows.

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## Defining Trauma-Informed Organizations

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“A program, organization, or system that is trauma -informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for healing; **recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, clients, and others involved with the system**; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.” (SAMHSA, 2012, p. 4)



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“A trauma-informed organization has capacity and willingness to: self-reflect, build organizational awareness, and seek to understand community narratives in order to respond in ways that do not unintentionally cause more harm” (Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care, p. 14, 2021)

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The trauma-informed approach is the overarching umbrella that provides the framework for all individuals, organizations and systems to engage in universal precaution—to assume individual, historical and systemic trauma are present while not knowing better than someone else, to listen, witness and believe what is real for others, and to commit to anti-racism and anti-oppression (Brave Heart, 2017).



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# It's not about fixing what has happened...

“By recognizing that individuals who have experienced trauma are more likely to perceive threat or negative intention because of their impacted self and world view, we can choose to intentionally respond in ways that ensure physical and emotional safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment.”

- The Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care, p. 15, 2021



# Re-Traumatization in an Organizational Context



## Retraumatization WHAT HURTS?



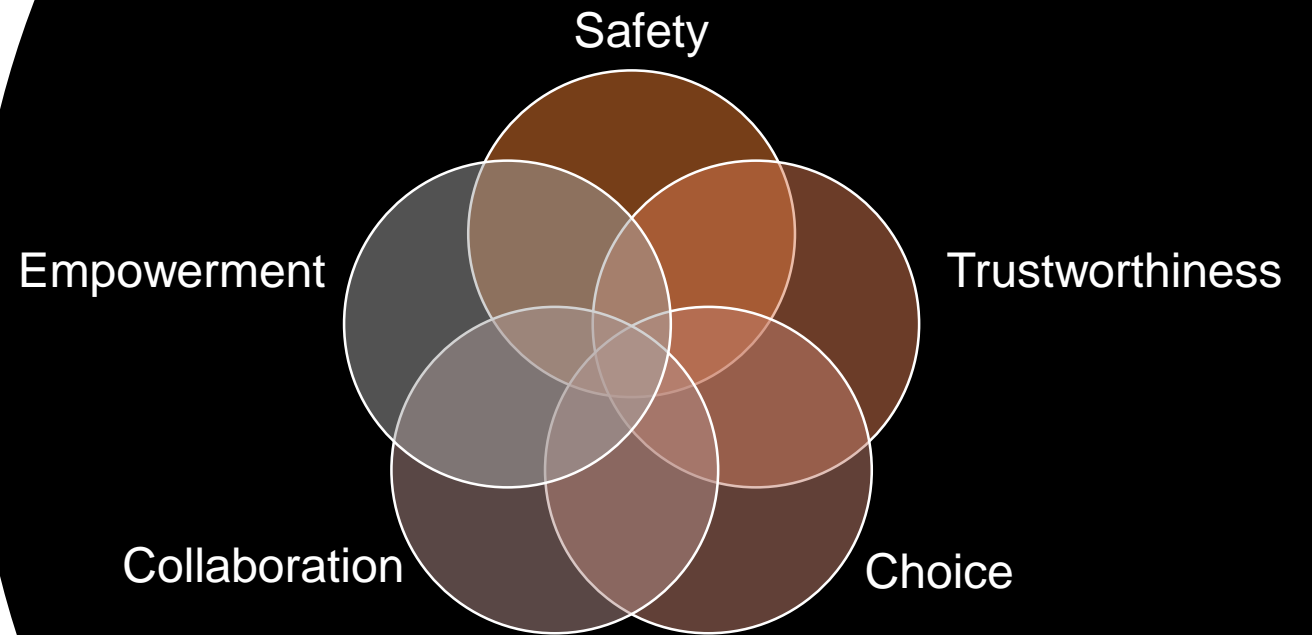
Figure 5 – Trauma Dynamics/Themes



# Five Guiding Values and Principles

These guiding principles provide a framework that can be used “in any organization/system with everyone, including at a worker-to-client/patient/student/consumer level, a worker-to-worker level, and a leadership-to-worker level.”

- The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2021.





# Retraumatization WHAT HURTS?



SYSTEM <i>(Policies, Procedures, Structural and Institutional Racism and Oppression)</i>	RELATIONSHIP <i>(Power, Control, Subversiveness, Interpersonal Racism and Oppression)</i>
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-  HAVING TO CONTINUALLY RETELL THEIR STORY
-  BEING TREATED AS A NUMBER
-  BEING SEEN AS A LABEL (I.E. ADDICT, SCHIZOPHRENIC)
-  NO CHOICE IN SERVICE OR TREATMENT
-  NON-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WORK RELATED STRESS
-  NO ACCESS TO SERVICES
-  PRACTICES WITHOUT ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS
-  ISOLATION OR EXCLUSION PRACTICES
-  MARGINALIZING PRACTICES
-  PRACTICES WITHOUT CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
-  "ISMS" AND PHOBIAS

-  NOT BEING SEEN/HEARD
-  NON-TRANSPARENCY AND VEILED TRUTHS
-  DOES THINGS FOR RATHER THAN WITH
-  USE OF PUNITIVE TREATMENT, COERCIVE PRACTICES AND OPPRESSIVE LANGUAGE
-  RACIAL PROFILING
-  BEING NON-COLLABORATIVE
-  VICTIM BLAMING
-  NON-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES
-  MICROAGGRESSIONS
-  NON-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND MESSAGING
-  NON-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF POWER DYNAMICS

CHOICE

EMPOWERMENT

COLLABORATION

SAFETY

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Figure 5 – Trauma Dynamics/Themes

# Five Guiding Principles

- The Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care, p. 28-29, 2021



**Safety:** Considerations for physical and emotional safety at work

**Trustworthiness:** Clear information about what can be done, by whom, when, why and under what circumstance

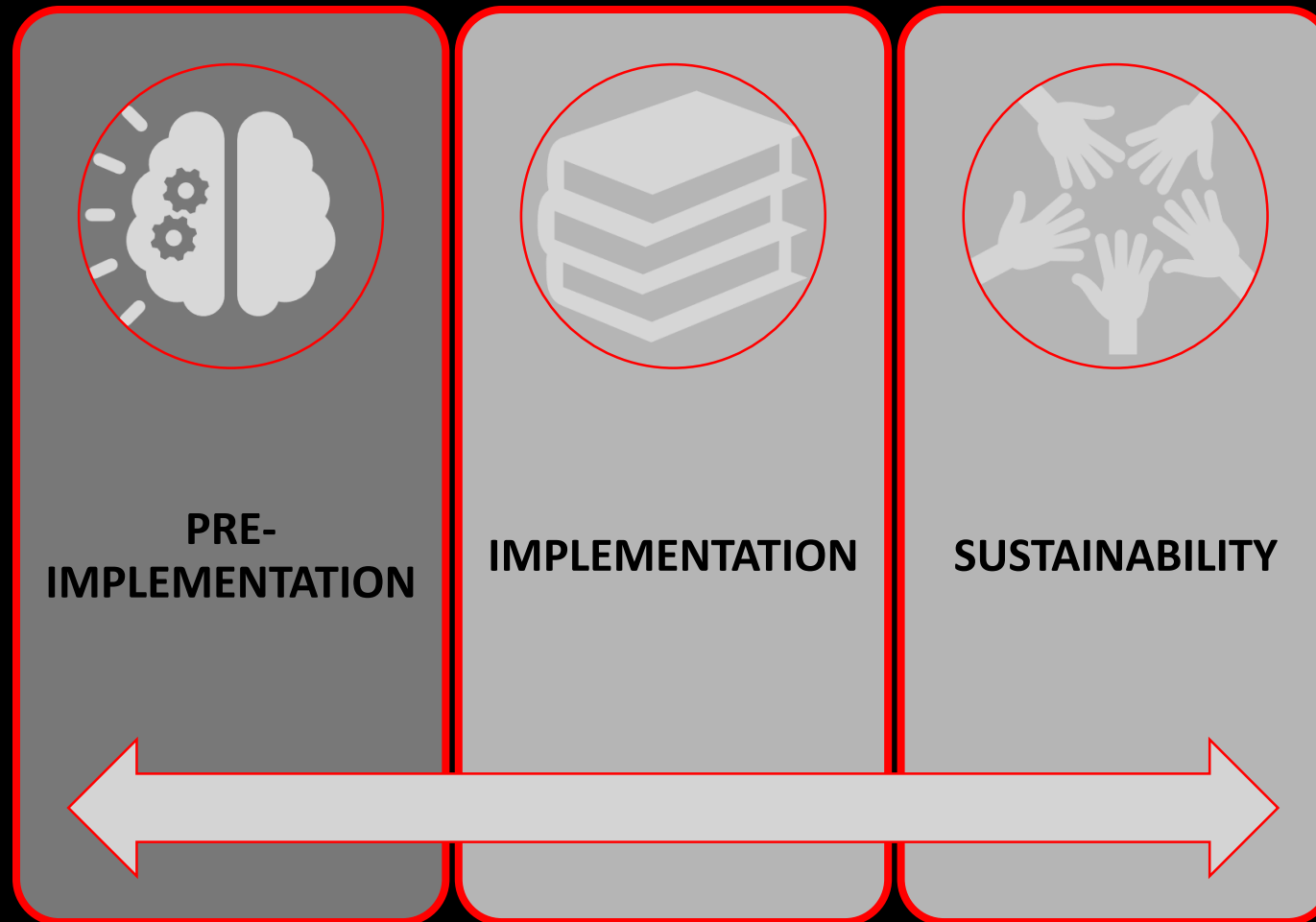
**Choice:** deliberately considering how much of a voice all individuals have within the organization.

**Collaboration:** Flattening the organizational power hierarchy by creating an environment where all individuals have a significant role in planning, evaluation, and implementation.

**Empowerment:** Recognizing and building on individual strengths and cultural/community/spiritual practices. Creating an atmosphere where everyone in the organization/system feels validated.



# It's Not a Destination...





### **PRE-IMPLEMENTATION:**

Organization/system prepares for and builds a foundation for Trauma-Informed Change



### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

Organization/system implements action steps specific to Trauma-Informed Organizational Change



### **SUSTAINABILITY:**

Organization/system further integrates Trauma-Informed practices into its fabric by establishing mechanisms to consolidate gains, monitor progress, and tweak implementation as needed.





## Trauma-Informed Climate Scale-10 (TICS-10)

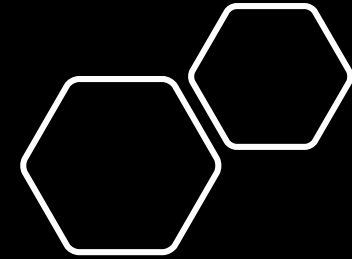
### APPENDIX NN

The following questionnaire may be used to assess your perceptions of the agency you currently work for. The TICS-10 is a reduced version of the Trauma-Informed Climate Scale (Hales, Kusmaul, & Nochajski, 2017), based on Harris and Fallof's (2001) five values of TIC. The TICS-10 has been validated in research (Hales, Kusmaul, Sundborg, & Nochajski, 2019).

Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using the following rating scale:

1= Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Not Sure   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When I come to work here, I feel emotionally safe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If I am upset at work, I know that other staff and supervisors will understand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I'm not sure who I can trust among my coworkers, supervisors, and administrators.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I can trust my supervisor to be fair in dealing with all staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I feel like I have a great deal of control over my job satisfaction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I don't have many choices when it comes to doing my job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The leadership listens only to their favorite employees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The administration here does not share decision-making with the rest of the staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. This organization doesn't seem to care whether staff gets what they need to do their jobs well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Staff is not supported when they try to find new and better ways to do things.



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# INITIAL ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

- Leading and Communicating
- Hiring and Orientation Practices
- Establishing a Safe Environment
- Collaborating with Others
- Reviewing Policies and Procedures

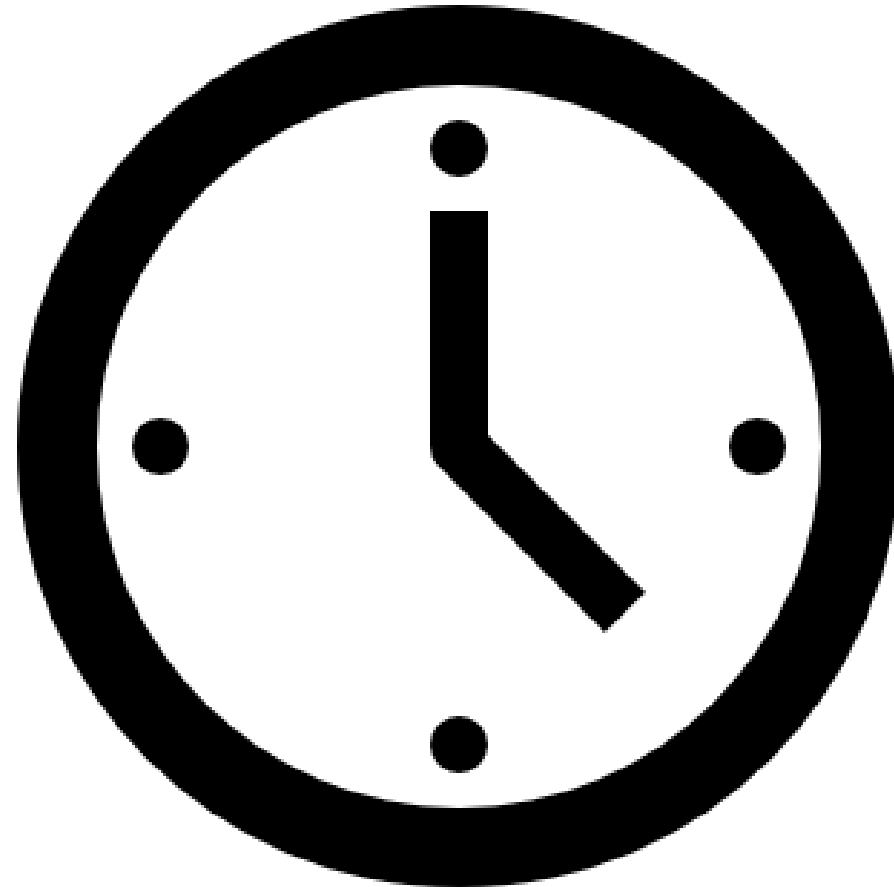
Pre-Implementation	
1. Leading and Communicating	
Who is your leadership team? _____	
a) Organization/system has a mission/vision statement and strategic plan that reflect a commitment to a trauma-informed approach.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
a1) Leadership team (including administration, board of directors, etc.) has training on individual, historical and systemic trauma and a trauma-informed approach.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
a2) Leadership team allocates some of their own time to the creation and sustainability of a trauma-informed organization.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b) Organization/system has a designated workgroup/committee/team with diverse perspectives and representation to lead the trauma-informed change process.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b1) Resources (time, money, and workers) are available to support trauma-informed efforts and activities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b2) Organization/system has strategies for engaging all individuals in the trauma-informed change process.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
c) Organization completes a trauma-informed organizational self-assessment as a baseline evaluation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



# Reflection in Practice

- Take a few minutes to look at the *Trauma-Informed Organization Model Planning* handout.
- Map out where your agency falls in each of the 9 domains:
  - 1 = not yet started
  - 5 = halfway there
  - 10 = ideal implementation

For this exercise, answer each question from an internal organizational perspective, rather than a client practice perspective.



# Group Discussion

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- In what domains did you find the greatest success in implementation?
  - Where do you have the most room for growth?
- Was there anything surprising that came up when completing this assessment with staff, employee's and internal systems at the forefront rather than client service delivery?
- Do you think that everyone in your agency would give the same ratings in each domain?

I encourage you to have others in your agency complete this or similar assessments. Does the outcome differ when the assessment is done by frontline or administrative staff rather than by supervisors and leadership?



- The Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care, p. 41, 2021

# The Importance of Leadership

*“a trauma-informed approach ‘really needs to originate with leadership. It can’t be bottom-up change... It can, but it’s a lot more difficult. It’s like rolling boulders uphill.’”*

*-Dr. Sandra Bloom (2008)*

**True leadership commitment requires more than agreeing that a trauma-informed approach is a good idea or approving staff time to attend presentations/training.**



# Modeling the Model...

## Leaders Invested in a Trauma-Informed Approach:

- Have a full understanding of what it means to be trauma-informed
- Incorporate a trauma-informed approach into the organization's mission/vision
- Integrate a trauma-informed approach into the organization's strategic plan
- Provide resources (time, space, money) for the trauma-informed initiative
- Are involved in the trauma-informed oversight committee
- Talk about a trauma-informed approach in meetings, newsletters, supervision, etc.

# Working on What's Possible

- What is *currently* possible?
- Does it make sense right now?
- Is it sustainable long term?
- Organizational Readiness...



# Working on What's Possible...



“The consistent delivery of TIC is only as effective as the organization’s commitment, which must extend to administrative practices with staff members, program policies and procedures, program design, staffing patterns, use of peer support, staff and peer training and supervision, organizational assessment and consumer feedback, and resources to uphold trauma-informed principles and practices.”

SAMHSA, p. 182, 2014

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a blue patterned jacket, is reaching up towards several large, iridescent bubbles. The bubbles are filled with colorful, shimmering particles and are set against a dark background. The girl's hand is near one of the bubbles, and she appears to be looking up at them with interest. The overall scene is whimsical and dreamlike.

# Sustainability

*A trauma-informed organization continues to demonstrate a commitment to compassionate and effective practices and organizational reassessments, and it changes to meet the needs of consumers [and employees] with histories of trauma.*

*-SAMHSA, p. 160, 2014*

# Get the Tools...

## Being Trauma Aware

Take the course: [ABOUT | Being Trauma Aware](#)

Download the promo-toolkit: [Toolkit](#)

## Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit

Download your copy: [The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care](#)



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 University at Buffalo  
School of Social Work

## TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANUAL

[socialwork.buffalo.edu/ittic](http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/ittic)

October 2021





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QUESTIONS? |

# References

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