Trauma-Informed Care Basics Facilitator Guide Tips for Facilitation

How to Use this Facilitation Guide

This guide is intended to accompany the three-part series, Understanding Stress, Understanding Trauma and Understanding Trauma-Informed Care web-based modules located on HealthEKnowledge. This guide is intended for facilitators, coaches and trauma-informed care champions of this curriculum to feel guided and supported in leading a cohort of through the content. The layout of this guide provides an overview of the objectives, materials needed, breathing & grounding exercises the facilitator can use, timing and content map for live sessions, as well as additional or supplemental exercises to support the content in the module.

Learning Format: Independent Learning

The web-based modules which supplement this learning guide are one of two parts of your learning system. The module content provides independent learning. Independent learning happens on your schedule. While your organization or system may ask that you access these modules within a certain timeframe to support your professional development and understanding of trauma, you have the ability to access and satisfy these requirements at a time that accommodates those needs. In this case, the three web-based modules that comprise the independent learning include:
- Module One: Understanding Stress
- Module Two: Understanding Trauma
- Module Three: Understanding Trauma-Informed Care

Your organization or system can support independent learning by using discussion boards, virtual libraries, and other forms of social networking on this content. Some organizations may keep a virtual trauma literature library on sharepoint, or develop a Microsoft Teams channel where people interested in trauma-informed care can connect.

Learning Format: Collective Learning

Independent learning is best supplemented with collective learning, which is the kind of learning that happens in real time. This means that you, your colleagues, and your supervisor can interact with the material in a specific virtual place, through a specific online or in-person medium, at a specific time. In other words, it's not exactly anywhere, anyhow, anytime. Methods of collective learning for these modules may include integrating or processing your learning during supervision, or bringing new hires or a cohort going through the material together to discuss and engage in learning to support your understanding of the content.

This facilitator's guide will serve as a guide for collective learning. It can be expanded upon by the facilitator to meet the needs of the learners, the organization/system, and the facilitator(s). The manual is a resource which includes small group learning activities to build off the learning which happened in the web-based learning modules.

The facilitator's manual will include case studies for specific systems to enhance problem-based learning. Problem-based learning is a way in which complex real-world problems are used as the vehicle to promote learning of concepts and principles as opposed to direct presentation of facts and concepts. These case studies will be grounded in trauma-informed principles to support the safety of the learning experience.

In addition to having the collective materials provided, there will be embedded moments of self-reflection throughout the independent materials to develop further introspection and curiosity around the content.

Together, these independent and collective learning materials are intended to bring a richer understanding of trauma, and ground you, the learner and facilitator, in the principles of trauma-informed care and provide a cost-free method of implementing trauma training and lay the groundwork for developing trauma informed care in organizations and systems.

Audience

The independent modules contain an introduction to trauma and trauma-informed care across systems. To that end, the intended audience is staff working in systems who may or may not interact with clients within their respective system. No prior knowledge about trauma is necessary. Each concept will build on the one that came before and be clearly defined so that the learner can apply their understanding to their own context.

The training is intended for a wide range of potential audiences, including direct service providers, supervisors and administrators, advocates, service recipients, and interested community members. Mixed audiences, with staff from different agencies, roles, or service systems, often work well. Including service recipients or family members along with staff can be especially effective—putting information about trauma directly in the hands of those most affected is empowering, and joint training creates a spirit of collaboration.

In addition, the interactions that occur between participants can lead to the development of new relationships and ultimately to more supportive and healing environments. This training forms the basis for more advanced work in developing trauma-informed environments and practices. It should be completed prior to embarking on more specialized training.

The audience for this guide is the person, or persons responsible for implementing trauma and trauma-informed care training throughout the unit, organization, or system.

Facilitator, or Facilitator Team

These learning modules are intended to be supplemented by in-person or virtual collective learning which happens in a community of learners (ideally between 12 and 20 participants), through direct supervision or through an onboarding process. This flexible format allows people involved in the implementation of trauma-informed care training to make the changes needed to meet the needs of their organization or system.

In other words, if the team is smaller, or if you are using this trauma-informed care learning system to supplement your onboarding process, there is flexibility built in so that the collective part of learning can take place in smaller settings, or as a part of supervision.

If there is a larger group (over 12 staff) going through the independent content as a cohort, it is suggested that there is a team of at least two facilitators. To model the principles of peer support, mutuality, and empowerment, it is suggested that one member of the facilitation team have lived experience. This facilitator team pairing can also be used to illustrate how people in different roles may experience the same events and circumstances differently.

The facilitator team should spend time getting to know each other before embarking on collective learning live sessions together. It is helpful to discuss specifics about what role each person will play as well as identifying which exercises each person will lead. One facilitator should have experience working in a setting directly relevant to the audience. People learn best from their peers, and there is no substitute for hands-on experience in making the learning system relevant.

We recommend that prior to the holding a collective learning space you spend some time reviewing the online web-based modules to re-familiarize yourself with the web-based module content. Simultaneously, start thinking about your audience—their backgrounds, level of experience, work settings, and roles at work. Think about ways to tailor the basic information in the learning to audience members, and try to share *non-activating examples/stories that relate to the actual services and settings represented by your audience.

A Word About Language

Language has the power to convey meaning and can change the dynamics in a learning space. To the extent that is possible, we have attempted to avoid using clinical language.

Similarly, trauma responses are natural human responses to extreme circumstances. While we do discuss the terms "vicarious trauma" or "secondary trauma," we do not believe there is a hierarchy of traumatic experiences. The focus is on using everyday language to talk about people's experiences.

We purposefully refrain using terms like "triggering" or "triggers." We think these terms have evolved and have often been used to minimize someone's experience. In addition, the word can have a violent connotation and does not accurately describe what is taking place in terms of neurobiology. Instead, we will use "activating," "trauma reminders," or "retraumatizing." Use

a term that feels comfortable to you and your participants to communicate reminders that can bring up one's experience/history of trauma.

Trauma-informed practices are based on the universal expectation that trauma has occurred. "Universal expectation," or "universal precaution," conveys the message that anyone in any system or program, no matter their position, whether they are people who use services or staff, can be a trauma survivor. In addition, it asks us to take appropriate measures to make space for these experiences and how they may show up in various settings.

While language may change, one way to think more critically about the words we use to communicate about mental health is to consider if the term does any of the following:

- Creates or reinforces stigma
- Outcasts or reinforces "otherness"
- Casts judgement on the person
- Draws comparisons
- Reinforces the medical model
- Reduces someone to a diagnosis or action
- Portrays a group as homogenous

If the term or language you are using does this, it may be the time to re-evaluate it, or find other options.

We also have a commitment to using person-first language. There are many reasons to use person-first language. People often state that using person-first language recognizes a person's humanity by reflecting dignity, respect and hope. One good resource for using person-first language is this manual created by the WGBH Educational Foundation.

Using Activation Warnings

It is important that facilitators use activation warnings as a way to create and sustain equitable and safe learning spaces. Facilitators can use an initial activation warning at the beginning and inform participants as specific content areas are being approached.

Facilitators can do this by providing participants with a statement to prepare them that contains the following information: content which is going to be covered and the length of time it will take to cover it. This will allow participants to make the choice to re-join when the content is covered. An example might be, *"we are going to cover content regarding suicide, it will take approximately 10 minutes, please use the self-care strategies you identified at the beginning of the session to make the decisions that feel right to you."* This reminds them of the strategies that they identified and provides space for voice and choice in their learning.

Integrating Trauma-Informed Care Principles in Learning Spaces

SAMHSA has developed a set of principles to guide trauma-informed work. These principles help guide action and decision making in a trauma-informed setting and can cut across settings to include the learning environment. For the purpose of this section, we will be

covering how they apply in the learning space that you will be holding during the collective learning.

Safety. This is a core principle which includes both physical and psychological safety. Some would argue that learning cannot take place in a setting where one's physical and/or psychological safety felt threatened. For a survivor of trauma, safety is often something that was violated. A facilitator can engender feelings of safety in the following ways:
- Making the physical environment safe and accessible to all of the participants (ex: safe and accessible restrooms for all persons).
- If meeting virtually, thinking through how one can provide digital equity (ex: providing instructions and access on how to access content).
- Using activation warnings and encouraging participants to engage their self-care plan if they feel psychologically unsafe.
- Limiting the discussion of traumatic events and telling war stories.
- Omitting graphic details of traumatic events, providing enough detail to convey information.

Trustworthiness & Transparency. In a learning space, trustworthiness and transparency means maintaining appropriate boundaries and making tasks clear. A facilitator can communicate trustworthiness and transparency in the following ways:
- Being clear in your role as the facilitator and providing appropriate resources for other needs (ex: referring participant to available psychological support, if the need arises, instead of expanding role to be all things to all people).
- Having boundaries and setting clear expectations (ex: time of collective learning is respected).
- Clear communication (ex: preface any activities that might be upsetting or have charged content with an activation warning).
- Follow-through on actions or tasks (ex: providing the materials to support their learning
- Modeling trust (ex: using inclusive language, introducing self with gender pronouns).

Peer support. In a space in which people are coming together to learn about trauma, it is important to draw on peer support. The facilitator team, to the extent possible, should include at least one person with lived experience. This models an orientation towards recovery and peer support. Peer support is voluntary, non-judgmental, empathetic, respectful, requires honest and direct communication, involves mutual responsibility, sharing power and is reciprocal. Modeling this between facilitators and encouraging connection outside of the learning space also models peer support. The following are examples of what this principle looks like in action:
- Using dyads at the beginning of each live learning session to draw on collective wisdom and build community.
- Supporting nonhierarchical learning such that everyone takes part in holding space.
- Creating group norms that all persons can agree to and center humanity and those most affected.
- Examining power dynamics in the group and creating space for voices.

Collaboration & mutuality. Learning is a collaborative process, which is ongoing. Facilitators can increase collaboration and mutuality in the learning space by:
Providing opportunities for participants to interact with one another through small group or dyad discussions
- Share power in the learning space (ex: listening more speaking less, provide spaces for ideas instead of providing answers, be comfortable in ambiguity that comes when people are questioning things).
- Encourage learning examples that come from the group, building on them as you move through material.

Empowerment & choice. A participant who feels empowered in the learning space will be able to absorb and provide more contributions to the environment. The independent material, the material that participants engage on their own time allows for choice in timing and pace of the material. This can also be navigated in the shared, collective, learning space in the following ways:
- Providing opportunities to opt in or out of activities. Sometimes facilitators can take this personally, but it might be a reflection of where the participant is physically or emotionally on any given day.
- Highlighting the reflections of the participants and integrating it into the learning.
- Providing options on how to engage an activity.

Cultural, historical & gender issues. Participants in learning spaces bring their multiple intersecting identities and experiences. It is important that, as a facilitator of a safe and trust-based learning space, one makes room for people's intersecting identities. One can do that in many ways, but here are a few ideas to get you started:
- Acknowledge the power dynamics, and as a facilitator, shift them to ensure that voices which are not typically heard or represented have a space.
- Make learning accessible in all ways – physically and psychologically. Examine the barriers in your environment and actively work to take them down.
- Communicate using language that reflects nuance, lived experience, equity and inclusion. An example is using person-centered language, coming from a place of humble curiosity (not assumptions), challenging language that describes people as homogenous or monolithic, examining stereotypes and microaggressions.

These principles are best supplemented by self-awareness. In understanding ourselves as facilitators of learning, we are better able to navigate these principles in the shared learning space. Being reflective, understanding that healing happens in relationships, can often take away the self-imposed, rigid connection to formulaic learning which has been instilled and modeled in traditional learning spaces.

Take a moment before holding a learning space to reflect on what you want to see and how you can integrate these principles in practice. It may take a slight change in language, or drastic changes to your environment, or be somewhere in between.

Adult Learners

Understanding your audience is important to facilitating a learning space. Adult learners are primarily in charge of his or her own learning, to that end, someone who facilitates learning spaces for adults has a different job from the one who teaches children. These are some basic characteristics in understanding adult learners:

- Need to know why they are learning something
- Learn through doing
- Are problem solvers
- Learn best when the subject is of immediate use
- Prefer social interaction
- Want to use their life experiences in the classroom
- Want to integrate new ideas with existing knowledge

Principles of Adult Learning

Typically, adult learners are motivated to learn when they have a need to know. Providing the connection for how the learning will be useful or can be applied in their work will help them feel connected and purposeful in their learning. Adult learners want to know how their time with you will help them, so they may have questions like:

- What's in it for me?
- Why do I need this information?
- How will I benefit from it?
- How can I make use of it in a practical, real way on the job?
- How will it make me a better worker or professional?

In addition, the adult learner participant will want to feel acknowledged in their experience and all of their previously acquired knowledge. This reflects respect for the participant. Generally, because adults come with experience, they may resent being talked down to, patronized, or ignored. The facilitator can help foster a comfortable, productive learning climate through the attitude they project by:

- Showing respect for the learner's individuality and experience.
- Being sensitive to the language you use so that learners are not inadvertently offended or shutdown.
- Being open to different perspectives.
- Adopting a caring attitude and showing it.

Adapted from the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science Learning Pyramid
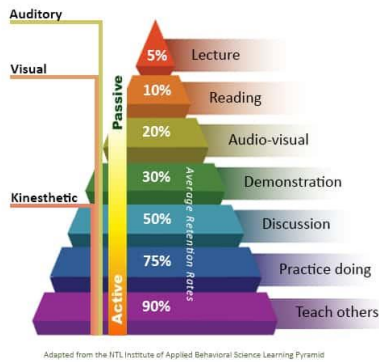
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is important to think about how we learn. As the learning pyramid shows, most learning is retained when there is an opportunity to teach others, or in practice doing. This is active learning. In the collective learning portion, facilitators will be engaging in these active learning practices, not speaking to/lecturing participants. For some, this may feel out of control, uncomfortable or ambiguous. This learning requires unconditional positive regard for the learner and an ability to walk with them in their learning. One method that supports this active learning is called Liberating Structures. Much of the content will rely on interactive learning using these techniques and requires mindful preparation.

Remembering and being aware of the dynamics that accompany adult learning, while engaging active learning strategies, can help facilitators be more successful in providing an inclusive learning experience.

Trauma-Informed Supervision Core Competencies

Understanding that the person facilitating this trauma-informed learning may in fact be a supervisor, it is important to provide information regarding the core competencies that form trauma-informed supervision. This will help not only in the facilitation of this learning, but also in normalizing trauma-informed supervision.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network proposes a set of competencies for supervisors in mental health and cross-system settings. These are the nine competencies proposed by NCTSN which may support your role as both a facilitator of learning and a supervisor:

- Knowledge of the **signs, symptoms, and risk factors** of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and its impact on employees.
- Knowledge of agency **support options**, referral process for employee assistance, or external support resources for supervisees who are experiencing symptoms.
- Knowledge and **capacity to self-assess**, monitor, and address the supervisor's personal experience of STS, Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, Burnout
- Knowledge of how to encourage employees in sharing the emotional experience of doing trauma work in a **safe and supportive** manner.
- Skills to assist the employee in **emotional re-regulation** after difficult encounters; capacity to assess the effectiveness of intervention, monitor progress and make appropriate referrals, if necessary.
- Knowledge of basic **Psychological First Aid** (PFA) or other supportive approaches to assist staff after an emergency or crisis event.
- Ability to **both model—and coach** supervisees in—using a trauma lens to guide case conceptualization and service delivery.
- Knowledge of **resiliency factors** and ability to structure resilience-building into individual and group supervisory activities.
- Ability to distinguish between **expected changes** in supervisee perspectives and cognitive distortions related to indirect trauma exposure.

- Ability to use appropriate self-disclosure in supervisory sessions to enhance the supervisees ability to **recognize, acknowledge, and respond** to the impact of indirect trauma.

Gentle Reminders for Facilitators
This information is adapted from the TIC Curriculum Instructor's Guidance SAMHSA's Trauma-Informed Approach: Key Assumptions and Principles.

Know the difference between "listening" and "learning."
Listening is passive, which means that lecture is the least efficient, least effective form of learning. Listening alone requires very little engagement on the learner's part. Therefore, don't talk more than 10-15 minutes without doing something interactive that stimulates discussion. Offer opportunities for participant interaction when possible, such as by asking questions, including role playing exercises, or breaking into small discussion groups.

Emotions provide the information for building memories.
People remember what they feel far more than what they simply hear or see. Creating learning experiences that are joyful can build a lasting memory.

Acknowledge the power of feelings.
Modulate your tone of voice to accentuate the experience. Allow participants to feel their way through an exercise. Do not tell them what they feel—ask them!

Use stories to engage people in learning.
People don't always remember statistics, but stories are powerful because they engage the participants' emotions. Stories speak directly to the heart and the imagination, so people tend to pay more attention to them. When you share something that others can relate to, you help develop a rapport with the group and engage their emotions, which support the formation of new memories.

It is more important to ask good questions than to supply all the answers.
Facilitators often fail to ask enough questions. Instead, they present solutions, which can leave participants feeling frustrated and interfere with learning. After you ask questions, restate what you have learned from the responses and to ensure that you understood correctly. You can do this by simply restating two or three of the key points you heard from participants.

Have a quick start and a big finish.
Give participants the opportunity to do something active and interesting very early. Do not bog them down with a long introduction. The faster they are engaged, the better. Don't let the learning space fizzle out at the end. Try to end on a high note. Ask yourself, "What were the participants feeling when they left?"

Don't assume that just because you said it, they got it.
Good facilitators know how to slip in repetition in a stealthy learner-directed way, where the material is presented again, but from a different angle. Repetition is a core component of the

web-based modules and can be very effective in supporting the learning and integration of content both in the independent and collective learning.

Be passionate and participants will respond in kind.
Be honest, be authentic, and, especially, be passionate about your message. Your passion will keep them awake. Your passion will be infectious, and it will provide the emotional hook to help people remember the content.

Don't think of yourself as the expert.
It's not about what you do or about what you know; it's about how participants feel about what they can do as a result of the learning experience you created. Rather than think of yourself as the expert, try thinking of yourself as "a person who creates learning experiences ... a person who helps others learn in their journey."

Prepare the Learning Space.
The final consideration to account for is the physical preparation of the room (virtual or in-person) and materials needed. This guide will provide activities which can be modified to meet the organization or system's needs for either virtual or in-person learning spaces. A list of materials will be outlined at the start of each collective learning module.