

# Trauma Informed Approaches



Information and strategies for working with people who have experienced trauma.

When you are interacting with someone who has experienced an event their body codes as traumatic, it's important to know how to interact through a Trauma-Informed lens.

## What is Trauma-Informed care?

Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based approach that acknowledges the impact of trauma on individuals. It emphasizes safety, trust, and collaboration, while also recognizing the potential for re-traumatization. In essence, it's a way of thinking and acting that prioritizes understanding and responding to the effects of trauma, aiming to create supportive and empowering environments.

## Trauma can change a lot...

Trauma can effect our brains in many ways. From creating gaps in memory to changing hormones and moods, trauma responses are often our body's primitive way of attempting to protect us from harm.

## Trauma is individual

Everyone experiences events differently. What one person believes to be a minor incident, another may be deeply impacted. Refrain from judging how you believe someone should be reacting and trust the other person's experience. You might notice change in mood, behaviors, or cognition. This may be someone's first experience with trauma. They may need a bit of orientation to understand how trauma functions and why they might be feeling/acting/thinking differently.

## Normalizing and naming

Helping people understand what they are experiencing can be helpful. It also helps to build trust. When appropriate, try saying:

- “If you have gaps in your memory, know that can be normal... your brain is really smart and is likely trying to protect you from what happened. Let’s do our best to sort out the details.”
- “Sometimes when things like this happen, we can think we’re “going crazy” or “losing our mind”. I want you to know it’s really normal for our minds to work differently while we recover from big things like this.”
- “I know sometimes details can jump around when we’re trying to remember and talk about things. That’s okay. We can try to work through the details together if you’re comfortable with that.”

## Considerations

- Think about tone. Slow down, be “soft”.
- Think about lighting. Soft and low lighting can make things feel better.
- Allow for emotions to be present. This may mean cursing, yelling, laughter/jokes.
- Acknowledge the challenging nature of the conversation.

## Be thinking about options you can provide & assist with

- Ask questions about safety - “Are you feeling safe now?” “Would you like me to call *resource* with you now? - Resource: Police, Housing, Confidential Resources
- Talk about evidence preservation - “It can be helpful to keep any potential evidence so you can continue to make decisions in the future, even if you haven’t decided what you want to do in the future. Would you like me to help connect you to *resource*? - Resource: Hospital/SANE exam
- What other campus/community resources might be helpful?