

# Principles of a Trauma-Informed System

## Understanding Trauma & Stress

Without understanding trauma, we are more likely to adopt behaviors and beliefs that are negative and unhealthy. However, when we understand trauma and stress we can act compassionately and take well-informed steps toward wellness.

## Safety & Stability

Trauma unpredictably violates our physical, social, and emotional safety resulting in a sense of threat and need to manage risks. Increasing stability in our daily lives and having these core safety needs met can minimize our stress reactions and allow us to focus our resources on wellness.

## Cultural Humility & Equity

We come from diverse social and cultural groups that may experience and react to trauma differently. When we are open to understanding these differences and respond to them sensitively we make each other feel understood and equity is advanced.

## Compassion & Dependability

Trauma is overwhelming and can leave us feeling isolated or betrayed, which may make it difficult to trust others and receive support. However, when we experience compassionate and dependable relationships, we reestablish trusting connections with others that foster mutual wellness.

## Collaboration & Empowerment

Trauma involves a loss of power and control that makes us feel helpless. However, when we are prepared for and given real opportunities to make choices for ourselves and our care, we feel empowered and can promote our own wellness.

## Resilience & Recovery

Trauma can have a long-lasting and broad impact on our lives that may create a feeling of hopelessness. Yet, when we focus on our strengths and clear steps we can take toward wellness we are more likely to be resilient and recover.

Understanding Stress and Trauma: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=618JvHIUar8>

**Trauma** – We understand that trauma is common, but experienced uniquely due to its many variations in form and impact.

**Stress** – We understand that optimal levels of positive stress can be healthy, but that chronic or extreme stress has damaging effects.

**Reactions** – We understand that many trauma reactions are adaptive, but that some resulting behaviors and beliefs may impede recovery and wellness.

**Recovery** – We understand that trauma can be overcome effectively through accessible treatments, skills, relationships, and personal practices

Safety and Stability: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XOWz2EG7ek>

**Stability** – We minimize unnecessary changes and, when changes are necessary, provide sufficient notice and preparation.

**Physical** – We create environments that are physically safe, accessible, clean, and comfortable.

**Social-Emotional** – We maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries and manage conflict appropriately in our relationships with others.

Cultural Humility and Equity: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=kqjn7BZAJCU>

**Differences** – We demonstrate knowledge of how specific social and cultural groups may experience, react to, and recover from trauma differently.

**Humility** – We are proactive in respectfully seeking information and learning about differences between social and cultural groups.

**Responsiveness** – We have and can easily access support and resources for sensitively meeting the unique social and cultural needs of others.

Compassion and Dependability: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=873d-KOQERc>

**Compassion** – We strive to act compassionately across our interactions with others through the genuine expression of concern and support.

**Relationships** – We value and seek to develop secure and dependable relationships characterized by mutual respect and attunement.

**Communication** – We promote dependability and create trust by communicating in ways that are clear, inclusive, and useful to others.

Collaboration and Empowerment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhqm5RLX25c>

**Empowerment** – We recognize the value of personal agency and understand how it supports recovery and overall wellness.

**Preparation** – We proactively provide information and support the development of skills that are necessary for the effective empowerment of others.

**Opportunities** – We regularly offer others opportunities to make decisions and choices that have a meaningful impact on their lives.

Recovery and Resiliency: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1\\_dQ7upNm4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1_dQ7upNm4)

**Path** – We recognize the value of instilling hope by seeking to develop a clear path towards wellness that addresses stress and trauma.

**Strengths** – We proactively identify and apply strengths to promote wellness and growth, rather than focusing singularly on symptom reduction.

**Practices** – We are aware of and have access to effective treatments, skills, and personal practices that support recovery and resiliency.

# Leadership Competencies of a Trauma-Informed System

## Trauma-Informed Communication

Focuses on the practice of intentionality about the mode, frequency, and amount of information to offer to others in order to minimize the impact of stress and trauma.

**Examples:**

Connect before correct - Right-sizing information - Framing + Storying  
Offering stabilization: Providing the why's, likely impacts, and what's next

## Inclusive Leadership

Makes space for diversity and difference. Understands power analysis and uses both power building and sharing to create more expansive contexts and communities. Promotes voice and choice. Acknowledges some wounds are results of oppression and must be remedied in relationships and institutions.

**Examples:** Power analysis - Power sharing - Power building - Doing with and not for - Taking multiple perspectives - Participatory management

## Mindfulness & Reflection

Practice of cultivating awareness, contemplation, and deliberation. Long-term focused versus reactive. Creates opportunities for healing in real time and prevents reverting back to former structures and practices that re-produces stress and trauma.

**Examples:** Reflective supervision- Curiosity - Capacity to see & feel without reacting

## Complexity

Awareness of systems thinking and change management. Able to operate in space of uncertainty and ambiguity in order to evolve our systems and structures where there are no pre-defined roadmaps.

**Examples:** Tolerate ambiguity -Synthesize disparate pieces of information - Ability to consider multi-variate inputs simultaneously

## Radical & Critical Inquiry

Capacity to be deeply reflective about one's own self-concept (radical) as well as the institution one leads (critical inquiry).

**Examples:** Critical self awareness -Willingness to challenge assumptions - Humility -Critical Institutional Inquiry about organizational treatments, interventions, and problem formulation.

## Relational Leadership

Values centrality of relationship. Uses relationship and influence more than power and authority to affect change and systems transformation.

**Examples:** Frequent use of appreciation - Whole person consideration - Build cultures of staff connection and shared success - Express and hold emotion and vulnerability- Interact with transparency and trust