

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) at Work



Mental health wellbeing is an important part of overall health and can affect both our personal and professional lives. Experiencing a traumatic event in your past or more recently can cause unexpected and debilitating symptoms which can lead to performance issues and potentially job loss. As an organization, taking a trauma informed care approach can benefit employee health in a number of ways and reduce losses in productivity. Adopting simple changes can help people feel a sense of psychological safety at work so they can get back to doing what they do best.

What is Trauma?

The American Psychological Association defines trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more.

Goals of Trauma Informed Care

- ▶ Understand the widespread effects of trauma
- ▶ Integrate info about trauma into practices and policies
- ▶ Recognize the signs/symptoms of trauma
- ▶ Actively avoid re-traumatization



Practical Changes for a more TIC environment

- **Open Door Policy:** Cultivate the psychological safety for employees to come to you with issues affecting their work; be readily available and non-judgmental.
- **Active Listening:** When conversing, limit distractions, make eye contact, ask open and clarifying questions, summarize, be empathetic. Consider that listening can be more important than speaking at times.
- **Praise, Feedback, & Recognition:** Provide different levels of feedback and recognition to all employees; for someone struggling with their mental health, a simple recognition of their efforts at work can be powerful.
- **Reduce Power Differentials:** Foster more frequent, open and authentic interaction between different organizational levels. Pay special attention to fostering psychological safety in the room.
- **Increase Control:** Give employees choices and preferences. For example, provide options or compromises on preferred working environment. Offer reasonable time off for traumatic events.
- **Neutral Celebrations and Holidays:** Holidays can be painful reminders associated with emotional distress (e.g. loss, grief, holiday stressors). Be thoughtful of the diverse experiences that make up your team.
- **Surveys/Feedback:** Solicit feedback often and share out these results to create a sense of transparency and authenticity. Be open about what changes will be made (if any) based on results.
- **Resources:** Ensure your employees know about resources that are available (free/low-cost counseling programs, crisis hot lines) and revisit these resources a few times a year. || Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741

Symptoms of Trauma (and PTSD)

Symptoms of trauma can manifest in many different ways and can be temporary or long-term, sometimes developing into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Here are some symptoms to look out for:

- Sudden changes in behavior
- Increased irritability or anger
- Avoidance of certain situations or triggers
- Emotional distress
- Emotional numbing



- Chronic anxiety
- Hyper-reactivity
- Depression
- Self-isolation
- Lack of focus
- Negativity