



Facilitator Guide:

Implementing the Trauma-Informed Tips Series



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF
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Implementing the Trauma-Informed Tips Series

Trauma-informed is an approach to **organizational culture** that recognizes how stress affects people, promotes tools and practices to decrease its impact, and encourages opportunities for **safety and connection**. The trauma-informed principles help operationalize this approach by offering a way to translate the key concepts of toxic stress, trauma, and resilience into action. These principles, adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), include the following:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support & mutual self-help
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Strengths-based
- Cultural, historical, and gender humility



Each workshop in the Tips for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach Workshop Series is organized around a trauma-informed principle and offers three practical tips for bring that principle to life. As you lead the facilitation of this series, you will be interacting with a variety of audiences. In addition to the slides and the facilitation notes and resources within the slides, this guide is designed to support you in your role as a facilitator. This guide contains both general facilitation tips as well as advice to support the activities and discussions you'll be leading.

Implementing the Trauma-Informed Tips Series

MATERIALS INCLUDED:

FACILITATOR GUIDE with general facilitator tips and ideas for engaging participants in discussions and activities.

SLIDES with facilitator notes and additional resources.

SAMPLE EMAILS to share with participants after workshops to reinforce tips.

HANDOUT on understanding stress, trauma, and resilience to support a shared language.

VIDEO to support facilitators on how to implement the series.

The facilitator notes offer key points to support the information on the slides and guidance on how to present the information. The notes are a starting point. As you grow more comfortable with the content, you can add personal and professional examples to bring the content to life. You will develop your own preferences and training style as you gain more experience.

The resources provide an expansion of the information offered in the slides. Many of the resources are the source of the content that you will be presenting. You may find it helpful to familiarize yourself with the resources as a way to answer questions or to find additional points that apply to the participants in your audience. Feel free to add more resources as you find them and to share them with your colleagues.

Email support is also provided to reflect the content that was covered in the workshop. You may choose to send the information to participants at once or over a series of weeks. The intention of these email supports is to offer a way to reinforce the concepts and to encourage practice of the skills beyond the initial workshop.

The handout on stress, trauma, and resilience reviews the key concepts behind a trauma-informed approach. One of the foundations of creating a trauma-informed culture is developing a shared language.

The video reviews how these materials can be used to implement this series and also includes an abbreviated sample workshop.



General Facilitation Tips:

These tips are designed to support you in your role as a facilitator in creating safety and connection for both yourself and the participants. They include suggestions on how to put the principles of a trauma-informed approach into action as a facilitator.

- **Send out** information in advance to participants so they know what to expect.
- **Welcome your participants** by name. If the workshop is virtual, invite them to change their display names to reflect their correct name and pronouns and any other information such as location.
- **Connect first!** Before diving into housekeeping or the agenda, include an icebreaker or another opportunity to build group connection.
- **If you are unsure** about the pronunciation of someone's name, ask. **Be aware** of your own biases. When interacting with participants, be careful to not assume marital status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or race/ethnicity.
- **Consider** doing a short grounding/mindfulness practice at the beginning of the training to help regulate yourself and the group and set the tone.
- **Do your best** to stay grounded as the facilitator. It is common to get nervous or forget what you wanted to say during a workshop. Use those moments as opportunities to model self-regulation (e.g., pausing or taking a moment to focus on your breath).
- **If you are meeting** with the same group multiple times, you may want to create agreements such as being present and listening actively for how your training group comes together. Make sure to embody these agreements yourself during the training and revisit them as needed.
- **Remember** that everyone has a different learning style. For example, some people learn verbally, some people learn visually, others learn by doing. Offer different choices when possible.
- If you make a mistake during the training, acknowledge it. **We are all human!**
- **For virtual meetings**, establish guidelines such as muting your microphone when not speaking and using your video when possible.
- **Space out content and activities** that might be stress inducing and stress-reducing. For example, after doing a role play activity, invite people to lead a physical grounding or mindfulness.
- **Build in breaks** for meetings over one hour. Provide food (when possible), encourage people to fidget or doodle if they need with coloring sheets, pipe cleaners, etc.
- **Include a closing activity or ritual** to synthesize learnings and connect as a group before ending the training.
- **Encourage participants** to keep open communication regarding their needs during the training. As you are facilitating conversations about toxic stress and trauma, it is possible for participants to be activated by something that reminds them of a past experience. **Encourage participants to take breaks** as they need to and ask for help, using the agreements as the foundation for normalizing these practices. You may also model how you get into your connection zone if you notice the room becoming activated.
- You may want to **share local community resources** that are available to the audience. This could include an organization's employee assistance program or something more specific like a domestic violence shelter, food bank, a housing resource, a substance abuse recovery program, or something else. **You will know your community and its needs best.**

General Activity Tips:

Activities are used throughout the training to support group interaction, engagement and the application of the learnings. Consider the following general tips related to facilitating activities:

- **Agreements are a collaborative** way to create a cohesive culture. They are not rules but rather guidelines that the group has co-created. Clear is kind, even when the topic is difficult. (For example: addressing oversharing, interruptions, or any timing issues).
- **In a trauma-informed approach**, all parties collaborate and agree on how to show up and participate. There is no retaliation, punitive responses, or reactivity. Communication and connection are the goals in this approach.
- **Encourage, but do not require**, participation. Offer choice regarding participation in activities. For example, you can offer an “I pass” option. All activities should be voluntary.
- **Consider accessibility and cultural concerns.** Some participants will have limitations in how they are willing or able to participate due to mobility. Offer options where possible.
- **When people get nervous**, they may shut down or overshare. One way to help support participants is to agree on a specific number of minutes for each person to share. You may choose to use a stopwatch, an hourglass, a kitchen timer, or your phone timer. The key is creating predictability and offering choice.
- **A number of activities are offered** throughout the training materials. As a facilitator, you can choose which prompts work best for your audience. Participants are also encouraged to explore the activities on their own in the email support.
- **Activities can be led in various ways**, large group discussions, small groups/breakouts, and anonymous sharing. See below for additional tips.
- **It can be helpful to identify** and explore how people reduce stress for themselves in this environment. Techniques like doodling, standing up as needed, taking breaks and stretching are all examples of stress management.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING PARTICIPANTS (IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY) IN DISCUSSION

- **Small groups/breakouts:** Speaking in front of a group of people can be activating for some. Breaking into small group discussions can help facilitate participation by reducing stress and making people feel more comfortable. Make sure you remind participants to identify someone who can take notes and report to the larger group so the wisdom can be shared. When hosting a virtual training, breakout rooms can be a helpful tool.
- **Anonymous participation:** The opportunity to share anonymously can increase a sense of safety for some. In virtual trainings, utilizing a jamboard or menti (or other platforms) to facilitate can support participation. For in-person trainings, post-it notes or questions in a bucket can be used for anonymous sharing. Encourage each person to share two or three notes to contribute to the group discussion.
- **Each person chooses the next person:** To create cohesiveness within the group and to help people learn one another’s names, you may decide that each person has to choose the next person to share (preferably someone they don’t know yet).
- **Alphabetical order:** Whether you start at the beginning, end, or in the middle, this method of engaging team members in communication encourages collaboration and challenges everyone to participate while creating predictability.
- **Brainstorming:** There is no right answer! Although saying anything may evoke anxiety for some, a conversation where everyone says the thing that comes into their mind takes the pressure off of needing to get the correct answer.