



CWI WORKS
POWERING OPPORTUNITY
FOR OLDER ADULTS

Trauma-Informed Care:

Seeing People Through a Human
Lens



When you hear the word trauma,
what comes to mind?



What is Trauma?

- A result of an event or experience that overwhelms a person's ability to cope
- Can lead to unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and physical symptoms like headaches or nausea, and can impact health, learning, and work.
- Trauma is not just the event; it is the lasting effect on how safe we feel, how much we trust, and how we see ourselves and the world.



Triggers



Triggers are reminders of past dangers



Activate survival response: fight, flight, or freeze

[The Impacts of Trauma Animation](#)



What is your stress response?

- A.Fight
 - B.Flight
 - C.Freeze
 - D.Fawn
-

Types of Trauma

Acute Trauma

- Single incident
- *Examples : car accident, assault, natural disaster*

Chronic Trauma

- Repeated exposure to stressors over time
- *Examples: poverty, discrimination*

Complex Trauma

- Prolonged interpersonal harm
- *Examples: domestic violence, childhood abuse and/or neglect*

Collective/Historical Trauma

- A major event experience by a group of individuals or within a community
- *Examples: COVID-19, war, 9/11, mass shootings*

Secondary Trauma

- Indirectly exposed to trauma through close contact with trauma survivor

Effects of Trauma



Physical: Headaches, sleep/appetite changes, illness



Emotional: Fear, anger outbursts, emotional swings



Cognitive: Disorganized thinking, memory issues, detachment



Behavioral: Isolation, substance use, diminished interest

Trauma & Aging

Key Facts

- 90% of older adults have experience trauma
- Life transitions can reactive symptoms
- Aging brain changes affect memory, stress and emotional regulation
- Higher Risk of chronic health conditions

Why It Matters

- Symptoms often underreported or untreated
- May be misattributed to “normal aging”
- Contributes to physical and mental health problems
- Recognizing trauma promotes tailored support

Guiding Principles to Trauma Informed Care



The 4 R's



REALIZE

Trauma is common and affects how people think, feel, and act



RECOGNIZE

Look for signs of trauma and stress responses



RESPOND

Use supportive, trauma-aware practices in all interactions



RESIST

RE-TRAUMATIZATION
Create safety and avoid actions that replicate past harm



Everyday Trauma-Informed Workplace Habits

- Assume trauma is common
- Provide predictability
- Use collaborative language
- Watch for signs of dysregulation
- Normalize boundaries
- Center strengths
- Honor cultural contexts
- Offer empowerment and choice



Looking Through a Trauma Informed Lens

James (58) misses his third appointment and leaves a voicemail saying “Something came up. I don’t need your help anyway.”

Looking Through a Trauma Informed Lens

James (58) misses his third appointment and leaves a voicemail saying “Something came up. I don’t need your help anyway.”

What could possibly be some triggers for James?

- A. Simple forgetfulness
- B. Avoidance of vulnerability
- C. Trust issues from past programs
- D. All the above

Think of a challenging client interaction. How might you reframe their behavior through a trauma informed lens?



Resilience in Older Adults

- Life experience = proven coping toolkit
- Accumulated wisdom from losses overcome
- Adaptive networks: Family, faith, community ties
- Reframing mastery: "I've survived worse"
- Purpose persistence: Still volunteering, caregiving





Building Resilience Daily

- Strong connections
- Reframing challenges
- Self-compassion breaks
- Mindfulness moments
- Purpose routines
- Active coping

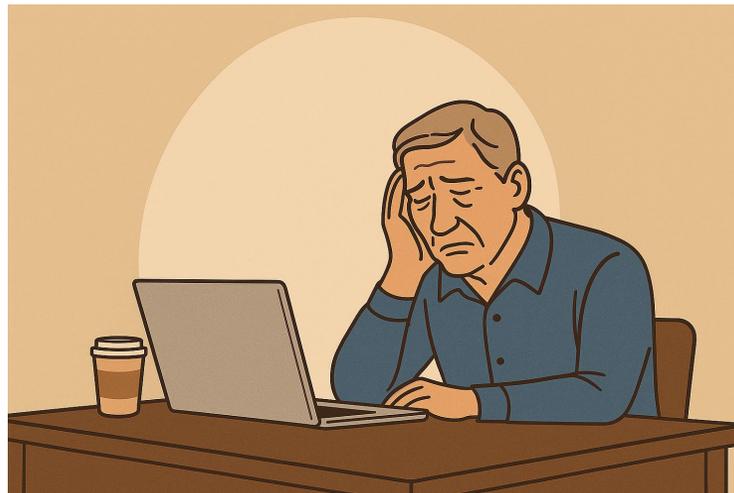
Vicarious Secondary Impact

Compassion Fatigue Signs:

- Irritability or emotional numbness
- Dreading sessions/appointments
- Exhaustion, cynicism, detachment
- Sleep/appetite changes

Self-care basics:

- Scheduled breaks
- Peer debriefs (no fixing)
- Clear and healthy boundaries



Resources

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Thank You!

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