WHAT IS TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE?

This presentation is one of a series developed in the course of a project of the YWCA Toronto in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health, entitled TIDE (Trauma Informed Development and Education). The project has received financial assistance from the Public Health Agency of Canada, however the views expressed within are not necessarily those of PHAC.

The series is intended to support ongoing integration of TIP within the YWCA Toronto and other YWCAs across Canada.
Trauma Informed Practice

- Trauma informed practice (TIP) is a relational approach to service delivery that takes into account how common the experience and enduring effects of trauma are.
- TIP is not a specific counselling technique, instead involves a multi-level, organization-wide approach.
- TIP is not based on disclosing trauma. Instead it can be seen as a “universal precaution” that is offered when working with everyone.
- TIP is a paradigm for service delivery based on principles - creating safety, promoting choice and building skills.
TIP is based on contributions from:

- Decades of work about violence against women and women’s health
- Wisdom from Indigenous scholars and community-based knowledge keepers
- Research from public health on Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Understanding of neurobiology

Connecting paradigms
Trauma Informed Practice as a movement

- TIP has taken the form of a movement: one concerned with changing the way we think about how we provide social and health care services
- TIP means changes at the practice, program, and policy level

TIP leadership and guidance has been developed for/by many settings:
- Schools
- Correctional settings
- Substance use harm reduction and treatment settings
- Mental health settings
- Women’s services and other community based programs
- Child welfare practice
It is important to understand the difference between trauma informed practice and trauma therapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trauma-Informed Practice</th>
<th>Trauma Therapy/Trauma-Specific</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universally-applied framework, outlines an approach to delivering all support and services</td>
<td>Delivered by practitioners who have extensive training and skills in trauma treatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on understanding the impacts of trauma and creating safety</td>
<td>Focuses directly on the trauma experience and on trauma recovery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does NOT require disclosure of trauma experiences</td>
<td>Explores specific experiences of trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes identifying coping strategies and strengthening these strategies and skills</td>
<td>Requires client consent</td>
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**People offering trauma informed services, need to know how to link women to trauma specific services, should women wish to pursue treatment.**
## Misconceptions about TIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common misconceptions</th>
<th>Trauma informed approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assuming everyone who has experienced trauma needs treatment</td>
<td>Assuming people are resilient and giving them many opportunities to tell you what type of help they wish to access</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIP means “letting people do whatever they want, without consequence”</td>
<td>TIP requires clear boundaries; Rights and Responsibilities for engagement are shared with participants and staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIP means addressing people’s trauma</td>
<td>TIP does not specifically address trauma experiences, rather it fosters an environment in which healing and growth are possible</td>
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Principles of TIP

Section 3 discusses how to apply these principles
1. Awareness of the prevalence and effects of trauma by service providers
2. Creating safety and fostering trust when offering services
3. Offering choice and control, fostering collaboration in interactions with service users
4. Focus on strengths and resilience, building skills for coping and wellness/healing
For more info see

- Trauma info sheet

Trauma involves a single experience, or repeated or multiple experiences, that overwhelm a person’s ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved in that experience. People who have experienced trauma often feel overwhelming fear, shame, and powerlessness.

Experiences of trauma in Canada are common - approximately 1 in every 4 Canadians experience trauma in their lifetime. For women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ individuals the rate of experiencing trauma is even higher. Trauma events can have significant impacts on overall health and well-being, particularly if these events occurred in childhood.

This means most YWCA Toronto participants have experienced some form of trauma. For example, many women accessing Shelters programs are fleeing violence; many women accessing employment services are living in poverty, and many girls attending childcare and/or camps have experienced difficult situations at home with their caregivers.

YWCA Toronto has made a commitment to organization-wide trauma-informed approaches. No matter your role at YWCA Toronto, it is important to recognize that these experiences affect the majority of those we serve, and to adjust our approaches so that we best serve the needs of our participants.

Trauma-specific therapy and trauma-informed approaches are different. Trauma therapy is offered by qualified trauma therapists, who provide specific services to individuals focused on their trauma experiences. Trauma-informed approaches acknowledge the prevalence and impacts of trauma, even if trauma has not been discussed. It prioritizes the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of both participants and staff. Working in a trauma-informed way means we work across the YWCA to shift culture, policies, training and awareness to create welcoming services and offer the best environment for staff and participants healing and well-being.

Trauma-informed approaches create safety for everyone in the organization. When we witness or experience violence in our work, it is important to recognize the impact...