An introduction to insidious trauma



Gwendolyn "Gwen" Downing (she/her), LPC Version: May 1, 2024

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Opening:

Acknowledging lived experience, with all the differing degrees, as we proceed, we keep that in mind.

Description:

Insidious trauma is the daily incidents of marginalization, objectification, dehumanization, intimidation, et cetera that are experienced by members of groups targeted by racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, and groups impacted by poverty (VAWnet). This session provides an introduction to the definition and some of the possible impacts, and gives some ideas for what one might be able to do.

Trainer and contact:

Gwendolyn "Gwen" Downing (she/her) Gwen@ConnectAll.online or www.ConnectAll.online

Info, Disclosures, and Disclaimers:

- Any sources used are not endorsements of the source.
- As recognized, information is what it is, and may be constantly evolving.
- Provided for informational purposes only.
- I am the originator and Director of the Connect All initiative, which has 501c3 fiscal sponsorship by We, the World.
- Whatever your role in the child care system, you are first a person.

Self-Care:

- Because this is about insidious trauma, some of the material I cover may create responses in our bodies, behaviors, thoughts, or emotions.
- Even if it wasn't about trauma, we all have internal and external factors, creating responses in our bodies, behaviors, thoughts, or emotions.
- Do whatever you need to.
- Mindfulness-Other section pp 5-8
- Mindful moments: 30 seconds. Whatever works for you. Can help with retention of information and self-care.
- A three-step skill set for self-care YouTube 20 minutes. Description: This video provides an overview of a three-step skill set for self-care, of one's body, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. And then, there is an additional segment with some possible approaches for thoughts, mindfulness, grounding, and resetting/relaxing.
- Help lines and other information

Mindfulness-Other

Possible techniques:

NOTE: Not all techniques work for everyone. And if one works one time, it might not work another time; and vice versa, it might not work then work later.

SBNRR Mindfulness Practice - This can be modified to your needs and time available:

Stop: Stop what you are doing, take the pause, give yourself space. If you need to, use verbal or internal mental cues to do this.

Breathe: Everyone is different. For some, it is helpful to pay attention to your breath and take a moment to breathe in whatever way works for you. For others, you might need a different or combined approach, including skipping and going to Notice. For anyone, you might need to try different approaches at different times.

Notice: Notice what is going on in your body, behaviors, thoughts, emotions. You are not judging yourself, just notice what is going on.

Reflect: Where is this coming from? Why am I thinking/feeling this? Why am I doing this? Any other curious questions that help clarify the source. Remember interaction of body, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

Respond: What is the best way to respond to this and move forward? Again, use whatever questions might help you.

5-4-3-2-1 practice - In your mind, out loud, or written:

- 5 things I can see
- 4 things I can touch
- 3 things I can hear
- 2 things I can smell
- 1 thing I can taste

Mental – Physical – Soothing Grounding - Healthline: <u>30 Grounding Techniques to Quiet Distressing Thoughts</u> (https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques)

A few examples:

Mental: List as many things in a category as you can. Alphabetically list a category. Do math/number exercises. Go through anchoring facts.

Physical: Touch something. Breathing exercise. Physical activity. Use your 5 senses.

Soothing: Think of a face/voice/thing/place that soothes you. Talk yourself kindly through it. List positive things.

SOS Technique - Developed by Julian Ford:

- Slow down Slow down or stop; as needed, connect to body, and let mind clear.
- Orient Pay attention to where you are, what you are doing, who you are with, what's important.
- Self-check How stressed or calm you are in the moment *and* how in control or dysregulated you are.

30 second body scan meditation:

This 30-Second Exercise Can Reduce Your Anxiety Significantly (It's True – We've Tried!)

(https://youaligned.com/body-scan-meditation/)

- 1. Get comfortable
- 2. Find your breath
- 3. Become the observer
- 4. Notice even more
- 5. Give yourself permission to relax

Example other approaches:

- **Thoughts:** Check for values alignment. Check for accuracy. Replace them. Let go. Think about or do something else. Make a plan. Express them/do something creative. Talk to someone.
- **Do a blend of mindfulness and physical**. While stretching, walking, so on: What's the closest/farthest sound I hear? What's the closest/farthest thing I see? What's the loudest/quietest sound? How relaxed/tense? So on.
- Physical and empty mind. Maybe focus on the movement or your breath as needed.
 - These stretches may be good for times like mini breaks: 4 Quick Stretches to Do If You've Been
 Sitting in the Car for Hours (https://www.self.com/gallery/sos-stretch-long-car-ride)
- Physical and sing, talk nonsense, recite a poem, so on.
- Relax physically and mentally. Slump, stretch out, curl up, let your mind empty, let your mind wander...
- Total stillness

Mindful Breathing Exercise: Mindful Breathing Exercise - YouTube

Possibly helpful apps:

NOTE: Some things to consider when using hotlines or mental health/wellness apps/online services.

- How do they protect my privacy? Are there steps I can take to protect my privacy?
- Are they ethical in their practices?
- What is the benefit/cost/risk of using them?

<u>PTSD Coach</u> (https://mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach): By the Veterans Administration, is for anyone experiencing Post Traumatic Stress, or wanting to know more to help someone else.

WYSA stress: Depression & anxiety therapy chatbot app (has free option).

<u>Moving forward</u> (https://www.veterantraining.va.gov/movingforward/): By the Veterans Administration, is for anyone coping with stressful problems.

<u>Woebot - Your Self-Care Expert</u> (https://woebothealth.com/): Helps with an array; everyday stresses and challenges, symptoms of depression and addiction.

Mindfulness: Headspace, Insight Timer, Mindfulness Coach, 10% Happier

Other: Provider Resilience, ACT coach, Virtual Hope Box, Well Body Coach, CALMapp

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Adapted SBNRR Mindfulness Practice

This can be modified to your needs and time available.

Stop: Stop what you are doing, take the pause, give yourself space. If you need to, use verbal or internal mental cues to do this.

Breathe: Everyone is different. For some, it is helpful to pay attention to your breath and take a moment to breathe in whatever way works for you. For others, you might need a different or combined approach, including skipping and going to Notice. For anyone, you might need to try different approaches at different times.

Notice: Notice what is going on with your body, behaviors, thoughts, emotions. You are not judging yourself, just notice what is going on.

Awareness of My Body, Behaviors, Thoughts, Emotions

- **Body:** What's happening in my body, from the top of my head to my toes? Am I warm, cold; relaxed, tense; numb, stiff, achy; tired, wired; thirsty, hungry; have a headache; and so on?
- **Behaviors:** What are my behaviors? What are my behaviors communicating to myself or/and others about how I'm doing?
- **Thoughts:** What are my thoughts? Am I present? Thinking about something I'm excited about, something that is bothering me? Any change from my normal? Are they accurate? Line up with my values? So on
- Emotions: What am I feelings? Calm? Happy? Stressed? Furious? Anxious? Need to escape? "Spaced out"? Disconnected? Withdrawn? Bored? Numb? Confident? Proud? Surprised? Embarrassed? Nervous? Indifferent? Envious? Compassionate? So on.

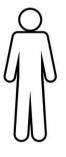
Reflect: Where is this coming from? Why am I thinking/feeling this? Why am I doing this? Any other curious questions that help clarify the source. Remember interaction of body, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

Explore possible sources, for what I am aware of in my body, behaviors, thoughts, emotions

Can I determine the source(s)? What's my best guess, if I can make one?

Personal factors (Internal) examples

- Personality
- Intelligence
- · Physical ability
- Preferences
- My choices
- Medical
- Mental health
- A need, e.g., hungry, tired
- Disability



Circumstances (External) examples

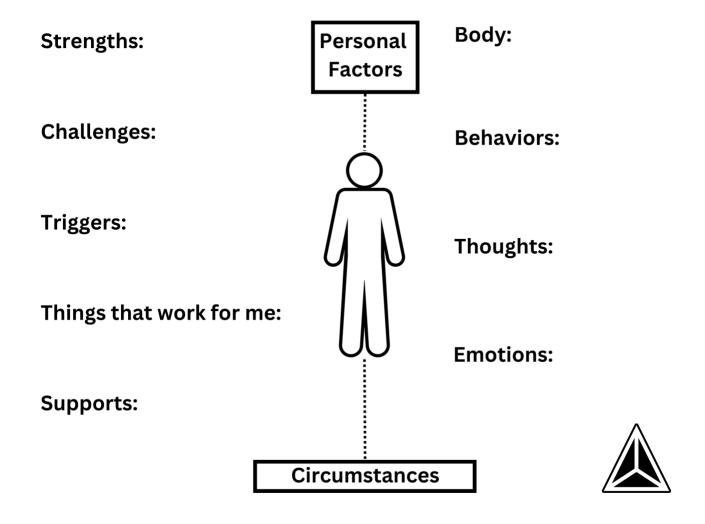
- Groups: e.g., peer, work, school
- Societal: globally, nation, state, town, neighborhood, etc
- Physical environment
- Postive stress
- Negative stress
- Trauma
- Medical treatment

Respond: What is the best way to respond to this? Again, use whatever questions might help you.

Explore possible approaches for what I am aware of in my body, behaviors, thoughts, emotions

- Is there something I can do/try about the source?
- Is there something I can do/try about the response?
- Is there anything else I can do/try?

Sometimes all we can do is try things.



What is insidious trauma?

The three Es of trauma (SAMHSA, 2023):

■ Individual trauma results from an **Event**, series of events, or a set of circumstances

that an individual Experiences as physically, mentally, or emotionally harmful or life

threatening

and that may have lasting adverse Effects on the individual's functioning and mental,

physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Insidious trauma:

The daily incidents of marginalization, objectification, dehumanization, intimidation, et cetera

that are experienced by members of groups targeted by racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism,

sexism, and other forms of oppression, and groups impacted by poverty. (VAWnet, n.d.)

Some of the terms:

Marginalization: to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

Objectification: to treat as an object.

Dehumanization: to deprive someone of human qualities, personality, or dignity; to subject.

someone to inhuman or degrading conditions or treatment; to address or portray someone in a

way that obscures or demeans that person's humanity or individuality.

Intimidation: to make timid or fearful; especially to compel or deter by or as if by threats.

Oppression: unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power.

Insidious trauma questions ©2022-2024 Gwendolyn Downing

Questions about possible experiences one might have had or/and are having:

Have you ever? (To the right) Because of? (Below)	Been afraid of what might happen (including what might not happen)?	Had others act in a way you didn't like (e.g., be mean, avoid you, not care)?	Experienced any other injury of any type (e.g., bad water, bad air, no food, bad food, not getting any type of care you need, disasters)?
How much money you don't/do have			
The color of your skin, or anything about your physical appearance, that others would identify as part of a racial/ethnic group(s)			
Where you live now or/and lived before			
You appear male, female, other			
You have, or look like you have, a disability (acknowledging the issues regarding the word "disability" for some areas it's applied to)			
Your age or the age you appear			
The way you dress or/and make your physical appearance, that would identify you as part of a group(s)			
What gender(s) you are sexually attracted to			
Other			

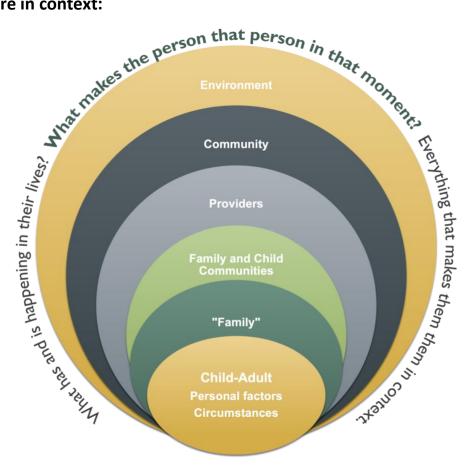
Reflection areas:
You
Individuals in your life
Others, including those you work with/for
Questions:
While going through the definition(s), what was something significant to you?
While going through the reflection, what was something significant to you?
What is one way you think insidious trauma applies to your work?

Possible impacts of insidious trauma

Not everyone all the time:

Everyone has their personal factors and circumstances; in which there are intrinsic, adaptive, and protective factors. And even if it appears to be happening, trajectory isn't determination.

Who we are in context:



- Strengths
- Protective factors
- Historical trauma
- Inter-generational trauma
- Daily life stress
- Burnout
- Adversity
- Past or/and current trauma: Direct; Indirect; Acute; Chronic; Complex; Insidious; Collective, organizational, community; Vicarious; Secondary traumatic stress

Social Determinants of Health example

Social Determinants of Health





https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health

Examples of SDOH include:

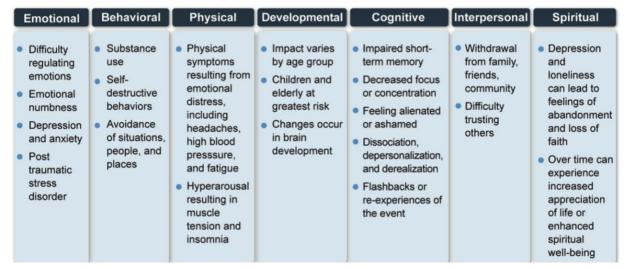
- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities
- Polluted air and water
- Language and literacy skills

Insidious trauma with the SDOH:

Insidious trauma with child care as a SDOH:

Impact of trauma on individuals:

Impact of Trauma on Individuals



https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/practical-guide-implementing-trauma-informed-approach

Allostatic load:

Allostasis is the process by which the body responds to stressors to regain homeostasis. Allostatic load/overload is the related effects in the body, from repeat or chronic stress. Original term from Bruce S McEwen and Eliot Stellar, 1993

Weathering:

Chronic exposure to experiences like racism, can lead to earlier health deterioration; both earlier health conditions (morbidity) and earlier death (mortality).

Original term from Arline Geronimus, 1992

Moral distress and secondary traumatic stress – insidious trauma

Adapted from: National Child Traumatic Stress Network's learning center: Cuellar, R., Hendricks, A., Clarke, M., Sprang, G., & the NCTSN Secondary Traumatic Stress Collaborative Group. (2021). Secondary Traumatic Stress: Understanding the Impact on Professionals in Trauma-Exposed Workplaces. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Moral Distress

"Stress that occurs when one believes they know the right thing to do, but institutional or other constraints make it difficult to pursue the desired course of action."

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

- Symptoms similar to, and at its most severe meet the criteria for, PTSD from being indirectly exposed to another person's direct traumatic experience(s).
- Can impact children/youth and adults.

Moral distress, STS, and insidious trauma

- Connected to my child, my child's friend, my partner, my friend, my colleague, etc
- Working with any formal role, including volunteer
- The daily incidents of marginalization, objectification, dehumanization, intimidation, et
 cetera, experienced by those I'm connected to/work with, can create moral distress or STS.
- One may be both personally experiencing insidious trauma (outside of or/and at work)- as
 well as any moral distress/STS from those they're connect to/working with.
- If any part(s) of my identity/circumstance is part of the group that can experience insidious trauma, I may have additional vulnerabilities, such as:
 - Identification with individuals of a similar identity(ies) or with similar experiences.
 - Being asked/feeling compelled to contribute expertise about my marginalized identity(ies).
 - Having a greater load than others.
 - Higher workloads and being asked to take on additional responsibilities.
 - Work specific Lack of safety or support in their agency.

Reflections:

- If experiencing insidious trauma outside/at work + moral/STS from insidious trauma -possible impacts in creating safety for others?
- If experiencing moral/STS from insidious trauma -- possible impacts in creating safety for others?
- Think about a caregiver, with either of the above -- possible impacts in creating safety for a child?

Questions:

What was significant to you?

Thoughts on how being aware of the possible impacts, might be a stressor?

Thoughts on how this ties to creating physical and psychological safety, for ourselves and others?

How much hope there is in us doing better, as individuals and a society.

What can WE individually do?

Example possibilities

- **Start with ourselves** Examine own biases, blind spots, behaviors, so on -- Even if you are experiencing insidious trauma, there might be areas you unknowingly contribute.
- **Include a lens of** "How might insidious trauma be a source/contributing source to what this individual is experiencing/exhibiting?" Also, the personal application.
- Practice the best self-care we can Learn more, or be more intentional, about self-care, including ways to mitigate STS; Reach out for help, as safe to do so.
- Learn more about the issue
- Create awareness help others understand the issue, possible impacts, things to do.
- Advocate for change if possible, search for partners who are already doing advocacy work, and team up for greater impact.
 - Consider your role in where the field/profession is going.
- Incorporate into the work you are already doing e.g., part of a group, such as parent, neighborhood, business, so on; or you're part of a specific initiative, like trauma informed change or DEI/similar efforts.
- Safety Think of insidious trauma's interplay with creating physical and psychological safety
 in Environment, Practice, and Policy home, business, neighborhood, system, field of work,
 agency, role(s), so on
 - Question things What insidious trauma sources are present in our (fill in the blank)? What is the evidence based, based on?
 - Role(s) presentations/trainings, administration, research, supervision
 - Set up location, hours, costs, languages, honoring distrust of systems and system
 created biases against services
 - Accessibility physical set up, materials
 - o **Pragmatics** transportation, child-care
 - Culture self-care, supportive, interactions with colleagues

The child care system and insidious trauma

Mental health field	Child care system
The field's role in:	The system's role in:
Creating/perpetuating in general	■ Discrimination in the system –
population	services specific
Discrimination in the field, tied to	Discrimination in the system -
research, screening, assessment,	towards those working within the
treatment	system or trying to
Discrimination in the field toward	Impacting the whole system of care
those working within the field or	for children and families
trying to	The system's role in:
Impacting the whole system of care,	Solutions and healing
such as in access to and set up of	
services	
The field's role in:	
Solutions and healing	

	Physical Safety	Psychological Safety
Environment		
Practice		
Policy		

Things we are already doing well

Things we know we could do/try differently

Things we want to think/talk/ask/learn more about

Onus



For those who need this,
Gwendolyn Downing and Shannon Crossbear

Question:

What is one thing you are going to do/thinking about doing – new, more, differently?

Closing:

<u>The Monkey Business Illusion, Daniel J. Simons – YouTube</u> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)

What are we missing with insidious trauma?

- Blind spots for what is known.
- What are some sources of insidious trauma, "we" might not recognize yet?

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Bibliography notes:

- I may not have read/watched all, but of those I didn't, at least thought they should be considered.
- This bibliography was compiled for other insidious trauma trainings I have.

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Appendix A: Sources for self-care and secondary traumatic stress

<u>CalTrin (California Training Institute)</u> (https://www.caltrin.org/)

- <u>CalTrin Self-Paced Courses</u>
 - o Understanding Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Traumatic Stress
 - o Strategies for Addressing Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Traumatic Stress
- CalTrin Training Archive
 - o <u>Secondary Traumatic Stress and Reflective Practice/Supervision</u>
 - o Trauma, Compassion Fatigue & Secondary Traumatic Stress
 - Organizational Strategies: Addressing Compassion Fatigue & Secondary
 Traumatic Stress

Secondary Traumatic Stress Consortium – free resources

(https://www.stsconsortium.com/free-resources)

<u>Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center – Secondary Traumatic Stress Resources</u>
(https://www.srcac.org/reflect-refuel-reset/)

<u>University of Kentucky Center on Trauma and Children's Secondary Traumatic Stress</u>
<u>Innovations and Solutions Center</u> (https://ctac.uky.edu/projects-and-programs/secondary-traumatic-stress-innovations-and-solutions-center-sts-isc)

Staying Inside the Window of Tolerance: An Advanced Training on Secondary Traumatic
 Stress and Resiliency

<u>Using the Secondary Traumatic Stress Core Competencies in Trauma-Informed Supervision - NCTSN</u> (https://www.nctsn.org/resources/using-secondary-traumatic-stress-core-competencies-trauma-informed-supervision)

<u>Virtual Calming Room - Sacramento City Unified School District</u>

(https://calmingroom.scusd.edu/): Has strategies and tools for students, families, and staff.

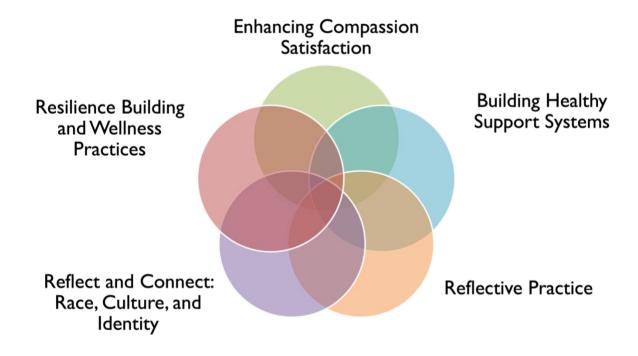
NOTE: Some things to consider when using hotlines or mental health or/and wellness, apps or/and online services.

- How do they protect my privacy? Are there steps I can take to protect my privacy?
- Are they ethical in their practices?
- What is the benefit/cost/risk of using them?

Example of "Recommended strategies to mitigate STS" from NCTSN

<u>Secondary Traumatic Stress: Understanding the Impact on Professionals in Trauma-Exposed</u>

<u>Workplaces.</u> National Child Traumatic Stress Network's learning center.



Enhancing compassion satisfaction:

We all have bad days at work, but there are also moments that remind us why we do this work.

- Think about a rewarding moment at your job.
- What are 3 things that you love/enjoy about your job?
- Think about 5 people whose lives you've touched.
- Why did you take your current job?
- What are 3 compliments you have received from your co-workers, or 3 things you think you
 do well?

Building healthy support systems:

- Form or attend a process/consult group.
- Ask to take a walk and/or debrief with a co-worker.
- Leave a note of gratitude for a co-worker.
- Give a compliment or praise for a job well done.
- Share "moments of grace & goosebumps" with your team.
- Eat lunch together, go for a coffee/tea break, or bring snacks to a meeting.
- Tell a joke/funny story or show photos to a co-worker.

Reflective practice:

- What are your most salient signs and symptoms of work distress? When are you most likely to notice these come up, and when could you take stock on a regular basis?
- What client encounters or histories/stories tend to bring up strong emotions and reactions in you? How might this connect to your own history, family norms, or personal vulnerabilities? How might this influence or change your interactions with clients/situations that tend to activate these "hot or soft spots" for you? What has helped you to respond effectively in the past?
- What emotions tend to be most difficult for you to feel during the work day (with clients or co-workers)? How might this relate to the way emotions were handled in your own family of origin (e.g., which emotions were "allowed" or not) or from other key influences?

Reflective practice with co-workers, low-impact debriefing:

- Have conversations in private.
- Engage in Low-Impact Processing with co-workers when you feel stuck or ruminative.
 - 1. Self-Awareness
 - 2. Fair Warning
 - 3. Consent
 - 4. Limited Disclosure (avoid "sliming" your co-workers!)
- Refrain from one-upmanship when describing trauma or workplace stressor stories.

Reflect and Connect: Race, Culture, and Identity

Consider your own identities. How do your identities influence...

- ...the way you see the world?
- ...the way you see your work?
- ...the way you understand the children and families with whom you work?

Check in with yourself...

- When you think about your work and your community, how do you feel?
- How do factors related to your identities contribute to your resilience and/or your experience of STS?
- Do you have someone to talk to about how you are feeling?

Connect with others to build mutual support around how your identities, cultures, race, and history may affect your responses to your work.

- Informal, supportive discussions with peers
- Regular peer processing groups
- Peer support and/or mentorship outside of your organization

Seek out and participate in traditional, cultural, and community healing, ceremonies, and supports.

Be honest and real about current injustices and challenges while also holding space for idealism, hope, and building change for future generations.

Appendix B: Sources for trauma-informed approaches

Physical and psychological safety in Environment, Practice, and Policy

Trauma-Informed Approaches

SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach 2014

(https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884) This manual introduces a concept of trauma and offers a framework for becoming a trauma-informed organization, system, or service sector. The manual provides a definition of trauma and a trauma-informed approach, and offers 6 key principles and 10 implementation domains.

SAMHSA's Practical Guide for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach 2023

(https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/practical-guide-implementing-trauma-informed-approach) This practical guide updates and expands the discussion presented in SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach Resource from 2014. The primary goal of this guide is to provide implementation strategies across multiple domains based on the original publication.

Considerations

Older Adults' Equity Collaborative's Equity Assessment Checklist

(https://resourcelibraryadmin.nyam.org/resource-library/oaec-equity-checklist/)
This equity self-assessment aims to help agencies determine how effectively they are supporting communities of greatest social need (GSN). It also aims to aid in identifying areas of growth. To get started, mark the boxes next to the actions your agency or team is taking to be more inclusive to this range of service recipients. Please note that this is not an all-encompassing list of items necessary to serve GSN clients in your communities.

Communities of Greatest Social Need (GSN) include: Black; Latino; Indigenous and Native American; Asian American and Pacific Islander; other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; and persons who live in rural areas.

<u>SAMHSA TIP 59: Improving Cultural Competence</u> (https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/tip-59-improving-cultural-competence)

<u>United Spinal Association's Disability Etiquette, Tips On Interacting With People With Disabilities</u> (https://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf)