



Leading from a Trauma Informed Lens

Leading from a trauma-informed lens involves understanding the impact of trauma on individuals and communities and integrating this understanding into leadership practices. Given the health disparities and inequities faced by tribal communities, leaders within these communities must prioritize trauma-informed approaches. These communities often confront unique challenges that increase their vulnerability to trauma. Therefore, leaders must actively address these issues to support healing and resilience among their people.

Here are some best practices for leading from a trauma-informed perspective.

1. Education and awareness.

Leaders should educate themselves and their teams about the prevalence and effects of trauma. This includes understanding how trauma can manifest in behaviors, relationships, and mental health.

2. Creating safe environments.

Trauma survivors often feel triggered or unsafe in certain environments. Leaders should strive to create physically and emotionally safe spaces where individuals feel respected, heard, and supported.

3. Building trust and rapport.

Trust is essential for individuals who have experienced trauma. Leaders should prioritize building trusting relationships with team members by demonstrating empathy, consistency, and transparency.

4. Empowerment and choice.

Trauma can strip individuals of their sense of control. Leaders should empower team members by providing opportunities for autonomy, decision-making, and self-advocacy.

5. Avoiding re-traumatization.

Leaders should be mindful of their words and actions to avoid inadvertently re-traumatizing individuals. This includes refraining from judgment, minimizing triggers, and respecting boundaries.

6. Flexibility and adaptability.

Trauma survivors may have unique needs and challenges. Leaders should be flexible and adaptable in their approach, accommodating individual differences, and providing personalized support.

7. Collaboration and partnership.

Leaders can foster a sense of community and belonging by promoting collaboration and partnership among team members. Encouraging peer support networks and mutual aid can help individuals feel connected and supported.

8. Self-Care and wellness.

Leading from a trauma-informed lens also involves prioritizing self-care and wellness for oneself and team members. Leaders should model healthy coping strategies, encourage work-life balance, and provide access to resources for mental health support.

9. Continuous learning and improvement.

Trauma-informed leadership is an ongoing process of learning and growth. Leaders should seek feedback, reflect on their practices, and continuously strive to improve their understanding and response to trauma.

10. Advocacy and social justice.

Trauma is often interconnected with broader social issues such as inequality, discrimination, and violence. Leaders can advocate for policies and practices that address the root causes of trauma and promote social justice and equity.

By integrating these best practices into their leadership approach, individuals can create environments that support healing, resilience, and empowerment for trauma survivors and promote the well-being of all team members.