

Trauma Informed System (TIS) Core Principles & Suggested Competencies

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Understanding Trauma & Stress

Without understanding trauma, we are more likely to adopt behaviors and beliefs that are negative and unhealthy. However, when we understand trauma and stress we can act compassionately and take well-informed steps toward wellness.

1. *Trauma* – We understand that trauma is common, but experienced uniquely due to its many variations in form and impact.
2. *Stress* – We understand that optimal levels of positive stress can be healthy, but that chronic or extreme stress has damaging effects.
3. *Reactions* – We understand that many trauma reactions are adaptive, but that some resulting behaviors and beliefs may impede recovery and wellness.
4. *Recovery* – We understand that trauma can be overcome effectively through accessible treatments, skills, relationships, and personal practices.

Compassion & Dependability

Trauma is overwhelming and can leave us feeling isolated or betrayed, which may make it difficult to trust others and receive support. However, when we experience compassionate and dependable relationships, we reestablish trusting connections with others that foster mutual wellness.

1. *Compassion* – We strive to act compassionately across our interactions with others through the genuine expression of concern and support.
2. *Relationships* – We value and seek to develop secure and dependable relationships characterized by mutual respect and attunement.
3. *Communication* – We promote dependability and create trust by communicating in ways that are clear, inclusive, and useful to others.

Safety & Stability

Trauma unpredictably violates our physical, social, and emotional safety resulting in a sense of threat and need to manage risks. Increasing stability in our daily lives and having these core safety needs met can minimize our stress reactions and allow us to focus our resources on wellness.

1. *Stability* – We minimize unnecessary changes and, when changes are necessary, provide sufficient notice and preparation.
2. *Physical* – We create environments that are physically safe, accessible, clean, and comfortable.
3. *Social-Emotional* – We maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries and manage conflict appropriately in our relationships with others.

Collaboration & Empowerment

Trauma involves a loss of power and control that makes us feel helpless. However, when we are prepared for and given real opportunities to make choices for ourselves and our care, we feel empowered and can promote our own wellness.

1. *Empowerment* – We recognize the value of personal agency and understand how it supports recovery and overall wellness.
2. *Preparation* – We proactively provide information and support the development of skills that are necessary for the effective empowerment of others.
3. *Opportunities* – We regularly offer others opportunities to make decisions and choices that have a meaningful impact on their lives.

Cultural Humility & Responsiveness

We come from diverse social and cultural groups that may experience and react to trauma differently. When we are open to understanding these differences and respond to them sensitively we make each other feel understood and wellness is enhanced.

1. *Differences* – We demonstrate knowledge of how specific social and cultural groups may experience, react to, and recover from trauma differently.
2. *Humility* – We are proactive in respectfully seeking information and learning about differences between social and cultural groups.
3. *Responsiveness* – We have and can easily access support and resources for sensitively meeting the unique social and cultural needs of others.

Resilience & Recovery

Trauma can have a long-lasting and broad impact on our lives that may create a feeling of hopelessness. Yet, when we focus on our strengths and clear steps we can take toward wellness we are more likely to be resilient and recover.

1. *Path* – We recognize the value of instilling hope by seeking to develop a clear path towards wellness that addresses stress and trauma.
2. *Strengths* – We proactively identify and apply strengths to promote wellness and growth, rather than focusing singularly on symptom reduction.
3. *Practices* – We are aware of and have access to effective treatments, skills, and personal practices that support recovery and resiliency.