

**NIWRC Advocacy Curriculum:
Violence Against Native Women:
Root Causes, Dynamics & Trauma-informed Advocacy**

**SESSION 6:
Trauma-Informed Approaches &
Advocacy**

*Slides have been edited for virtual presentation by the
Tribal Law and Policy Institute*

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Trauma-Informed Approaches and Advocacy

1. Trauma and Domestic Violence: Framing the Issues
2. What Is a Trauma-Informed Approach?
3. Responding to Trauma - What Helps
4. Self-Healing & Secondary Trauma



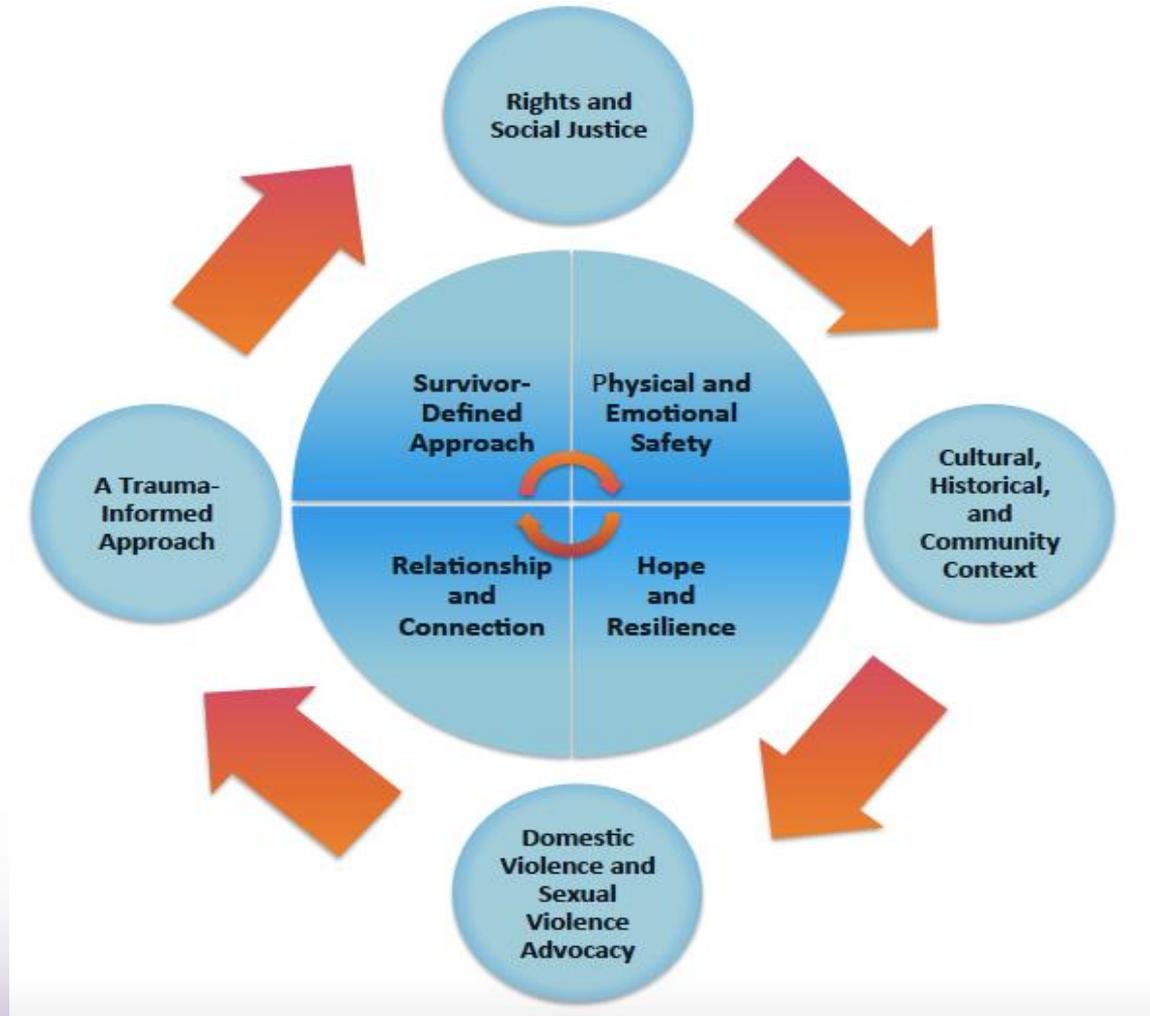
1. Trauma & Domestic Violence: Framing the Issues

Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Describe the different lenses that frame the issues of violence & principles central to advocacy
- Describe resilience
- Describe how understanding the dynamics of trauma impacts our responses

Our Work is Informed by Understanding Connections



National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health



- Without a domestic violence lens, services can be endangering
- Without a trauma lens, services can be retraumatizing
- Without a culture lens, services may not be relevant or helpful
- Without a human rights lens, services may be oppressive and/or inaccessible
- Without a social justice lens, we would not be engaged in social change

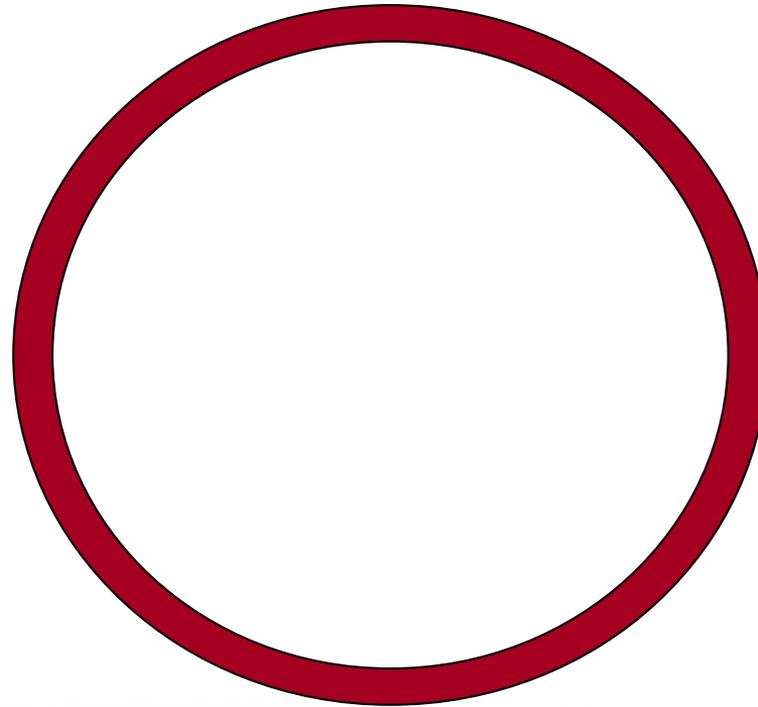
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Advocates view their role through all these lenses.



Indigenous Culture

Respect
Compassion
Equity
Equality
Connection
Relationships
Balance
Spirituality



Root of Non-violence: Natural Belief System



2. What Is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Define “trauma-informed”
- Describe basic principles of trauma-informed responses
- Describe trauma-informed responses from a culturally-based perspective

What Do We Mean by Trauma-Informed?



- Understanding the [neurobiology], pervasiveness and impact of trauma
- Mitigating and transforming those effects
 - Minimizing retraumatization
 - Supporting healing, resilience and well-being
 - Attending to the impact on providers and organizations
- Addressing the underlying conditions that produce abuse, violence and oppression
- Embodying in our lives and our work the world we want to create



Trauma-Informed Approach

- Normalizes human responses to trauma
- Supports healing
- Minimizes revictimization
- Shifts our understanding of symptoms from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”
- Recognizes symptoms as survival strategies
- Recognizes the importance of understanding the meaning people make of their experiences
- Actively honors survivor- and woman-centered and gender-inclusive approaches, voices and expertise

How Does Being Trauma Informed Help our Victim Advocacy?



We Can....

- **Understand survivors' responses in context**
- **Respond in more helpful and empathic ways**
- **Offer more effective interventions**
- **Understand our own responses and their potential impact and need for organizational support**
- **Recognize role of social context and coercive control**

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Culturally-based Responses Are Trauma-Informed



Indigenous culture provides us with understanding:

- We Heal as a Collective - we heal together!
- Identity and sense of belonging
- Experiences with discrimination and oppression
- The meaning we give our experiences
- Beliefs and traditions we draw upon
- Identifying our individual gifts and strengths is necessary for individual transformation & healing
- Identifying our traditional/cultural gifts and strengths is necessary for healing & transformation as individuals, families and nations



Indigenous Culture and Spirituality are about Relationships

- We Are All Related
- Values: respect, generosity, privacy and humility; spiritual realities.
- How we refer to each other matters, i.e., relative names vs. titles and labels.
- Safety





Key Factors to Consider in Building a Trauma-Informed Response

- Understanding the neurobiology of trauma/ violence
- Necessity of making relationships/ connections as individuals
- Trust- worthiness
- Confidentiality & Respect for Privacy
- Maintain Survivor Sense of Control
- Emotional Safety
- Respond to Challenges People Face, Not Labels
- Screen In, Not Out
- Critical Thinking About Who's Needs Are Being Met
- Priorities of Safety & Accountability
- Safety Planning As Process, Not Product
- Allow for Time

3. Responding to Trauma - What Helps



Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Illustrate ways and need to increase self-awareness
- Describe advocates role in developing trauma-informed responses
- Describe trauma-informed techniques and approaches that are culturally-based
- Describe the possible range of responses from survivor's view
- Describe trauma-informed environments and ways to provide emotional safety & skill building
- List possible helpful questions and interventions; how to make distinctions



**Policy and procedure
matter,
but may have little or no
impact if there isn't a
connection, trust or safety.**

Patti Bland



“Somebody wanted to show me support, listen to me, not yell at me, not scream at me, just look at some options instead of that. Through them showing love to me, I began to love myself. I didn't deserve the punishment for all that had happened in my life. The continuous bad relationships, continuous abusing the drugs, and shame and the guilt I felt from all that. I deserved better. It was also OK to feel that way from all that.”



“They were right there for me”



Our roles as Relatives are essential to non-violence, accountability and healing.

SAFETY is integral.

What have we been taught as Indigenous people about how to treat our Relatives?

Visitors in our homes?

Self-Awareness



Awareness of our own experiences with trauma, how we are affected by the work, and how we may be affecting others.

- Self-reflection
- Attention to what helps you stay balanced, focused, caring, and effective
- Willingness to do the “self-work”
- Valuing our experiences, survival skills, strengths

Preparation for our Role As Advocates



- Accurate information; continuing education
- Self –Reflection – awareness of own bias, assumptions, etc.
- Recognize professional power
- Ability to foster control, choice & connections
- Ability to validate fears, anger etc. – avoid personalizing
- Environment – calm, safe, welcoming
- Respond – Don't react
- Meet people where they are
- Look for & acknowledge, courage, strengths, survival skills
- Transparency; avoid surprises; explain
- Believe
- Actively earn trust



In Our Advocate's Role



- Be prepared
- Prioritize safety including confidentiality.
- Screen In/ Not Out. Policies, procedures and environment that are trauma-informed & woman/survivor-centered. Americans with Disabilities Act & Fair Housing Act compliant.
- Go slow as possible.
- Meet basic needs.
- Safety planning begins when we meet.

In Our Advocate's Role continued



- Provide information and perspective on a universal basis about SU coercion, trauma and DV, battering/IPV and incorporate into safety planning along with harm reduction strategies
- Provide cross training to medical, mental health, social service providers, law enforcement and criminal justice systems
- Provide leadership on policy & procedure development prioritizing safety and accountability to programs and agencies survivors contact/work with
- Collaborate/ MOUs with local substance abuse treatment, medical, mental health providers and to develop a continuum of DV/SU services and supports
- Support survivors in navigating services that may not be as responsive to their needs.
- Participate in community-wide initiatives.
- Educate, educate, educate
- Include voices and active participation of survivors in all aspects of the work.
- Acknowledge and pro-actively address secondary trauma
- Celebrate small steps and successes



Trauma in the Context of Interpersonal Violence: Expanding the Framework

- Trauma is not “post”
- Appropriate response to ongoing danger
- “Overreaction” to minor stimuli or acute social awareness?

Warshaw, 1999



Get Ready! Breath!

- Be centered and focused
- Listen
- Don't Personalize
- Respond, don't React
- Allow for Silence
- Ask what she needs, would like, when, how
- Safety prioritized
- Provide Options
- Be Flexible



Listening

- **“Listen to hear, not to talk.”** – Diane Wolff, End Domestic Abuse WI
- Listen to what is being said and to what might be happening underneath
- A lot of how we communicate that we are listening is through body language, energy, and presence

Practical Strategies for Responding I ; Carole Warshaw, MD; National Center on DV Trauma & MH

Offer Action That is Possible in the Moment



What feels possible right now?

- For the person you are supporting, for *this* moment, and for you?
- What do you know from the person you are supporting about what helps them?
- What has been supportive to other people that you might try?
- Offer but don't prescribe



Offer Action That is Possible in the Moment

- Can you tell me more about what is happening/what happened?
- Can we take a couple of breaths together?
- Are there other body-based, calming, or grounding practices we can try?
- Would taking a walk be helpful?
- We have time – we can sit here for awhile, if that would be helpful.

Practical Strategies for Responding I ; Carole Warshaw, MD; National Center on DV Trauma & MH



National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
CREATING TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES: TIPSHEET SERIES

Tips for Enhancing Emotional Safety

1. Understand emotional safety.

“We want you to know that whatever you are thinking and feeling, you are welcome here.”

2. Help survivors manage feelings.

“For many women, this can all be overwhelming. We don’t have to solve every problem right away. Let’s take the time to sort things out together and then decide which thing you want to work on first.”



3. Provide a soothing place.

“You may just want to sit and relax for a bit. This room is set up for that and open whenever you need to use it.”

4. Provide information about trauma.

“Many people have trouble turning their minds away from frightening experiences. Sometimes people feel anxious, worrying about how to make things turn out better.”



5. Provide clear information and avoid surprises.

“A lot of us live and work together in the small space here. That’s why we meet twice a week to talk about how things are going for each of us and what we each need to be as comfortable as possible. We ask all the community members who live or work in the shelter to be present.”

6. Help survivors feel comforted and in control.

“We want you and your children to feel safe and welcome. If something doesn’t seem right to you, please let us know and we’ll work on it with you.”

7. Support emotional safety for staff as well.

“All of us are affected by the work we do. Everyone’s emotional safety is important.”



How do we make our services **welcoming, accessible, and supportive** for all survivors including those who are experiencing mental health concerns, crisis, and/or who are using drugs/alcohol?



Creating Accessible, Cultural, DV & Trauma-Informed Services

Key elements

- Organizational Commitment and Infrastructure
- Staff Support
- Physical, Sensory, and Relational Environment
- Contact/Intake, Programs, and Services
- Community Partnerships
- Evaluation and Feedback



Facilitating Healing, Resilience, and Well-Being

- Provide resources and access for participation in ceremonies
- Work with survivors on strengthening or developing new skills for dealing with painful or disruptive feelings such as:
 - relaxation training or exercises
 - grounding techniques
 - mindfulness or body-based strategies
 - developing an emotional safety plan
- Incorporate experiences of mental health and substance abuse coercion into planning
- Work with survivors to anticipate and prepare for trauma reminders

Supporting Emotional Safety: Be Proactive



For Example:

- Talk with each person at contact/intake about how shelter living can be challenging for everyone, the kinds of issues that often arise, and what you can do to create a more comfortable supportive environment
- Discuss the kinds of things people might find unsettling and what might help

Create physical and sensory environments that are flexible and support a wide range of experiences and needs.

Examples of Flexible Space and Routines



- Headset with music or ear plugs
- Room without a roommate (if possible)
- Room with a roommate
- Room close to staff offices
- Access to a quiet room
- Assistance completing forms
- Room to pace or move around
- Reminders to take medication if requested
- Assistance taking medication if requested
- Assistance monitoring blood pressure or blood sugar
- Flexibility to not attend meetings or groups
- Flexibility about chores
- Support in parenting



Attending to Sensory Impact Creating Emotional Safety

Things that might be helpful:

- Calming, colorful décor
- Brightness and soft lighting
- Quiet spaces to be with other people or alone
- Communal spaces where there is activity you can join
- Safe places to be outside
- Flexibility and choice



Drawing on Peer Support

- Renames experiences
- Strengthens sense of community
- Offers flexible supports and instructive Interactions
- Is voluntary
- There is *mutual responsibility for setting limits and creating safety*

Practices that Are Healing



Mindfulness

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Grounding

Grounding techniques help you to stay “in the moment” when your mind and body are returning to a place of trauma or stress.



This can be Overwhelming. Keep it Simple.

- Accurate information
- Sleep
- Diet
- Change the way routine things are done
- Visualization
- Exercises, stretching
- Practice deep breathing
- Mindfulness breaks
- Affirmations
- Play time
- Other?



Culturally Based Healing and Resilience

- Sharing food
- Laughter is Medicine
- Water is medicine
- Prayer
- Ceremony
- Being Together
- Traditional music, singing, dancing
- Herbal medicines
- Outside in Nature





4. Self-Healing & Secondary Trauma

In a Trauma-Informed Approach,
We are also Part of the Equation

Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- List values and intentions that support trauma-informed approaches & issues that may impede it
- Describe stress, burn-out, secondary trauma
- Describe supports and techniques for self-healing and coping with secondary trauma



“How we are is as important as what we do.”

- Jeree Pawl



Secondary Trauma

“How we are is as important as what we do.”- Jeree Pawl

- Occurs when the impact of other’s life experiences with trauma also impacts our lives.
- When we open our hearts and minds, when we bear witness, when we are willing to know and to create the emotional safety for people to share their experiences, we are affected.

Saakvitne et. al. 2000, NCDVTMH, 2013



Our Values and Intentions

- Honor each person's wholeness
- Provide culturally responsive support and access to cultural practices and ceremonies
- Preserve dignity and choice
- Use person-first language
- Avoid retraumatization
- Be present and non-judgmental
- Remain connected and caring
- Provide access to our services and supports

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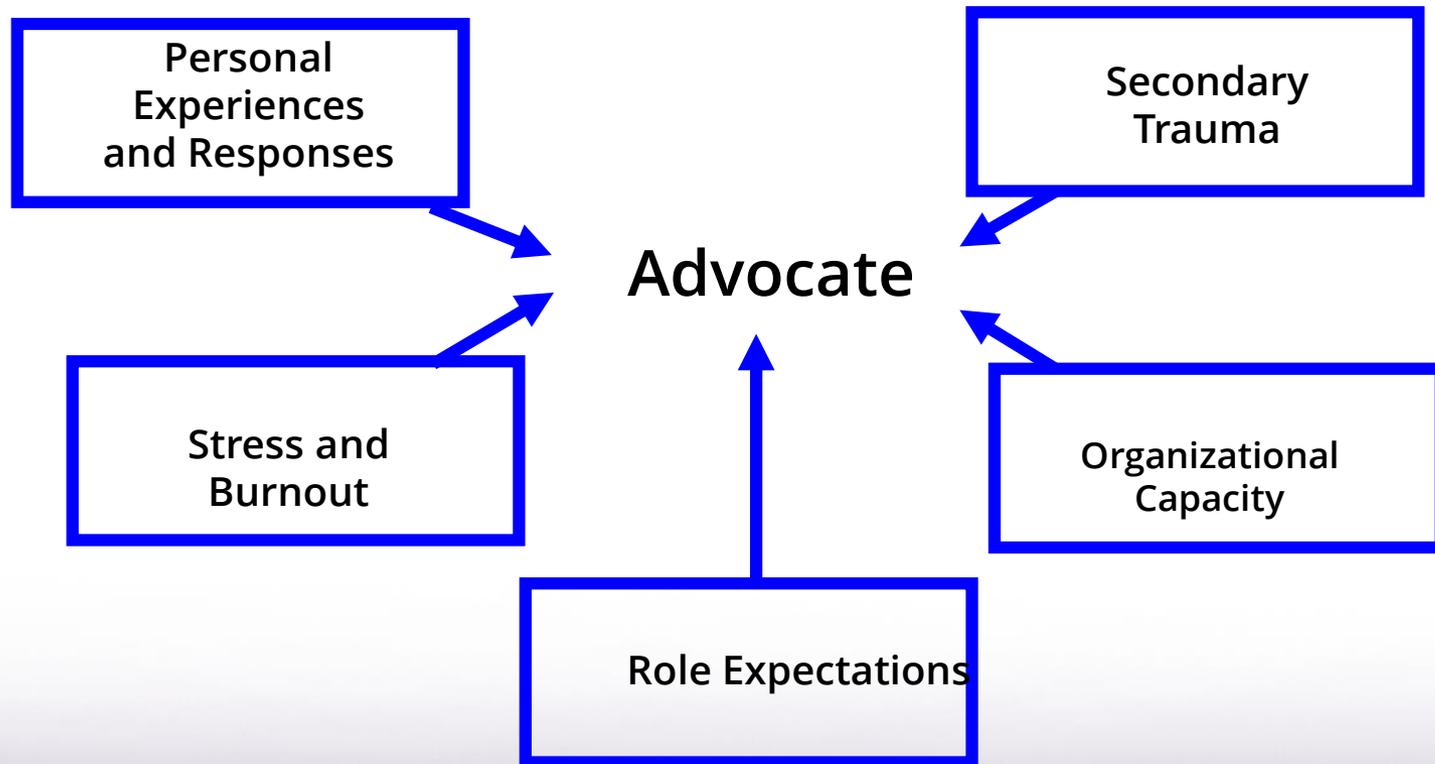


What gets in the way of our intentions & values?

- Worrying about what if...
- Separating “work” from culture
- Information gaps
- Our own experiences
- Stigma
- Labeling
- Not knowing what helps (for ourselves and others)
- Crisis plans and policies: not having them, not being aware of them, and/or not being able to act on them



Attending to Our Own Needs





When what is below the surface impacts our relationships...

- We may blame and see other people as the source of the problem
- We may lose touch with our empathy
- We may respond to other's needs in ways that aren't helpful or supportive
- We feel bad about our responses
- We may react to others inappropriately because they remind us of someone else.

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Self-Awareness

- Awareness of our own experiences with trauma, how we are affected by the work, and how we may be affecting others.
- Self-reflection
- Connections, relationships
- What helps you stay balanced, focused, caring, and effective
- Willingness to do the “self-work”
- Awareness of influence / impact of oppression, intergenerational trauma & resiliency
- Resilience – including “historical”

Techniques to help build our resources, our resilience

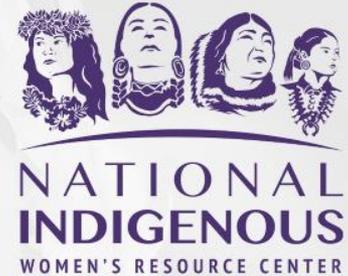


(Same techniques we practice with survivors!)

- Breathing
- Self-soothing
- Grounding
- Taking breaks
- Visualization and imagining
- Mindfulness practices
- Movement
- Journaling

Questions





Thank you!

For more information on this presentation, go to

www.niwrc.org

For video resources from the
Tribal Law and Policy Institute, visit

<https://www.Home.Tlpi.org/video-resource-series->

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