



# Trauma Informed Physical Spaces

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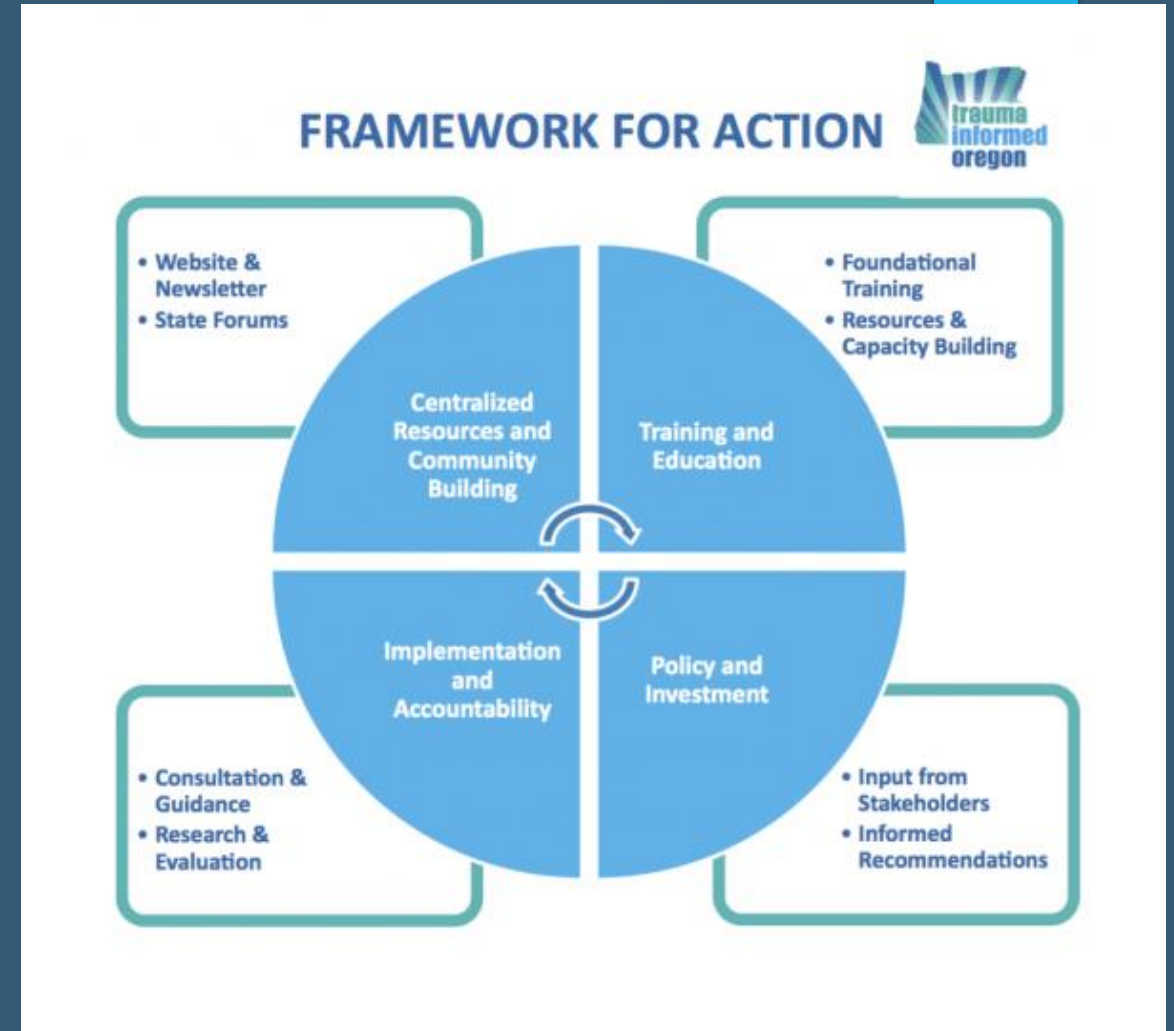
# Introductions

- ▶ Gratitude
- ▶ Portland, Oregon by way of North Carolina, USA.
  - ▶ 4,301,089 population; 250,000 KM2
- ▶ Social worker (BSW, MSW, LCSW, PHD)
  - ▶ Clinical trauma work
  - ▶ Systems work across sectors



# Trauma Informed Oregon

- ▶ a statewide collaborative aimed at preventing and ameliorating the impact of adverse experiences on children, adults, and families.
- ▶ Primarily funded by OHA.
- ▶ Oregon Pediatric Society & Oregon Health Science University.
- ▶ Advisory board with lived experience, public health, office of equity, provider.



# Our time today

- ▶ Focus on trauma informed physical environments
  - ▶ Quick level set on terms
  - ▶ Purpose of focus on physical spaces
  - ▶ Examples and processes
  - ▶ Practice
- ▶ Reality Check
  - ▶ Your spaces are different - right?
  - ▶ Some think this is an easier win – good starting place
  - ▶ Validating and calling out folks who have tried this

# Terms

- ▶ Trauma – something that overwhelms your ability to cope in the moment; event, effect, experience; threatens survival – includes experiences of oppression such as racism, agism, sexism, ableism.
- ▶ Toxic Stress – prolonged activation of the stress response system in the absence of protective relationships
- ▶ Scarcity – having less than you think you need

# Why is it important?

- ▶ Trauma is pervasive.
- ▶ Trauma's impact is broad, deep and life-shaping.
- ▶ Critical for those who have experienced adversity
- ▶ Trauma differentially affects.
- ▶ Trauma affects how people approach services.
- ▶ The service system has often been activating or re-traumatizing.

# Principles of TIC



Safety

Trustworthiness & Transparency

Peer Support

Collaboration & Mutuality

Empowerment, Voice and Choice

Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

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

# Why focus on Physical Environments?

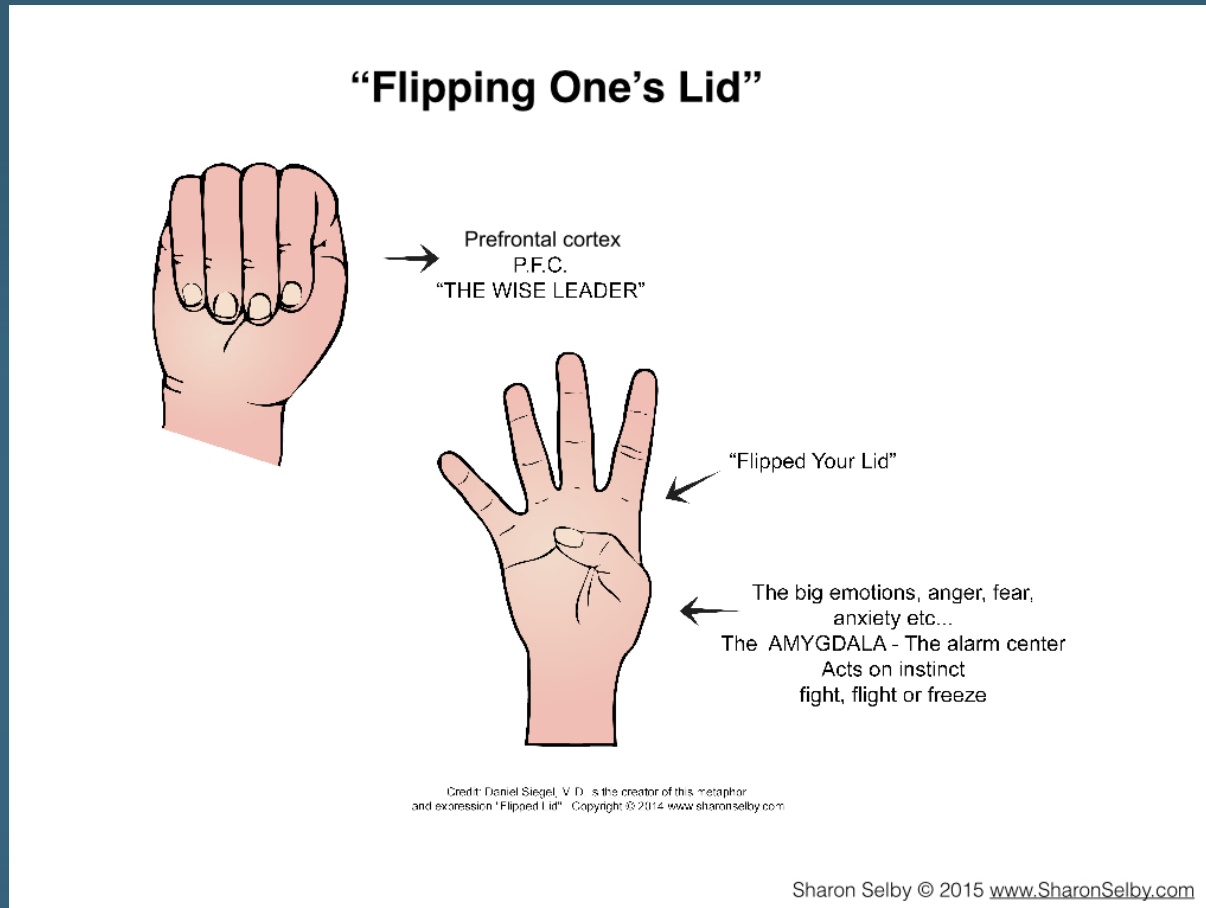
- ▶ Reducing anxiety and activation by
  - ▶ reducing fear
  - ▶ Preventing re-traumatization
  - ▶ Promoting safety – physical and emotional
  - ▶ Belonging, heard, valued, helped (not harmed)

***How are positive interactions promoted or hindered by the environment?***



## Neurobiology

Helps us understand how our brain development and functions are impacted by toxic stress/trauma



Challenges with:

- Memory
- Communication
- Sensory regulation
- Executive functioning
- Regulation

In Survival Mode –  
assessing threat  
constantly

# Trauma Informed Care Logic Model

WHAT WE NEED

WHAT WE DO

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

OUTCOMES  
(hypothesized)

AWARENESS of trauma among service users and staff.

TIC COMPETENCE among staff and leadership.

COMMITMENT from leadership and staff to prioritize TIC in budget, mission/vision, and strategic plan.

INFORMATION to identify strengths and areas of improvement.

PROCESS & INFRASTRUCTURE to support and sustain TIC efforts.

**Reflect TIC principles through:**

POLICIES

PRACTICES, for example:  
- Performance reviews  
- Hiring and onboarding  
- Supervision

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

**Service users and staff will:**

FEEL SAFE

FEEL EMPOWERED (with voice and choice)

FEEL VALUED & CARED FOR

BELIEVE the organization has their best interests in mind

TRUST the organization, staff, and leadership

SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT & SATISFACTION

- More appt. completion
- Less no shows
- Less absences (school)

STAFF ENGAGEMENT & SATISFACTION

- Less turnover
- Less sick days
- Less burnout & compassion fatigue

BETTER HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Assumptions

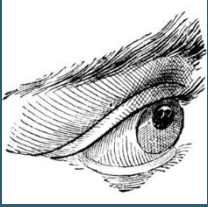
1. Human service settings are populated with people (service users and staff) with experience of past or present trauma.
2. Services and settings can be re-traumatizing for individuals when they feel unsafe or don't feel that they have control, power, choice, voice, or value.
3. Trauma informed care takes these challenges into account and creates services and settings that are safe, empowering, trustworthy, collaborative, and responsive to cultural, historical, and gender issues (based on TIC principles).

THE  
WHY!

# Process

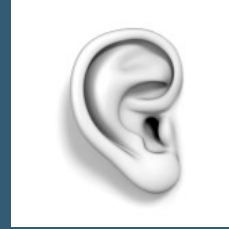
- ▶ Walk through with those who utilize services and staff (all staff).
- ▶ Assess:
  - ▶ What you see, touch, smell, taste, hear and how does it make you feel safe (belonging, seen, heard, not harmed, )
  - ▶ Ask what does it mean to feel safe?
- ▶ As you make decision about spaces use the principles for staff and those served.

# Sensory Perception



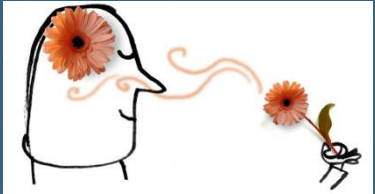
## Visual

- Least accurate of all senses
- Does not reach full adult functioning until age four



## Auditory

- Processing problems have some connection to autism and dyslexia



## Olfactory (Smell)

- Can detect around 10,000 smells
- 75% of what you taste has to do with smell
- Only sensory input that is directly connected to limbic system (memory & emotion)

## Taste

- 2,000-5,000 taste buds
- Four types of taste:



## Touch

- First of five senses to develop and most prominent at birth
- Critical part of growth and nurturing

# Create Safe Context

## Physical Safety

- ▶ What does physical space look like?
- ▶ Where and when are services?
- ▶ Who is there/allowed to come?
- ▶ Attend to unease.

***Is there anything I can do to help you feel more safe?***

## Examples

- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Bathrooms
- ▶ Exits/entrances
- ▶ Signage about what to expect, where to go...
- ▶ Home visiting plans.
- ▶ End with “what’s next” - predict
- ▶ Vicarious trauma prevention plans
- ▶ Space for self-care
- ▶ Training
- ▶ Scripts

# Examples:

\* Consider meetings/gathering, buildings, and processes

- ▶ Youth serving agency that added the TIA intention on the front wall
- ▶ Putting peer support & crisis management in the front of the agency
- ▶ Agenda for the day posted.
- ▶ Earplugs, fidgets
- ▶ Space to move
- ▶ Water & food
- ▶ knocking on doors,
- ▶ How you wake people up
- ▶ Chairs without arms – not too close
- ▶ No broken toys
- ▶ Regulation boxes and spaces
- ▶ Wiggle chairs
- ▶ How to communicate (go to the bathroom?)

# Standards:

- ▶ IIa. Our physical space is regularly reviewed for actual and perceived safety concerns that may affect employees and individuals receiving services.
- ▶ IIb. Our physical environment is regularly reviewed for inclusiveness for those accessing services as well as the workforce.
- ▶ IIc. We have a designated “safe space” for employees to practice self-care.
- ▶ IId. Physical safety and crisis protocols for employees and for individuals receiving services are in place and are regularly practiced.
- ▶ IIe. We have a process in place to hear and respond to safety concerns that arise.

## **BUILDING:**

Design solutions such as exposure to natural light, windows looking out at nature, wide corridors, earth tones, and glazed doors to enclosed spaces, as well as clear signage, can lessen the trauma a person feels when they enter and navigate a courthouse.

## **HUMAN ELEMENT**

focuses on the human element when interacting with parents and youth. "I focus on relaxing my body language, dropping the tone (deeper sound), slowing down the pace a bit, looking the person in the eye in a receptive way, actively listening if and when they speak, acknowledging what they have said, acknowledging the positives of what they are doing, acknowledging their struggles and barriers, and giving encouragement."

## **SAFETY**

like have separate hearings when there is an offender parent and a victim parent. They may also have one parent on the phone and the other in person. For children, they often use the jury room for them to wait in, if they are testifying. They encourage attorneys who are going to call a child victim to testify to bring them to the courtroom prior to the trial. He says, "Essentially, we try to make the court environment as least intimidating as possible."

she does what she can to make the setting safe and non-threatening. In DV [domestic violence] matters, she separates the parties, asks for extra courtroom security if warranted, and asks a victim advocate to meet or be there when a victim appears to need extra help. Deputies in the courthouse make sure there are no safety or security issues and that victims can safely enter and depart the courtroom/courthouse.

tries to let them have a voice and shows them that the court is not a scary place. If someone is clearly suffering, she tries to take frequent breaks, allow check-ins with support personnel, and remains calm if/when someone acts out.

jury trials where the charges themselves (frequently child sexual abuse or domestic violence) generate a lot of anguish and pain for jurors and she will excuse potential jurors the minute she sees they're suffering from having to relive something they or a close family member may have experienced.

***From Shary Mason, JCIP Model Court and Training Analyst, Juvenile Court Programs Division, Oregon Judicial Department***





Hot spot or activation?	Why does this happen?	What is it activating?	How to make it less so?
"I need to see you"			

# HotSpots

- ▶ From the beginning to the end of your work day what might cause activation in those you serve?
- ▶ Why is this done? Why/how does it activate? What can you do to make it less so?

# Create Safe Context cont...

## Emotional Safety

- ▶ Clear & consistent boundaries
  - ▶ Be able to state and model
  - ▶ Allowed to speak up re: vicarious trauma
- ▶ Transparency
  - ▶ Explain the “why”
  - ▶ Eligibility written out and explained
- ▶ Predictability
  - ▶ What next?

## Examples

- ▶ What is your role?
- ▶ Saying no.
- ▶ Access to records
- ▶ Access to job expectations before hire
- ▶ Psy eval prep

# Scripts -

We Say and Do	Person Experiences	TI Response
"Your drug screen is dirty"	I'm dirty. I failed.	"Your drug screen shows the presence of drugs"
"Did you take your pills today"	What's wrong with me. No one cares how the drugs make me feel.	"Are the medication your dr Rx working well for you?"
Individuals are scared and required to wait before appearing.	Increase agitation.	Provide schedule; ways to move while waiting.
Participant is asked to share intimate details without acknowledging impact on others.	Intimidation, fear, shame, embarrassment.	Allow to approach bench, do outside of full courtroom.
Signs instruct about what not to do.	Intimidating, lack of respect, treated like a child. Confusing.	Eliminate all but most needed. Word to be respectful.
To witness: "You can't talk about....."	Worries they will mess up; increase anxiety	My job is to stop if you go to far....

*Adapted from Essential Components of Trauma Informed Judicial Practice,*

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- ▶ <http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/foundation-information/>
  - ▶ <http://www.pdxhfs.org/blog/2019/2/12/jump-for-joy>
  - ▶ <http://traumainformedoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Hosting-a-Meeting-Using-Principles-of-Trauma-Informed-Care.pdf>

# Considerations

- ▶ Strive for choice
- ▶ When you can't change then alert
- ▶ Know why this is connected to toxic stress
- ▶ Constant review – feedback
  
- ▶ Emotional Safety:

Questions?  
THANK YOU!

