

Being Trauma-Informed

“Trauma-informed practice” is a strengths-based framework that is founded on six core principles – safety, transparency, choice, mutuality, empowerment and ethics.

Being *trauma-informed* means:

- being aware of and awake to the different ways trauma manifests in people.
- seeing and treating trauma survivors as unique individuals who have experienced extremely abnormal situations and have managed as best they could.
- both working together in a way that seeks to minimise re-traumatisation and honour the commitment, time and effort that trauma survivors make when participating in any programs about their experiences.

Given the nature of trauma carried by *survivors* and *victims of terrorism*, being *trauma-informed* is a style of engagement that we need to embrace at all stages of a project, for everyone involved - survivor, victim and other project personnel.

Six Principles

Generally speaking, *trauma-informed* practice means designing, developing and maintaining your project in accordance with the following six principles in mind:



Safety

How can we ensure physical and emotional well-being in a way that is aware to the effects of stress and trauma (both physical and psychological) that may arise in a project?



Mutuality

How will we ensure reciprocity and avoid extractive interactions during the course of a project?



Transparency

How can we maximise transparency through task clarity, consistency and interpersonal boundaries in a project?



Empowerment

How can we facilitate confidence and skill-building that recognises strengths and assets, and nurtures areas of need?



Choice

How will we maximise the ability to exercise choice and control in what activities personnel engage in while involved a project, and how?



Ethics

How will we balance the principles of doing things in “good faith” and doing “no net harm” against each other?







Project Plan [Example]

PROJECT PURPOSE: To co-design and create a storytelling platform for Australian and New Zealander survivors and victims of terrorism.

DATE AGREED: August 2020

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

- Government project sponsor
- Social impact and design agency
- Website developer
- Research and evaluation expert
- Videographers and photographers
- Storytellers

SIX PRINCIPLES	THE IDEAS AND QUESTIONS I/WE NEED TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO WORKING WITH TRAUMA SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS	THE ACTIONS I/WE WILL ADOPT TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO WORKING WITH TRAUMA SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS
 Safety	How can we ensure physical and emotional wellbeing that in a way that is aware to the effects of stress and trauma (both physical and psychological) that may arise in a project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation should always be voluntary - where possible, try to determine a level of readiness from the Storyteller themselves. • Determine if Storytellers have existing support systems or people and create room for them to be part of project. • Ensure that all third parties engaged have access to resources to provide trauma-sensitive sources and psychological support. • Engage a community organisation to provide trauma-informed practice briefings to all new team members.
 Transparency	How can we maximise transparency through task clarity, consistency and interpersonal boundaries in a project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make clear what the expectations are from the very beginning, via clear Terms of Engagement. • Frequently communicate these expectations and be transparent about intentions and boundaries of the Project. • Establish a rhythm of communication and stick to it - even if it is just once a month or once a quarter. Where possible, do not cease communications abruptly. Acknowledge any changes in rhythm.
 Choice	How will we maximise the ability to exercise choice and control in what activities personnel engage in while involved in a project, and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytellers will not be compelled to share anything they are not comfortable sharing. • If relevant, Storytellers should have some choice in third parties and creatives they wish to engage with, particularly those they have had dealings with. • Make clear the conditions of participant consent and revocation of consent of Storyteller-provided content - or an annual review clause.
 Mutuality	How will we ensure reciprocity and avoid extractive interactions during the course of a project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact and frequent communication around level of engagement, remuneration and acknowledgement. • This project is as much about survivors themselves as it is about the communities of support around them - ease the load of expectations by looking to experts, practitioners and creatives who can be part of this collective.
 Empowerment	How can we facilitate confidence and skill-building that recognises strengths and assets, and nurtures areas of need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytellers should be encouraged to create content around issues they wish to talk about. • Make clear the accountabilities the Project Team has to different project funders and the Storyteller themselves and that the purpose of such arrangements is to honour their commitment and support their involvement in the program, but be open to other ways to do this if not monetarily.
 Ethics	How will we balance the principles of doing things in "good faith" and doing "no net harm" against each other?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the nature of trauma, and the project itself, regularly checking in with Storytellers to ensure their comfort levels with what is publicly available should be adopted as a matter of practice. • Make both internal and external communications clear about the participatory nature of this project, and create regular room for conversation with Storytellers about their current circumstances throughout the project.

Collaborating with survivors/victims

PROJECT PURPOSE:

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

DATE AGREED:

SIX PRINCIPLES

THE IDEAS AND QUESTIONS I/WE NEED TO
CONSIDER IN RELATION TO WORKING WITH
SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS

THE ACTIONS I/WE WILL ADOPT TO CONSIDER IN RELATION
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