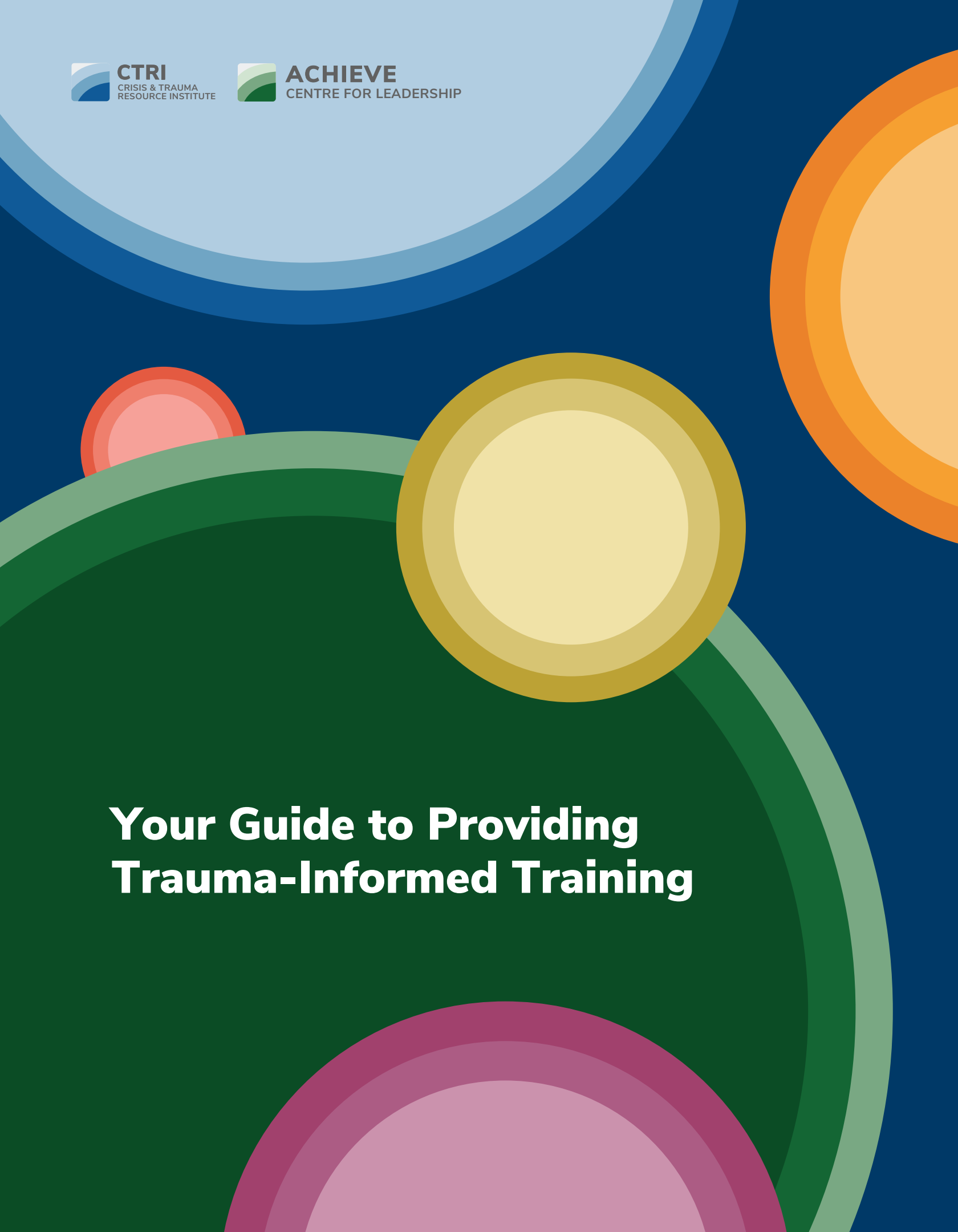




Your Guide to Providing Trauma-Informed Training

Table of Contents

2	Diversity and Trauma-Awareness
3	The Impact of Trauma on Learning
6	Tips for Trauma-Informed Training
8	Additional Resources

Diversity and Trauma-Awareness

We can expect to see diversity in every audience. And it's important to remember that diversity includes people's past experiences of trauma, which may impact their learning. That's why it's imperative to examine how you facilitate workshops using a trauma-informed lens.

The Impact of Trauma on Learning

INFORMATION PROCESSING

- Traumatic experiences can impact the brain's ability to process information.
- More time may be needed for a person to absorb new information or instructions for activities.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The verbal area of the brain is affected by traumatic experiences. A person may find activities that require verbal communication difficult.

EYE CONTACT AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- It is important to recognize the cultural and trauma significance of eye contact. The Western gaze values direct eye contact as this is a hallmark of confidence. Facilitators and participants come with their own relationship to eye contact. This may be influenced by culture, marginalization, oppression, trauma, and/or neurodivergence.
- As a facilitator, consider your perspective on eye contact. What is comfortable, comfortable enough, or uncomfortable to you? What informs this? How might your eye contact impact those in the training? How might you be impacted by or perceive participants' eye contact?

TRAUMA ACTIVATION AND RESPONSES

- Learners may find certain topics, words, or images unsettling, or they might experience activation of their trauma response.
- From a neurobiology perspective, when we look at neuroception specifically, images (human/real vs icons) can evoke cues of safety. Real images are preferable to icons in most cases.
- By the same token, real images of a person in distress could evoke greater activation of trauma. Avoid distressing images of any type.
- It is important to recognize that a person who appears withdrawn, unengaged, challenging, or disruptive may be experiencing emotional activation related to a trauma response.

NEURODIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Many neurodivergent people have learned to mask their neuro-differences because of the lack of acceptance. They grow up in a world that isn't built for them, so they require accommodations which may take extra work and resources. They are typically labelled as different and “less than” their peers.
- Often, these negative experiences begin in educational settings and are generalized to workplaces. So, they feel they don't belong or fit in, and over time, these experiences can become a trauma.
- Education of any kind may unintentionally activate these traumas, so it is essential to consider trauma-informed accessibility when delivering training.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Since colonization, educational settings and the way we learn have been dominated by Eurocentric systems of learning. Furthermore, educational settings have been a source of trauma for Indigenous peoples. It is important to be aware of this fact.
- When facilitating, it may be helpful to implement a reciprocal learning approach. This can be done by facilitating conversation and encouraging participants to share their knowledge.
- Being aware of the hierarchy prevalent in a Eurocentric learning structure can also be helpful. Approaching facilitation with humility – recognizing that we have some knowledge while acknowledging that everyone has wisdom to share – is helpful.

BOUNDARIES

- Trauma can impair a person's sense of personal boundaries. This often shows up in learning environments as a tendency to overshare.
- In some workshops, there is an atmosphere and invitation to share, but it must be remembered that a workshop is not a group therapy session.
- Someone who overshares may feel regret and shame afterwards.
- Others may have a trauma response activated by hearing someone else's story.
- It is important for facilitators to assist learners in protecting their own boundaries by naming this potential issue and encouraging people to be selective in what and how they share.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Training

01 | CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Establish both physical and emotional safety:

- Ensure the venue or virtual space feels secure and inviting.
- Set clear boundaries and expectations for behaviour during the training.
- Allow time for participants to process information and questions.
- Check your stories and examples for any unconscious bias.

02 | PROMOTE TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

- Be clear about the training agenda, objectives, and what participants can expect.
- Encourage openness and honesty among participants and trainers.

03 | FACILITATE EMPOWERMENT AND CHOICE

- Provide participants with options to engage in a way that feels comfortable for them.
- Encourage personal agency and allow individuals to opt-out of activities that might be triggering.

04 | BE CULTURALLY AND CONTEXTUALLY AWARE

- Recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds of participants.
- Adapt the training materials and examples to be inclusive and relevant to all participants.

05 | FOSTER COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION

- Create opportunities for group work and peer support.
- Encourage participants to share experiences and learn from one another.

06 | BE MINDFUL OF TRIGGERS AND RESPONSES

- Consider the impact the topic/content/shared stories may have on your audience.
- Identify potential triggers and minimize them in your material and delivery.
- Plan to embed grounding strategies and reminders throughout the day.
- Embed encouragement for people to use self-regulation tools (e.g., fidget gadgets, knitting, art, beading) that are accessible to them and for people to check in with their nervous system (NS) and do intentional check-ins on what their NS needs at any given moment.
- Recognize signs of trauma responses and be prepared to provide support.
- Use images thoughtfully.

07 | TAKE A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

- Focus on resilience, strengths, and coping skills rather than deficits.
- Highlight positive achievements and progress.
- Feedback is important. How do you provide feedback? How do/can you tie what was said into the workshop topic to enhance learning? How would you give feedback when the information spoken about is of concern?
- It's important to address misinformation and provide space for curiosity and self-reflection. People often take risks talking in public forums. How can you respond in a way that embodies and models trauma-informed insight and response.
- When information is inaccurate, respond in a way that embodies and models trauma-informed insight and response.
- Don't let side conversations or other disruptive behaviours go on too long. Shift judgement to curiosity! Consider what may be underlying the behaviour:
 - Is this a traumatic topic for some participants?
 - Do they need a bathroom break?
 - Have you been droning on?
 - Is the room too hot?
- Inappropriate or disrespectful comments or jokes also need to be addressed. When someone says something disguised as a joke – that's sexist, heteronormative, discriminatory, etc. – we have a responsibility to address it in a trauma-informed way, using an anti-oppression lens.
 - How do we respond from a decolonizing, anti-racism, neuro-affirming, and trauma-informed place?

08 | OFFER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

- Have support systems or personnel available for participants who may need additional help.
- Provide information about further resources, such as counselling services.

09 | ADAPT AND BE FLEXIBLE

- Be prepared to modify the agenda or approach based on the needs and responses of the group.
- Remain open to feedback from participants for continual improvement.

10 | ENCOURAGE SELF-CARE AND REFLECTION

- Build in breaks and encourage participants to engage in self-care activities.
- Allow time for reflection and integration of the material.
- Do your own self-reflection by asking yourself, *Am I being trauma-informed in my language and actions?*

Additional Resources

Canadian Teachers Federation (2022). *Trauma-informed teaching and learning*.

<https://www.ctf-fce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Trauma-Informed-Teaching-Learning-EN.pdf>

O'Neill, L, George, S & Wagg, J. (n.d.). *Trauma-Informed Classroom Strategies*.

University of Northern British Columbia.

<https://web.unbc.ca/~loneill/classroomstrategiesmanual.pdf>

- This is written for teachers of young children, but the same principles would apply to adults.