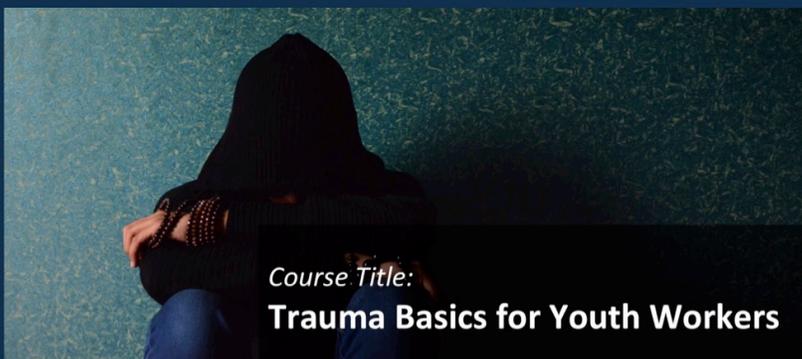




4 tips to practice trauma-informed care with youth

- 1. Establish a sense of safety:** At the base of trauma-informed care is the establishment of a sense of safety. Without that, competent work can't happen. Strive to create a physically, emotionally, interpersonally, and culturally safe space so that trust builds and a young person will feel more open to you and whatever intervention you offer.
- 2. Understand how trauma impacts the brain and learning :** Put simply, when a person is perceiving threat and/or danger, their prefrontal cortex (the rational, planning, controlling part of the brain) gets bypassed and their emotional center takes over. In extreme situations this results in the fight, flight, freeze, and feigned death responses. This is why when a youth is extremely triggered, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to follow directions, learn something new, or engage in traditional talk therapy.
- 3. View behavior as protection:** Whether a young person is extremely disruptive, disrespectful, resistant, violent, detached, nonchalant, or simply "doesn't care," it's important to interpret these behaviors as protective mechanisms rather than personal attacks. We may not have the luxury of knowing if a behavior is rooted in trauma, however if we interpret them as self-protective mechanisms rather than personal attacks we have a much better chance of not taking things personal, building a relationship with that young person, and helping them develop self-awareness of that behavior.
- 4. You are the key:** The so called "negative" behaviors that result from trauma do not occur in isolation. They are often reactions to a misinterpreted cue in their environment in which they've assessed danger subconsciously, even if it isn't dangerous. It's for that reason that working on ourselves, our skills, and our self-care is critical. The more we can learn to be less reactive, more aware, the more we can attune to the needs of the young person. The more we practice self-care, the less burned out we get and the more present we are in our jobs. Think of yourself as an active agent in the practice of trauma-informed care as one aspect of healing for the young people you work with.



Course Title:
Trauma Basics for Youth Workers

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