



TRAUMA-INFORMED ADVOCACY SERIES

Modeling the Model in Trauma-Informed Advocacy



Presented by **Whitney L. Marris, LMSW**
Trauma-Informed Practice & System Transformation Consultant, [CTIPP](#)
Co-Chair, [National Trauma Campaign](#)

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN THIS MODULE

how trauma themes they
may show up in advocacy



the importance of attending
to oneself in TI advocacy



enlivening the core values of a TI
approach in your advocacy work

A trauma-informed approach shifts the focus from
“What’s wrong with...?”
to
“What happened to...?”

⚡ RE-TRAUMATIZATION:

WHAT HURTS?

SYSTEM

(policies, procedures, “the way things are done”)



having to continually re-tell one's story



being treated as a number



policies/practices without cultural considerations



institutionalized oppression, -isms, and covert/overt bias



no choices in policies/practices that impact one's life



being seen as a label (e.g., schizophrenic, addict)

RELATIONSHIPS

(power, control, subversiveness)



not being seen/heard



violating trust



failure to ensure emotional safety



microaggressions; cultural insensitivity



noncollaborative; things are done for/to rather than with



use of punitive or coercive practices and/or language

Safety



- physical & psychological safety are considered & prioritized
- adaptive skills related to preserving safety are understood as protective and resourceful

Trustworthiness & Transparency



- decisions are made and processes are conducted transparently
- building trust is prioritized & intentional efforts are made

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice



- individuals, family, group, & community strengths are validated & built upon
- capacity-building is prioritized
- belief in individual/collective resiliency, healing, & trauma recovery

PRINCIPLES OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Collaboration & Mutuality



- meaningful opportunities for the sharing of decision-making & power are created
- culture of doing *with* vs. *to* or *for*

Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues

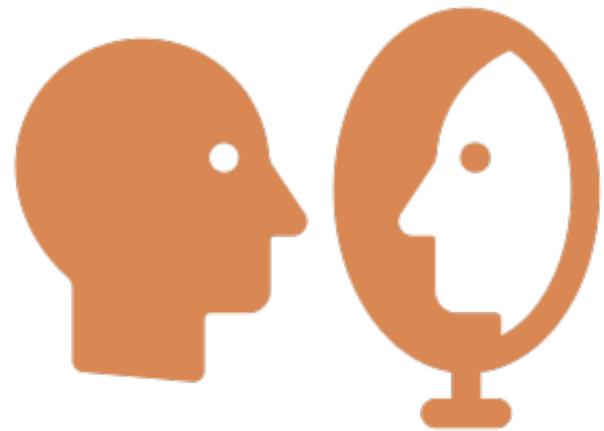


- cultural stereotypes, oppression, & biases are intentionally addressed
- recognition of cultural, historical, racial, historical, & collective trauma
- factors of cultural resilience are honored & mobilized for healing

Peer Support & Mutual Self-Help



- voices of lived experience are valued & amplified
- mutual self-help/peer support are valued as vital to recovery & growth
- opportunities exist for fellowship, solidarity, & healing



REFLECTION POINT:

How do you already demonstrate commitment to these principles?

What do you think is important to pay attention to as you continue to intentionally integrate these principles into your advocacy?



SAFETY

- Consider physical *and* psychological safety - especially of people and communities made vulnerable by inadequate policies
- Notice where safety for one group may come at the expense of another's
- Implement strategies to support fellow advocates in maintaining safety
 - * Strive to establish an inclusive, welcoming, culturally-attuned, destigmatizing, and non-retraumatizing environment
 - * Know and provide information on wellness supports
 - * Consider using a "buddy system" for preparation for hearings, meetings, etc.
- Develop ways to safely and respectfully address safety issues when they arise
 - With input from advocates and community members - what does safety and support mean and look like to them?



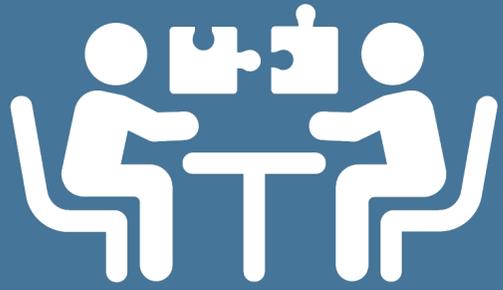
TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY

- Recognize the ways that harms may limit transparency and trust
- Articulate what is fact vs. what is assumed/hypothesized
- Communicate reasonable expectations and provide role clarity
- Follow through with what you say you will do and be honest about factors that impact those expectations being met
- Be forthcoming about and allow choice in how personal stories collected may be used — seek informed consent
- Provide meaningful updates about use of data, progress, etc.
- Be consistent and have a structure for thoughtful, accessible communication



EMPOWERMENT, VOICE, & CHOICE

- Share power and extend decision-making to target populations of change
- Lift up people's lived experience with trauma (primary and secondary) in your efforts to deepen education and spur action
- Storytelling considerations
 - * Consider the messenger - whose story is it to tell?
- Promote self-determination and autonomy in your efforts and policy proposals
- Highlight and uplift individual and collective successes as they occur
- Acknowledge individuals and communities as stakeholders who not only face challenges and uncertainty but also possess creativity, expertise, and fortitude



COLLABORATION & MUTUALITY

- Ensure the indigenous knowledge and experience of those impacted by policies and proposed changes is included in all conversations
 - * Step up and step back
- Develop an understanding of fellow advocates' strengths to inform efforts
 - * Negotiate the terms of collaboration to allow for choice in meaningful roles
- Work to find consensus on shared values, goals, best hopes, and what successful advocacy will look like
- Be intentional about embracing shared learning and uplifting cultural wellness and wisdom
- Create diverse opportunities for all to make meaningful contribution and provide feedback
- Commit to information-sharing across networks



CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, & GENDER ISSUES

- Consider an intersectional framework to devise a trauma-informed strategy to negotiate the dynamics of and collaborate across difference
- Notice how discriminatory policy, oppressive systems, and negative discourse reinforce each other to continue to deny rights to certain individuals, families, and communities — and the resilient lived experience of those impacted to survive
- Use your positionality to create cross-sectoral cultures of identity and inclusion
- Define time and air space to be an equity issue and promote equal sharing
- Become proactive in sharing with as well as learning from one another



PEER SUPPORT & MUTUAL SELF-HELP

- Seek to integrate collective, community-based solutions
- Honor and communicate respect for community leadership, history, and lived experience
- Facilitate activities and engagement that offer opportunities for advocates with similar interests, stories, or other factors to connect
 - *Strive to help segments of the community in forging highly supportive, active networks

“

The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, **until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.**

”

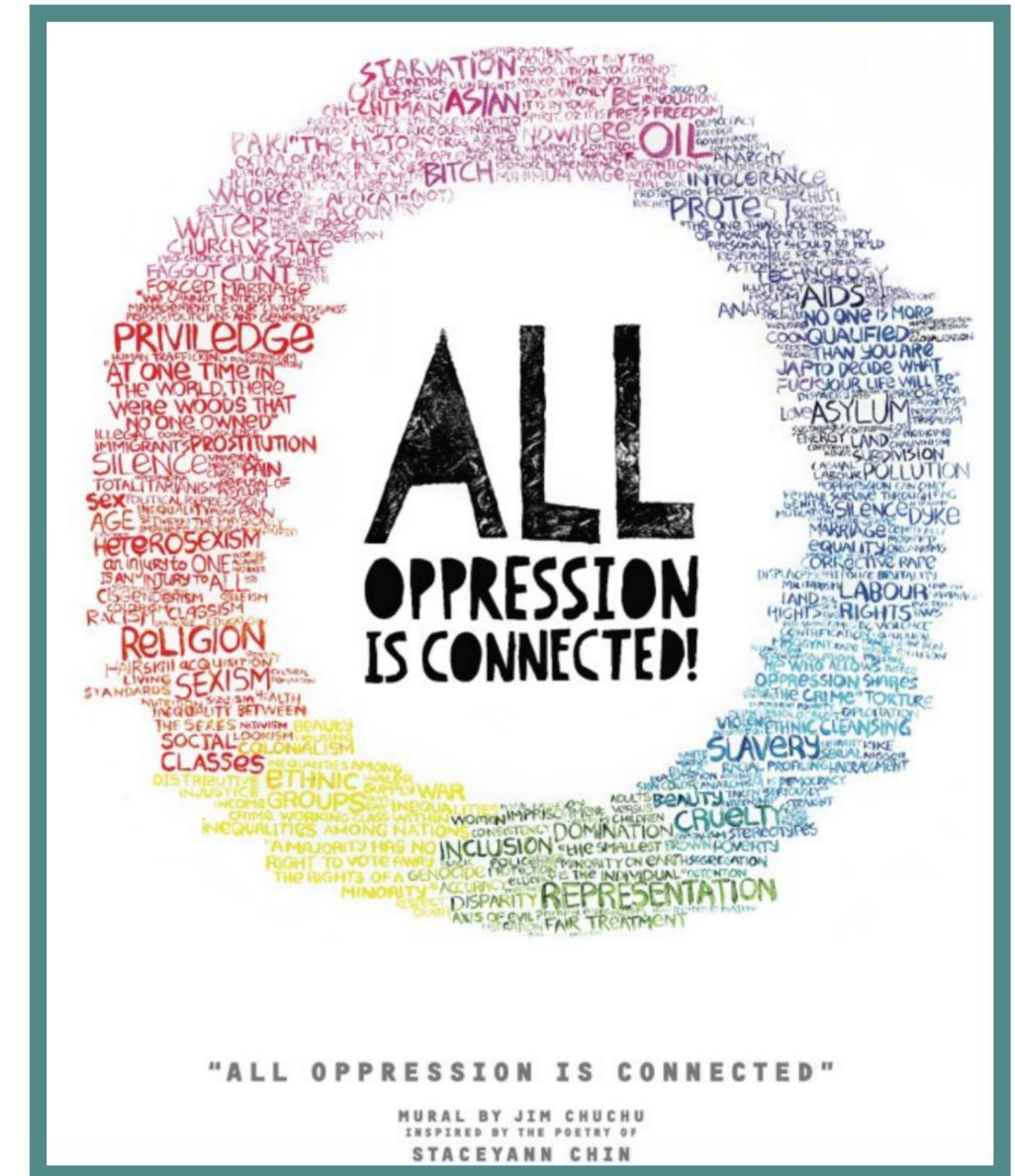
— **Jane Addams**

Social Worker & Activist

The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements, 1893

APPLYING AN ANTI-OPPRESSIVE, EQUITY-CENTERED LENS TO TRAUMA-INFORMED ADVOCACY

- Policies and the policy process often mirror society
- Policy affects (often disproportionately) our diverse, overlapping, and intersecting identities
 - ✦ Race, culture, ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, neurodiversity, religion/spirituality, citizenship status, age, socioeconomic status, national origin, etc....
- Recognize your individual role in upholding and/or benefitting from inequality, oppression, and colonization in our structures, systems, and institutions (whether unintentional or intentional)
- Look for **implicit and explicit** stressors and adverse impacts that have manifested/persist/might emerge due to policy's influence on societal conditions
- Consider how work in the policy arena is strengthened by a commitment to pay attention to power, privilege, and oppression while advocating for policy responses that **challenge disempowering** institutional and community practices



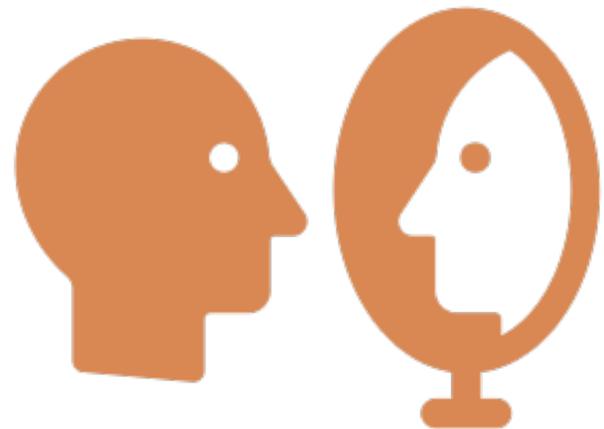
REFLECTION POINT:

What are your experiences with privilege, equity, and oppression?

What unearned privileges do you have access to?

What do you need to “unlearn?”

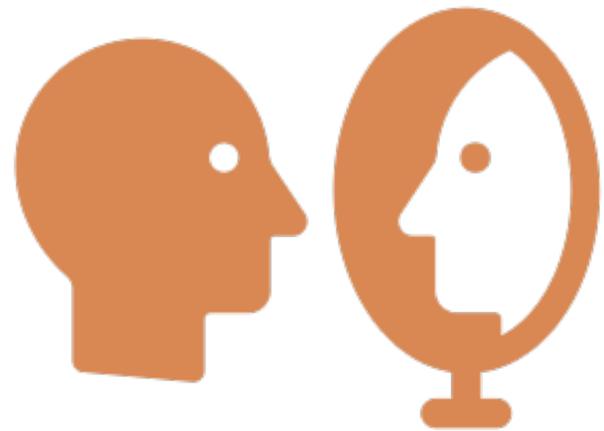
How can you not only recognize injustice, but act with intentionality and urgency to redress it?



THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING TO SELF

- Enacting the principles of a trauma-informed approach is an ongoing, digestive process in which self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-care are critical to:
 - ✦ Making thoughtful decisions based on one's expertise of themselves
 - ✦ Sustaining oneself while interfacing with trauma
 - ✦ Actively and intentionally resisting retraumatization in advocacy efforts
- Mindfulness with compassion
- Curiosity alongside critical inquiry
- Facilitate check-ins (allowing anyone to pass or not participate) and allow time/space for advocates to discuss what they are noticing and how they maintain wellbeing
- Strive to recognize the ways in which experiences may be related to stress/trauma responses (whether primary or secondary exposure)





REFLECTION POINT:

What is the most important takeaway of engaging with this series for you?

How will the content from this series inform your work moving forward?

What is one step you will take to attend to your wellness now that you have completed the series?