

TRAUMA-INFORMED CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE

MODULE SIXTEEN

Main Principles

The main principles of trauma-informed corrections include:

- Safety
- Trust
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment



By making small adjustments to correctional practice to incorporate these principles, the facility can be made safer, with a reduction in unsafe behaviors of incarcerated persons.

Examples of trauma-informed strategies in everyday interactions include:

- At intake/admission, let incarcerated persons choose where to sit down within a defined, safe, and secure space.
- Facilitate productive and safe interactions between incarcerated persons as part of unit meetings, recreation, and other activities.
- Model turn-taking, listening, and allowing each person to speak.
- As part of routine inmate-staff interactions, be encouraging about strengths and accomplishments of the individual.
- Use a tone of voice and pace of speaking that encourages relaxation and stability.
- Use postures and body proximity that convey safety and support rather than control.

- Avoiding language that conveys control (e.g., instead of referring to "cells" or "shake downs," refer to "rooms" or "safety checks").

Of course, prison leadership makes policy choices, but correctional officers can make everyday choices to be aware of trauma-induced crisis and work to prevent it.

Language Is Important

Small changes. Even small changes to language can make the correctional environment feel less traumatizing to incarcerated persons.

The National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women (Benedict, 2014) provides a series of strategies that can make most procedures trauma-informed. These are:

- Tell the incarcerated person what procedure needs to take place and why.
- Briefly describe what will happen during the procedure.
- Reassure the individual that you will conduct the procedure in a way that maximizes his/her safety and comfort.
- Ask the individual if he/she has any questions about the procedure before you begin.
- Use verbal cues throughout the procedure (e.g., "now I am going to place the items from your purse onto the table").
- Let the individual know when the procedure has been completed.
- Ask the individual how he/she is doing.
- Thank the individual for his/her cooperation.

A TRAUMA-INFORMED PAT DOWN

MODULE SIXTEEN

Script One: Typical Language

Instructions: Read aloud in a hard, loud voice. Some lines may be shouted, if you choose. Please pause between each numbered line.

1. Ok, inmate. Face the wall, now!
2. You cannot complain about search. If you hadn't done the crime, you wouldn't be here.
3. Are you disrespecting me? Does my nametag say "man?" You call me OFFICER when you speak to me. Now shut up.
4. Hold still, inmate!
5. You can pick up your crap when we're done. Leave it on the floor now.
6. Ok. Get your crap and go.



Script Two: Trauma-informed Language

Instructions: Read aloud in a calm, patient voice. Please pause between each numbered line.

1. Mr. Walters, please come over here for search.
2. I know, I know, nobody likes to be searched. Let's get through it together.
3. Do you have anything that will stab or poke me?
4. I'm halfway done. You'll be on your way in a minute.
5. Almost done now. Once I check your cuffs and shoes we'll be done.
6. Please hold your tissues while I complete the search. I know you don't want them on the dirty floor.
7. OK, Mr. Walters, that's all done. Have a good day.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2014-DP-BX-000, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.