

16: TRAUMA-INFORMED CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES

Time:	45 min.
Format:	Lecture, activity, discussion
Materials:	PowerPoint, Handout: "Trauma-Informed Correctional Practice," Handout: "A Trauma-Informed Pat Down," flip chart and markers
Competencies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe trauma-informed principles for correctional facilities.

Description

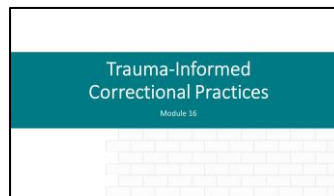
This module defines and describes trauma-informed correctional practices. It gives concrete examples and guidelines and explores the benefits of using these practices. It also has a supporting activity that allows participants, by considering a day in the life of a correctional officer and a person who is incarcerated, to consider how a CO's behavior can affect the correctional environment.

Before Training

Print out enough copies of the handout "Trauma-Informed Correctional Practice" for every participant to have one. Print out one copy of the handout "A Trauma-Informed Pat Down" to give for the volunteer for the activity "Inform Yourself."

During Training

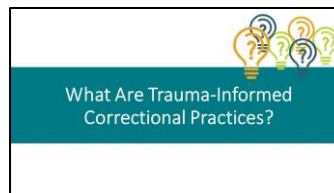
What Are Trauma-Informed Correctional Practices?



Set Up

Say:

People's traumatic experiences can influence daily life in correctional facilities. It's important to take trauma into account as you move through your workday.



Correctional facilities across the United States (especially women's facilities) are beginning to follow guidelines for "trauma-informed" approaches to safety and security.

Lecture

Present lecture:

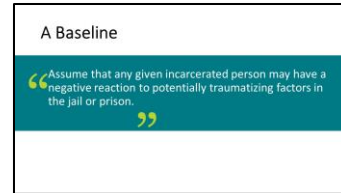
Trauma-informed correctional guidelines include training for staff and incarcerated people on the effects of trauma, as well as developing operational practices that help incarcerated people manage difficult symptoms so that they can safely engage in institutional programs and services.

Trauma-informed environments **may help incarcerated people to self-regulate** psychologically and physically, becoming more stable and being less likely to be triggered into self-protective responses that complicate facility operations.



Trauma-informed practices can also **enhance job satisfaction** for correctional staff, resulting in less burnout and staff turnover (Benedict, 2014).

Given the prevalence of trauma among incarcerated people and the need for a humane, respectful response to all people, experts recommend the use of "universal precautions" to help protect incarcerated people from being re-traumatized. **That is, assume that any given incarcerated person may have a negative reaction to potentially traumatizing factors in the jail or prison.** If correctional systems can try to reduce unneeded trauma for all incarcerated people, it can produce a safer, more secure facility for those incarcerated and for correctional staff (Benedict, 2014).



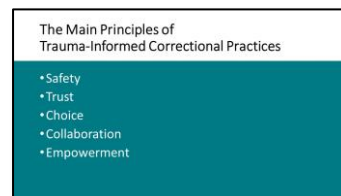
The Main Principles

Lecture

Present lecture:

The main principles of trauma-informed corrections include:

- Safety
- Trust
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment



So, what does using these principles look like?

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

Examples of trauma-informed strategies in everyday interactions include:

- At intake/admission, let incarcerated people choose where to sit down within a defined, safe, and secure space.
- Facilitate productive and safe interactions between incarcerated people as part of unit meetings, recreation, and other activities.
- 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.
- Avoid language that conveys control (e.g., instead of referring to "cells" or "shake downs," refer to "rooms" or "safety checks").
- As part of routine inmate-staff interactions, encourage strengths and accomplishments of the incarcerated people.

Examples in Every Day Interactions

- At intake/admission allow some choice
- Facilitate productive and safe interactions between incarcerated people
- Be encouraging about strengths and accomplishments of the individual

Examples in Every Day Interactions

- 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
- Avoid language that conveys control

Of course, correctional leadership makes policy, but correctional officers can make everyday choices to be aware of trauma-related crises and work to prevent them from arising.

Transition by saying:

Let's focus in on one very important aspect in corrections: language and voice.

Language is Important

Lecture

Present lecture:

Sometimes, we may feel impatient about thinking before speaking. However, language is powerful.

As a CO, you can harness that power to change the environment of your workplace.

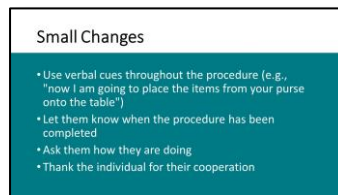
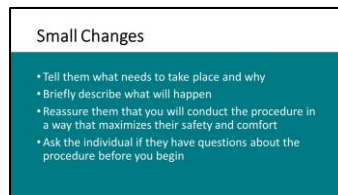
Language Is Important



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

For instance, instead of referring to incarcerated people and staff by last names, using titles of respect such as "Ms. Smith" or "Sergeant Smith" can promote trust. During pat-downs and searches, correctional officers may reduce trauma by calmly talking the incarcerated person through the procedure, just as doctors do with patients during sensitive procedures. 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.

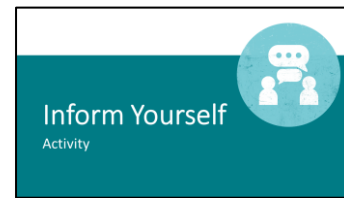


Transition by saying:

A number of these suggestions may be quite different from the way you typically do things at your workplace. So, is change worth it? What are the benefits?

Activity: Inform Yourself

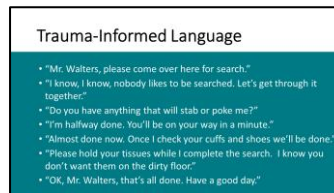
1. Explain the purpose of the activity, which is to become aware of how we speak to incarcerated people and how we can inform our language with trauma-based principles for a chance at better outcomes.
2. Give the following instructions:
 - a. I'd like a volunteer to come to the front to read aloud a script. The script is some typical language we may use when doing a pat down.
 - b. To those of you listening, imagine that **you** are the one getting a pat down and that they are speaking to you personally.
3. Give the handout "A Trauma-Informed Pat Down," which you have printed ahead of time, to the volunteer and have them read the first version aloud. Remind them to read it in a hard, loud voice and that they may shout if they feel like it:
 - a. Read the following:
 - i. Ok, inmate. Face the wall, right now!
 - ii. You cannot complain about search. If you hadn't done the crime, you wouldn't be here.
 - iii. Are you disrespecting me? Does my nametag say "man?" You call me OFFICER when you speak to me. Now shut up.
 - iv. Hold still, inmate!
 - v. You can pick up your crap when we're done. Leave it on the floor now.
 - vi. Ok. Get your crap and go.



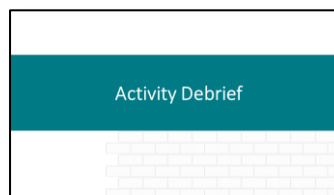
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- b. Once they're done reading it, ask the group the following questions:
 - i. Is this pretty typical of pat down language in your facility?
 - ii. How did you find yourself responding as you listened to the script?
 - iii. Given what you know about the effects of trauma on a person, how might this language be problematic for getting cooperation?
4. Initiate a brief discussion, asking them to highlight words or phrases that may agitate someone who is traumatized.
5. Now have the volunteer read the second version of the script. Tell them to speak in a calm and steady voice. Remind the participants to imagine that **they** are the ones getting a pat down and that the reader is speaking to them, personally.
 - a. Mr. Walters, please come over here for search.
 - b. I know, I know, nobody likes to be searched. Let's get through it together.
 - c. Do you have anything that will stab or poke me?
 - d. I'm halfway done. You'll be on your way in a minute.
 - e. Almost done now. Once I check your cuffs and shoes we'll be done.
 - f. Please hold your tissues while I complete the search. I know you don't want them on the dirty floor.

- g. OK, Mr. Walters, that's all done. Have a good day.
6. Show the slide with the script on it for their reference. Initiate a brief discussion with the following questions:
- a. How did you find yourself responding as you listened to the script?
 - b. How does it differ from the previous script? Give some examples.
 - c. Can you imagine yourself speaking in this way to people in your facility? Why or why not?



7. Debrief by asking:
- a. How could this be useful on the job? Do you think this trauma-informed language might help make pat downs go more smoothly?
 - b. Are there other procedures that you could use this approach with?



Transition by saying:

Let's look closely at the benefits that others have seen by using this trauma-informed language on the job.

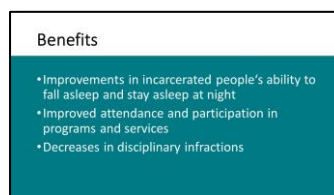
Benefits

Lecture

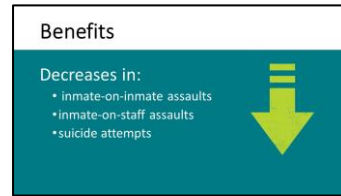
Present lecture:

Some facilities that have implemented trauma-informed practices report the following specific benefits:

- Improvements in incarcerated people's ability to fall asleep and stay asleep at night



- Improved attendance and participation in programs and services
- Decreases in disciplinary infractions
- Decreases in inmate-on-inmate assaults
- Decreases in inmate-on-staff assaults
- Decreases in suicide attempts (Benedict, 2014).



Discussion

Check in with participants by asking:

- What sounds interesting and useful to you of what you've just heard? Why?
- What worried you or didn't sound plausible in your workplace? Why?

Transition by saying:

Let's test some of these ideas with an exercise.

Activity: Making Choices

1. Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to consider how everyday circumstances might change if we apply the Main Principles of trauma-informed practice.
2. Tell the participants they will work in small groups made up of their tables. Each table will have part of a scenario that will explore helping a traumatized person get through a challenging day. There will be three encounters that you, as the CO, have during one day with Sheena, a woman who is incarcerated.



If there are more than three tables, you may assign each scenario to more than one table.

3. Give the following instructions:

Once you have your group's scenario, refer to the main principles of trauma-informed practice and make choices about how to respond to and interact with Sheena in order to get the best possible results: keeping her, yourself, and the prison population safe.

Refer to your handout "Trauma-Informed Correctional Practice" as needed.

4. To the first table(s), read:

A group of women who are incarcerated are participating in a psychoeducational trauma group. Sheena is among them. The group is meeting for the first time. Introductions are in progress. Some look very tense.

Then an announcement is made that everyone must return to their cells for a full count. Women have three minutes to return.

Doors begin slamming all over the facility, a noise you are used to. But when you check to make sure everyone has left the group meeting room, you see Sheena standing as if frozen. Every time a door slams, she jumps and looks terrified. She seems unable to move.

5. To the second table(s), read the previous scenario and tell them that they know that Sheena is having a challenging day. Then read them their scenario:

Later when the count is over and people may move around again, it's time for Sheena to leave for work time. However, she's huddled on her bed. When you ask what's going on, she says that being in the group exhausted her. She can't do any more today. She just wants to sleep.

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You know she must leave the cell. What do you do? (Hint: look for solutions that are non-combative and create trust in the CO and empower Sheena to make good choices.)

6. To the third table(s), read the previous two scenarios and tell them that they know that Sheena is having a very challenging day. Then read them their scenario:

Finally, you encounter Sheena again during recreation time, but she is very agitated. You overheard that a woman in the trauma group shared stories about rape at the hands of her dealer/partner. Sheena was deeply upset by this, and when you speak to her, she is very agitated and keeps saying, "I can't calm down! I can't stop thinking about it! I don't know what to do!"

7. Give the groups 5 minutes to work to come up with a trauma-informed plan to get Sheena through her day.
 - a. Ask all participants, how do you approach Sheena and what do you say? How do you treat her? (Hint: have them refer to their handout if they are unsure. Encourage responses that are non-confrontational and explain to Sheena what is happening and what she needs to do.)
8. When the 5 minutes are up, recall the group's attention and start with those working on the first scenario. Ask them what they came up with. Listen to all responses, and then offer a constructive critique of their good choices and guide changes to choices that were not trauma-informed. When they reach a good trauma-informed response, congratulate them and tell them that they've gotten Sheena successfully to the next part of the day.

9. Repeat Step 8 above with the second and then the third group. Once each group comes up with a good trauma-informed response to Sheena, tell them that they've successfully gotten Sheena safely to the next part of the day.
10. Once the third group completes their report, tell all participants that they have helped Sheena calm down, and the evening progresses peacefully without a crisis.

Activity Debrief

Conclude the activity with the following reflective questions:

- How difficult was it to come up with trauma-informed responses?
- How might you use the main principles at your workplace?
- Are there any barriers to using them at your workplace?
- What are some advantages you see in beginning to use these practices and principles?



Conclude by saying:

Trauma is pervasive in corrections, and some people arrive with more in their life histories. While trauma-informed practices might one day be routine in your workplace, you can make trauma-informed decisions and actions every day.



SOURCES

Module 16

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