

Become informed on childhood trauma as a health issue

By Mikki Burcher, Health Promotions Specialist,
Valeo Behavioral Health Care

Since the landmark adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study nearly 30 years ago, it has become clear that childhood trauma is widespread in our communities. Research finds that up to 90% of adults ages 65+ “have been exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event in their lifetime” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs). The problem is so pervasive that in 2019 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared childhood trauma a public health issue.



Mikki Burcher

At a local level, this means that you and/or most people you interact with daily have endured some type of trauma in their lifetime. One of the things you can do to help others (or yourself) as they navigate trauma is to be trauma-informed and use trauma-informed practices.

Trauma-informed practice is an approach to interpersonal interactions that recognizes trauma is widespread. With this framework, persons in service positions (including teachers, healthcare workers, and behavioral healthcare workers) assume that those they serve have experienced some kind of trauma and work with individuals in a way that prioritizes safety and healing while preventing re-traumatization.

Both service recipients and service providers benefit from trauma-informed practices. “Trauma-in-

formed practices can potentially improve patient engagement, treatment adherence, and health outcomes,” says the Center for Health Care Strategies. Similarly, service providers using trauma-informed practices tend to have increased job satisfaction, increased mental wellbeing, and lower levels of secondary trauma.

Many professions and organizations, including Valeo and other behavioral healthcare centers, have formally adopted a trauma-informed approach (often called trauma-informed care). But, we can also use trauma-informed practices in our day-to-day interactions with others. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), there are six key principles to trauma-informed practices. Here are some examples of how you can integrate these principles into your daily interactions with others.

- **Safety.** Ask permission before touching or hugging someone. Let people choose where they would like to sit during a meeting or appointment.
- **Trustworthiness and transparency.** If a person shares about traumatic experience, listen. Be honest about your own experiences. Hold their story in confidence; do not tell others.
- **Peer support.** Offer to help find a relevant support group to help process trauma. Not sure where to start? Check out <https://support-groupsinks.org/> or call 211 to speak to a United Way referral specialist.
- **Collaboration and mutuality.** Make sure everyone, especially the person who experienced trauma, has an equal voice when discussing what happened and how to move forward.

- **Empowerment, voice, and choice.** Validate the experiences of those who open up to you about their trauma. Encourage them to be an active participant in their treatment and healing journey.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender issues.** Address your own internal biases and learn about the experiences of people with identities different than yours. Be supportive of people who wish to use cultural practices as part of their coping or treatment plans.

Finding a solution to the public health crisis of childhood and general trauma will be a long and complex task, but being trauma-informed and using trauma-informed practices is one way that we can help others (and ourselves) successfully navigate trauma right now.

If you or a loved one are struggling with mental health challenges, professional help is available. Valeo’s Crisis Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for walk-in mental health emergencies. It is located at 400 SW Oakley Avenue. You can also call the Valeo Crisis Line, available 24 hours a day, at 785-234-3300.

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Crisis Services
400 SW Oakley
Topeka, KS 66606
24 Hour Crisis Line
785-234-3300

National Suicide Prevention Life Line

1-800-273-8255

Shawnee County Suicide Prevention Coalition

SCSPC.org

Family Service & Guidance Center (18 and under)

325 SW Frazier
Topeka, KS 66606
24 Hour Crisis Number
785-232-5005

Healing after Loss to Suicide Group (HeALS)

Sandy Reams – Group Facilitator
Topeka.Heals@gmail.com
785-249-3792