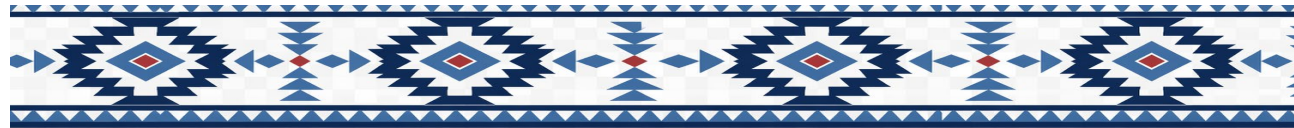


# From Burn Out to Balance: Healing Informed Leadership



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Costa Mesa, CA



Head Start Regional TTA Network

# Meet your Presenters



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# Shared Agreements

1. Confidentiality
2. Mutual respect
3. Assume positive intent
4. Cell phones off/vibrate
5. Minimize multi-tasking
6. Take Care of Yourself 😊
7. What else?



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# Objectives

- Learn about the principles and purpose of a trauma-informed approach to leadership
- Explore why the principles of a trauma-informed leadership are especially supportive in early childhood programs
- Engage in self-reflection around the skillset required to lead from a trauma-informed lens
- Identify 2-3 strategies for creating a culture of wellness that support relationship-building and decrease stress & burnout



- Think of a supervisor who's been supportive.
- What's a word or phrase you would use to describe them?



# What is a trauma informed leadership approach?

- Integrates an understanding of trauma and its impacts with leadership practices that promote resilience, empowerment, and emotional healing
- Acknowledges that trauma can affect individuals in profound ways, influencing their behavior, decision-making, and relationships
- Leaders who adopt this framework prioritize the needs of their staff, creating environments where employees feel valued and supported



# Why adopt a trauma informed leadership approach?

- The rise in mental and emotional stress, anxiety and anger is leading to a realization that trauma must be understood, acknowledged and addressed by workplace leaders.
- Trauma isn't limited to catastrophic events; it encompasses any experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope.
- Unaddressed trauma often manifests as decreased productivity, interpersonal conflicts, increased absenteeism and high turnover rates.



# Why adopt a trauma informed leadership approach?

- Burnout
- Secondary Stress
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma



# Burnout

## According to Psychology Today...

- Burnout is defined as a state of emotional, mental, and often physical exhaustion brought on by prolonged or repeated stress.
- Though it's most often brought on by problems at work, it can also be driven by stress in other areas of life, such parenting, caretaking and romantic relationships.



# Compassion Fatigue

According to Psychology Today...

Compassion fatigue can be physical, emotional, or spiritual exhaustion that overtakes the otherwise positive and fulfilling experience of helping others when we over-empathize (Figley, 2002a)

Symptoms can include:

- **Physical:** unusual sleeping patterns, weakness or tiredness, lack of energy, frequently falling ill, and changing eating habits.
- **Psychological and emotional:** feeling sad, empty, lonely numb, agitated, despair, stuck, or a loss of control.
- **Behavioral:** withdrawal, lack of connection/avoiding connection, rejecting others, or feeling rejected.



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# Why EC Professionals may be prone to secondary stress?

- 1. DEEP EMPATHY:** Empathy allows the early childhood professional to understand a child's feelings and can help deepen the relationship, however, empathizing to a point where the early childhood professional is consistently worried or overly anxious about a child or family may be unhealthy.
- 2. PERSONAL TRAUMA:** May have some unresolved trauma in their own lives, and listening to similar trauma experiences with children and families in their care may trigger memories of their own experiences.
- 3. LACK OF RESOURCES:** Lack of access to supports such as training, reflective supervision, and leadership supports, can exacerbate stress.



# Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Leadership

**Safety:** Creating physical and emotional environments where individuals feel secure and free from harm or judgment.

**Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Building trust through consistent actions, clear communication, and honest dialogue.

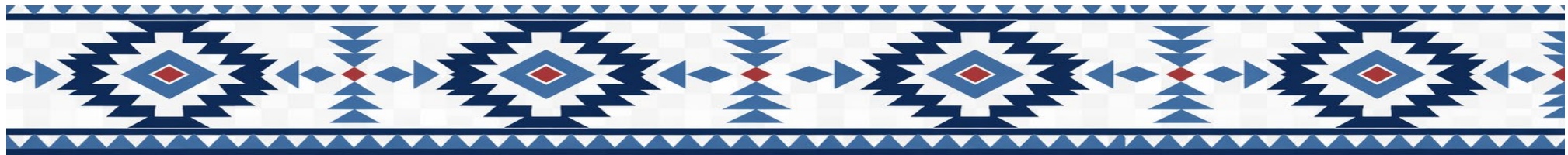
**Empowerment and Choice:** Valuing autonomy and encouraging employees to take ownership of their work and decisions.

**Collaboration:** Promoting shared decision-making and mutual respect among team members.

**Cultural Humility:** a lifelong, active process of self-reflection and self-critique where individuals examine their own biases, beliefs, and power dynamics to approach others with respect, openness, and empathy



**Healing informed care** goes further by actively creating environments and practices that support recovery, resilience, and empowerment, ensuring that care is not only safe but also restorative.



# Self-Reflection

- What does it feel like to be led by you?
- Do staff feel safe coming to you if they have a question?
- What's the culture that's been creating around asking for help?



# What does it mean to be trauma informed?

1. **REALIZE** the widespread impact of trauma and understand that anyone can be affected.
2. **RECOGNIZE** the signs and symptoms of trauma in children, families, staff and others.
3. **RESPOND** by integrating trauma knowledge into policies, procedures, and practices.
4. **RESIST** Re-traumatization by anticipating and minimizing practices, environments, or interactions that could trigger trauma responses.



# Discussion

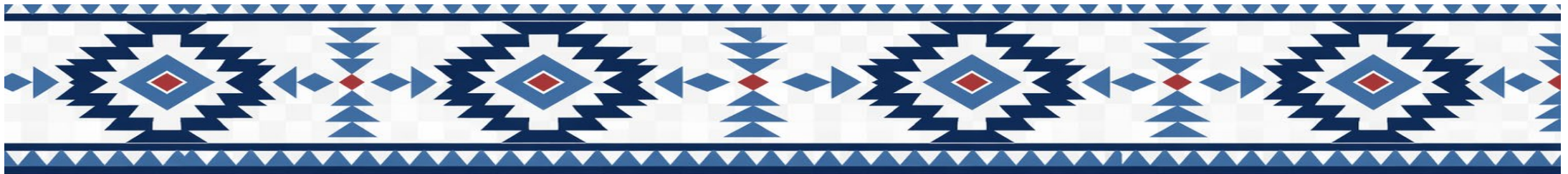
- Share a few examples of what it looks like to be a trauma-informed leader in your program.
- How would learning more about being trauma-informed support you as a supervisor/leader?
- What are ways you approach balancing being supportive of staff while also empowering them to take personal responsibility if they need additional support outside the workplace?



# Culture of Wellness

## 1302.93 Staff health and wellness.

(d) A program should cultivate a program-wide culture of wellness that empowers staff as professionals and supports staff to effectively accomplish their job responsibilities in a high-quality manner, in line with the requirement at § 1302.101(a)(2).



# In your program, how do you:

- Share information/resources to recognize symptoms of secondary stress/compassion fatigue/burnout?
- Offer support/coaching/mentorship around working with families who are facing adversity?
- Offer time/space/incentives for staff to engage in self-care?



# What skills support being trauma-informed?

- Understanding personal triggers and reactions
- Ability to regulate emotions
- Recognize when we need breaks
- Recognize possible signs and symptoms of trauma in others
- Being non-judgmental
- Active listening
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to be present with and witness big feelings



# Discussion

What are ways you can further develop these skills?

What resources would you find helpful to support you as a leader?



# In a trauma-informed culture...

Supervisors and coaches can:

- help staff prepare for their emotional reactions to families who have experienced trauma
- encourage staff to ask for help, focus on what they can do, and let go of what they can't
- work with staff to reflect on their practice

Leaders and staff can use three key strategies to strengthen their trauma-informed care practices:

- strengths-based attitudes and practices
- reflective supervision
- reflective practice



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# What is Psychological Safety?

Organizational behavioral scientist Amy Edmondson first introduced the construct of “team psychological safety.”

The term refers to your ability to freely express your opinions at work without fear. Psychological safety develops over time.

When it exists, members of a team can be themselves, and they share the belief they can take appropriate risks, and they can and should:

- admit and discuss mistakes,
- openly address problems and tough issues,
- seek help and feedback,
- trust that no one on the team is out to get them, and
- trust that they are a valued member of the team.



# Team Psychological Safety

To measure a team's level of psychological safety, Edmondson asked team members how strongly they agreed or disagreed with these statements:

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of the team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.



# Brainstorm: Having Difficult Conversations

1. Staff member is calling out often - how do you dig deeper into what's going on for them in a professional way?
2. Two teachers are not getting along in the classroom – how can you create safety to address this?
3. Noticing signs of burnout in a staff members who is not meeting their job responsibilities – how do you approach this?
4. Teacher is complaining about a child's behavior, and you have observed that they are contributing to the child's dysregulation; how do you have this conversation?



Share your insights or ideas for what you would like to incorporate into your program.



# Program-Wide Strategies

- Provide training at all levels in trauma-informed practices
- Include all staff in identifying the needs of frontline staff who are working directly with children and families experiencing trauma
- Lift up the importance of mental health along with physical health (e.g. staff wellness programs, community partnerships to support self-care/mental health access)
- Create an environment of support (i.e. spaces to decompress, posting notes of appreciation, team-building activities) so staff don't feel like they are holding it all alone



# Program-Wide Strategies

- Consider adding stress management goals to staff development plans
- Incorporate reflective practice or supervision to help build staff skills around understanding their responses and managing stress
- Provide access to mental health consultation for the staff to support them in working through secondary stress
  - If funding is an issue, consider co-funding with another local program, connecting with a university with a graduate program in counseling, therapy, or a related field
- Consider how cultural practices can be incorporated to support mental & emotional health



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# Resources: Headstart.gov

Strategies and Recommendations for Supporting Mental Health  
ACF-OHS-IM-24-01

<https://headstart.gov/archive/policy/im/acf-ohs-im-24-01>

Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce  
ACF-IM-HS-21-05

- <https://headstart.gov/archive/policy/im/acf-im-hs-21-05>

Individualized Professional Development Portfolio (iPD)

[Supporting Healing and Resilience for Family Services Staff](#)

[Mindfulness in Head Start Settings](#)

[Cultivating Wellness: Strategies to Improve Your Health and Well-being](#)



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Share ONE insight or  
takeaway!

