



# Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program  
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## Trauma-Informed Leadership

*Adapted from Dayna Lee-Baggley, Ph.D.*

**Achievement, connection, thriving, growing, and engagement are all words associated with effective workplace teams. Leaders, however, are facing significant challenges in today's workplace. We are living in a world filled with people in crisis. From COVID to the "Great Resignation" to "quiet quitting," workers suffer from high burnout and exhaustion levels.**

### The art and science of safety and connection in the workplace.

- Trauma-informed leadership enhances psychological safety so employees can thrive and function as part of an effective team.
- For a leader to succeed, they must be concerned with the well-being of those they lead.
- Leadership success is also about how well the leader can get people to work together.

When people are not working well together, it is the leader's job to "fix" that problem. This is usually interpreted as identifying the broken team member(s) and "fixing" them so that they will act differently.

People, however, are not like machines or car engines where you can replace broken parts or add some oil to "fix" them. Often it is not easy to pinpoint who needs "fixing," especially when people disagree on who is "broken." Trauma-informed leaders lead with respect and appreciate that the people they lead are not broken.

Finally, providing opportunities for Peer Support can

help people with lived experience of trauma learn and grow together. Helping peers come together also enhances the likelihood that people will feel safe due to the stronger sense of belonging that comes with having peers. Bringing peers together can also support empowerment, as it's often easier to speak up as a group than as an individual.

### So how is a leader supposed to "fix" the problem?

The answer can be found in a trauma-informed approach to leadership. Such an approach does not try to "fix" people. Trauma-informed practices are based on the basic human need for connection—people are hard-wired to connect and feel calm and stable when safe connections are available. It provides an entirely different kind of "fix," in which the environment becomes safer and more stable, allowing people to flourish, to be more productive, creative, innovative, and cooperative.

### A trauma-informed leader:

- Encourages team members to look through the lens of shared purpose. Reframing and refocusing on what is important for the team to succeed. Effective leaders start with the end in mind.
- Shows recognition for each team member's important contribution to achieving that shared purpose.
- Embraces individual autonomy coupled with accountability.
- Trauma-informed leaders recognize that people who don't want to be made to feel stupid or embarrassed.
- Focuses on changing the behavior (i.e., what a person does to achieve the shared purpose) and not the person. It hardly ever works to tell someone to stop feeling upset or worried. Telling someone to calm down can make them feel more anxious. It is easier

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to, for example, ask them to turn left instead of right. People have far greater control over their actions than what they think and feel.

- Finally, the trauma-informed leader operates from the perspective of compassion.

A trauma-informed approach hands over the responsibility of "fixing" a team to the team members guided by the leader. The people who work together have the ultimate responsibility of getting back on track. A trauma-informed team leader models, encourages, and supports with compassion and empathy.

This is how trauma-informed leaders bring psychological safety into the workplace. As Google discovered in its ground-breaking study called the Aristotle project, you cannot have a great and effective team without psychological safety.

### First Choice Health EAP offers Supervisor Consultations

If you are interested in learning more about practicing trauma-informed leadership, connect with our EAP Account Executives. First Choice Health EAP provides Supervisor Consultations on various topics as part of our services.

We are here to help! Reach out to First Choice Health EAP when you and your employees need support. One of the many benefits of our program is that our team of qualified clinical experts are available 24/7 to assess specific concerns and develop tailored plans of action to individuals reaching out for assistance.

#### References:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-psychology-of-weight-loss/202209/trauma-informed-leadership#:~:text=Key%20points,get%20people%20to%20work%20together.>

