



ST. AEMILIAN-LAKESIDE, INC.
Advancing foster care, education and mental health services



*Creating a Trauma
Informed Community*

SEVEN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Trauma informed care can be defined in many different ways, which include both philosophy and practices. At St. Aemilian-Lakeside, we believe the following elements are helpful in understanding what trauma informed care is and how to implement it.

1 Prevalence – Exposure to and difficulty adjusting to adverse experiences is significantly more common than we previously had known. A keen appreciation for the scope of adverse events, especially on children, is a key element to understanding the needs of people who have been exposed to events such as domestic violence and substance abuse, separation/divorce, mental illness, physical and sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect, and acts of violence.

2 Impact – Trauma occurs when a person’s ability to cope with an adverse event is overwhelmed and contributes to difficulties in functioning. The impact of this process is profound, especially when the adverse event occurs during key developmental timeframes. The seminal ACE (adverse childhood experiences) study shows how early trauma also can have a serious effect on a person’s physical health in later life and ultimately impact life expectancy.

3 Perception/Reality – A shift in perspective can bring a new reality. Helping those charged with caring for people struggling with trauma by simply changing the question from “What is wrong with you?” to “What has happened to you and how can I support you?” can bring enormous understanding.

4 The Lower Brain – Knowledge of the basic architecture of the brain provides both an understanding of the impact of trauma and a key toward effective treatment. Many of the interventions that have been offered to people struggling with trauma have focused on the cognitive or “upper” parts of the brain. Trauma informed interventions often prioritize addressing the more primitive or “lower” parts of the brain. This concept supports the use of sensory strategies such as drumming, singing, dancing, yoga, etc., which have been shown to be effective in addressing the impact of trauma.



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Relationship – Relationships are key to reaching a traumatized child and to mitigating trauma. Strong relationships help create resilience and shield a child from the effects of trauma.

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Reason for Being – Understanding what makes someone want to wake up in the morning, what has true meaning for that person, is critical to trauma informed care. The importance of family is often a key factor in a person’s reason for being. Directing interventions that are created by and driven by the person being served also contribute to a significant “reason to be.”

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Caregiver Capacity – To effectively work with traumatized individuals, caregivers must take care of themselves and find a work/ life balance. Critical is identifying our limits, knowing sometimes we will be pushed beyond them, and what we will do to find balance.