

Understanding and implementing a trauma-informed approach

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Poll:

How familiar are you with the concept of an organisation-wide trauma-informed approach?



By the end of this session you will be able to:



Describe features of a trauma-informed organisation



Explain how collective leadership supports and strengthens a trauma-informed culture in an organisation



Identify practical ways to embed trauma-informed principles into practice



Recognise key aspects of kaimahi well-being within a trauma-informed context

Our session today

Understanding an Organisation-wide Trauma-Informed Approach



What is it?



Why is it important?



Implementation



Worker wellbeing

Resources for trauma - informed approaches

Workforce centre webpages

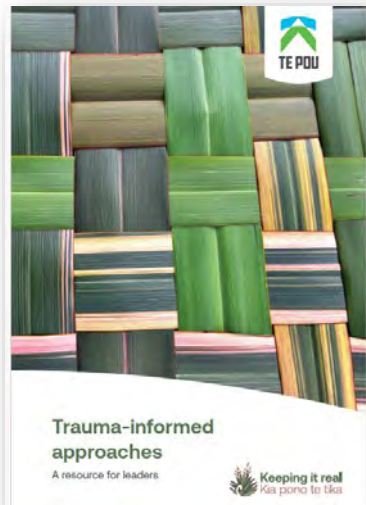
E-Learning
courses

Hard copy
resources

Videos

Workshops

Evidence papers

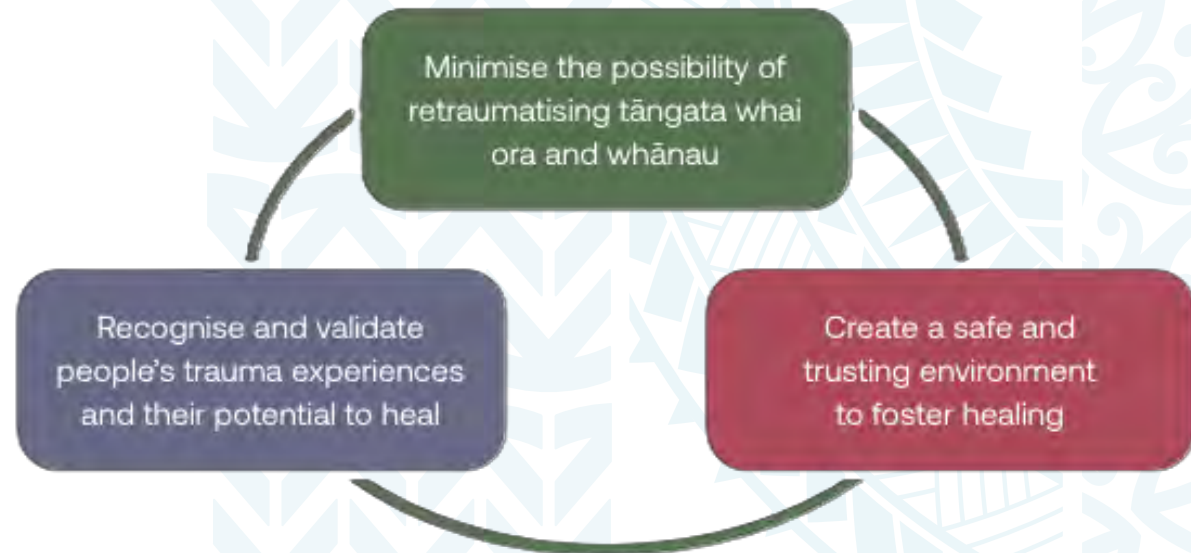
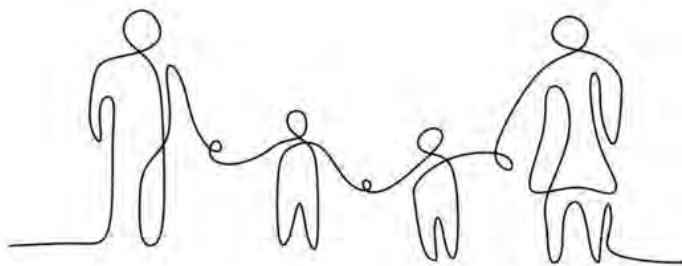


Available courses from Whāraurau:

- Trauma-informed care in Aotearoa
- Childhood trauma | Impact on development and behaviour
- Trauma informed care for caregivers
- Trauma informed care for the children's workforce
- Self-care in trauma informed organisations

What is a trauma-informed approach?

A way of working grounded in shared values and principles that prioritises safety, trust, and mana, and actively works to avoid retraumatising tāngata whai ora, their whānau, and kaimahi



Trauma-informed leadership from a Tiriti perspective



Kahurangi Fergusson-Tibble
(Te Pou & Blueprint)

Stacey Porter
(Whāraurau)

Definition of a trauma-informed, organisation-wide approach

- The entire **organisation** recognises the prevalence and impact of trauma and integrates this understanding into all policies, practices, environments, and interactions
- Moves beyond **individual** interventions to a system-wide culture and way of working
- Aligns organisational systems and everyday practice so that trauma-informed principles are consistently enacted at every level, by everyone, in everything they do



Why do we need a trauma-informed approach | Stats



Over half of New Zealand adults (55%) experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), 1 in 9 adults (11.6%) experienced 4 or more ACEs, strongly linked to lifelong mental and physical health issues*



Māori experience higher exposure to violence, housing insecurity, discrimination, and deprivation



Over 40% of Pacific children experience three or more ACEs by age 9



Over half of women have experienced sexual or intimate partner violence in their lifetime**



About 80% of women and men in the New Zealand prison population have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime



Trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa experience severe trauma, with 77% reporting high or very high psychological distress due to traumatic events***

*[Adverse childhood experiences in New Zealand and subsequent victimization in adulthood: Findings from a population-based study – PubMed](#)

**[NZ Family Violence Statistics 2024 – nzfamilies.org.nz](https://nzfamilies.org.nz)

*** <https://countingourselves.nz/>

Why is a trauma informed approach helpful?

- People and whānau feel safer, seen, and respected
- Improves therapeutic relationships
- Respond to causes, not only symptoms
- Enhances whānau connection, resilience, and collective healing
- Minimises the risk of being retraumatised by services and systems
- Helps address inequalities
- Supports recovery and wellbeing



To tātou haerenga | Our Journey: How we started

- Establishment of trauma-informed committee
- Look at Trauma-informed models of care, Terms of Reference (TOR) and sponsor
- Created a 'pilot' to implement Trauma-informed care (TIC) into daily practice.
- Readiness checklist – pre-implementation



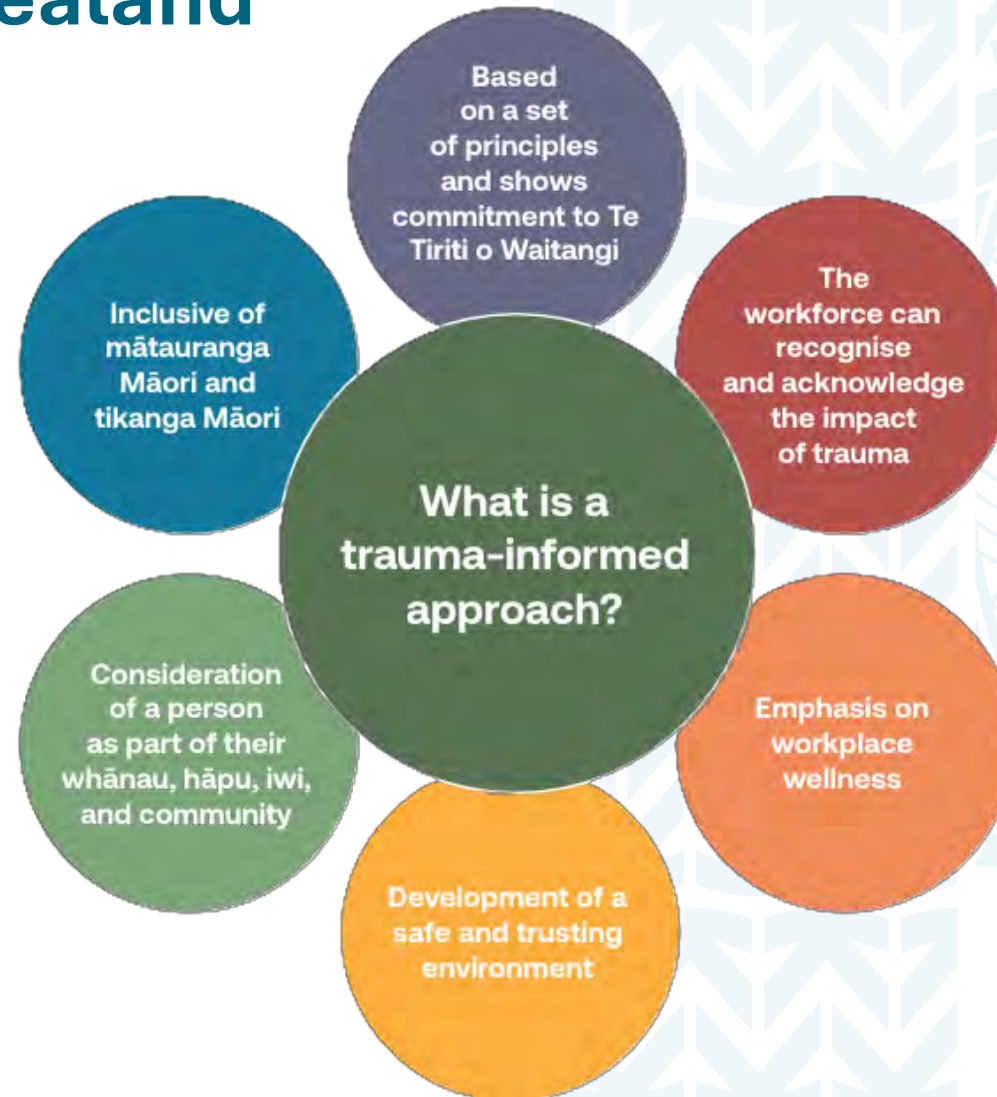
Principles of a trauma-informed organisation-wide approach

Findings from a 2024 review of the literature

Mostly based on SAMHSA's principles of safety, trust, choice, empowerment, peer support, and cultural, historical and gender sensitivities

Within Aotearoa New Zealand services a kaupapa Māori approach is essential to address equity, acknowledge the impacts of colonisation, and honour commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Principles of a trauma informed approach within Aotearoa | New Zealand

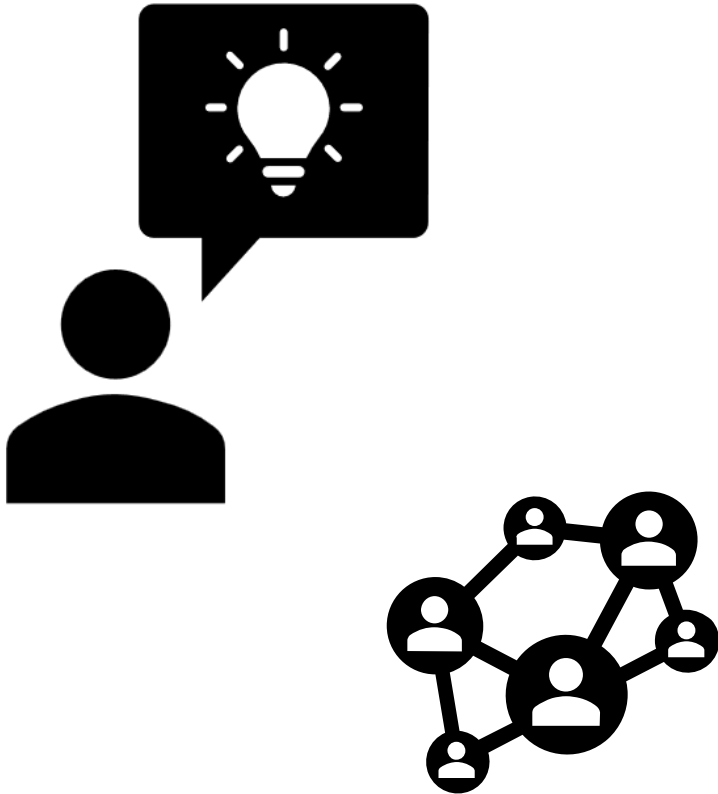


To tātou haerenga | Our Journey: Principles

- Used SAMHSA principles, but cultural aspects missing
- We are guided by Te Korowai Atawhai and Te kāhui Pou (our cultural arm of SMHS) to ensure cultural oversight throughout our haerenga.
- The importance of Tikanga practices are fundamental to ensuring overall cultural and staff safety.
- Use the Seven Key Principles set out by He Oranga Ngākau.
- It is important to acknowledge TIC within Aotearoa, and the research carried out by Te Pou, Whāraurau and Le Va.

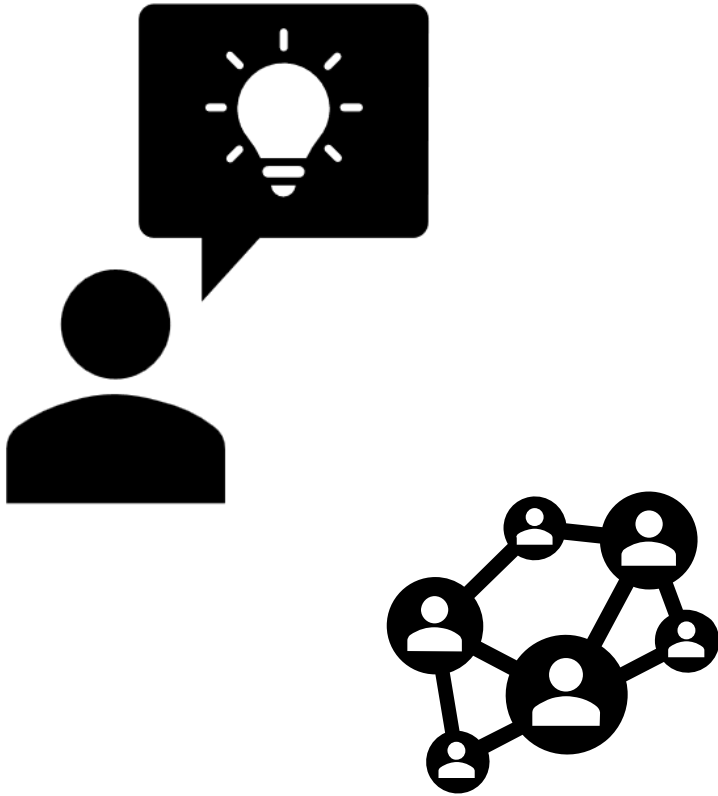


Implementation: Principles in the classroom



- Own oxygen mask first, stress is contagious.
- Understand and/or develop interoception, neuroception self-regulation, dysregulation, coregulation. Observe and be observed
- Whanaungatanga is key: learning happens in safe relationships
- Effective communication: Clear expectations.

Implementation: Principles in the classroom



- Classroom kōrero vs. clinical practice kōrero
- Routine: greet at door, karakia and waiata, brain breaks: quiet and moving, kai
- Classroom set up: consider demographic, teamwork, self-soothing items
- Shift mindset from a behavioural deficit model to an understanding of behaviour: look hard for protective factors.

Word cloud



**Which trauma-informed principle matters most in
your context right now?**

One-word answers

Actions that support a trauma informed approach

Organisation level

- Leadership and culture
- Policies and systems
- Workforce development
- Service environment
- Service design and delivery
- Worker wellbeing
- Encourage change

Individual

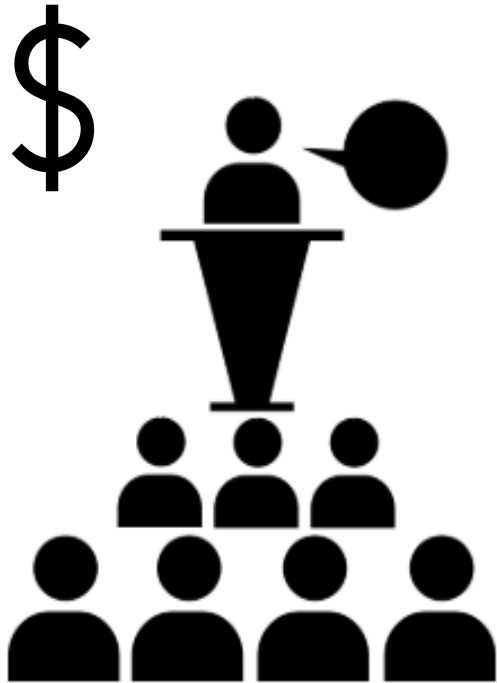
- Everyday interactions
- Recognise and validate
- Promote safety
- Support choice and empowerment
- Collaboration and partnership
- Support regulation and connection
- Engage in reflective practice

To tātou haerenga | Our Journey: Leadership

- Charge nurse led the start with a rehabilitation ward
- Senior leadership team put the pilot on hold
- The committee went ahead and did some in-services to the staff to introduce TIC into practice
- Training unit came on board
- Nominated persons from the committee did presentations to their own leadership teams within SMHS.

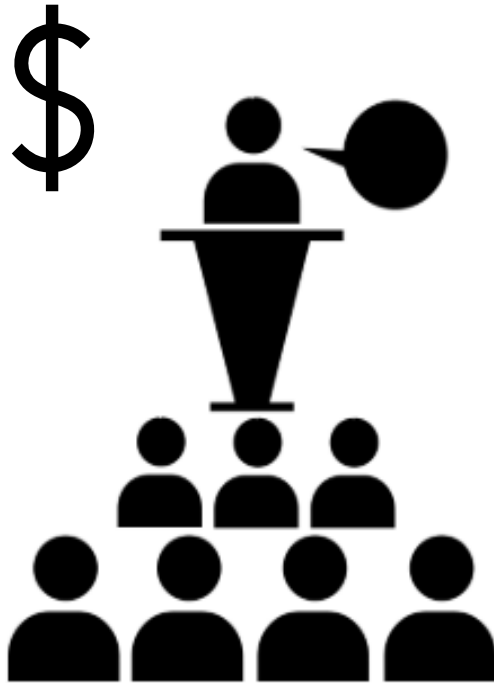


Implementation: Convincing conversations with leadership



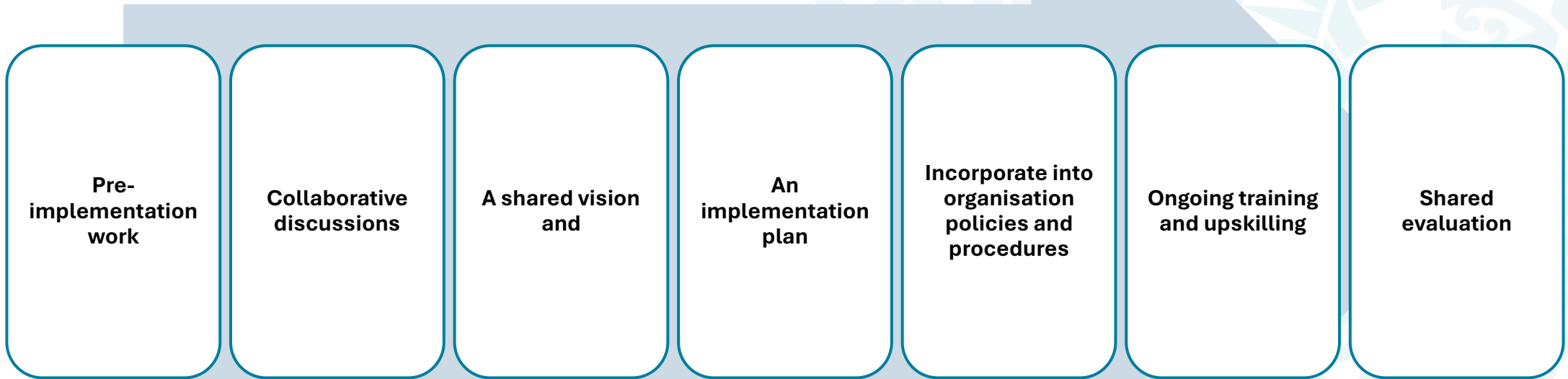
- Trauma-informed vs. trauma-specific
- Understand the literature and evidence of why this is important: convincing arguments, informed strategy/plan
- Find the ‘why?’ 
- Acknowledge role that services may play in traumatisation and re-traumatisation

Implementation: Convincing conversations with leadership



- Cost/benefit of becoming a TI educational institution: ākonga success/outcomes, financial implications, using a trauma-informed approach benefits everyone.
- Cost/benefit of acknowledging and working to mitigate vicarious trauma
- Undertake research
- Patience and perseverance

How do you implement a trauma-informed approach?



Te Pou resource 'Trauma-informed approaches – A resource for leaders'
[Trauma-informed approaches - A resource for leaders | Te Pou](#)

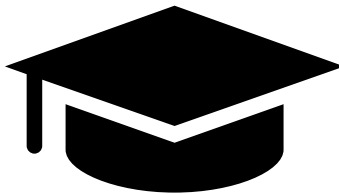
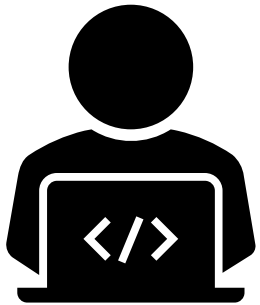
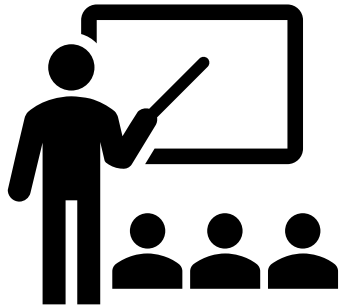
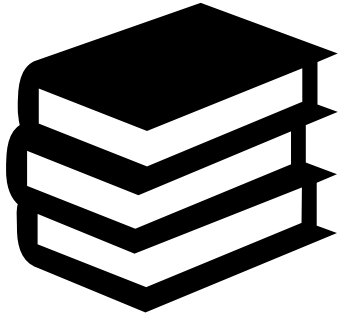


To tātou haerenga | Our Journey: Enablers for implementation

- Pre-implementation work done by the committee
- Getting the sign - off to teach the TIC day divisionally within SMHS, plus Te Kahui Pou committee - cultural
- On our haerenga atu ano to start teaching in a formal capacity
- Checked the readiness checklist with a vast improvement
- We acknowledge the importance of ‘Hongihongi te Wheiwheia’ – where feedback is shared and received.



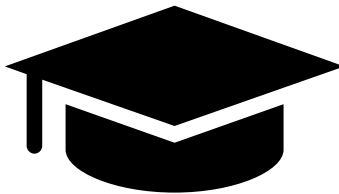
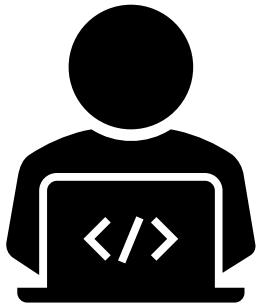
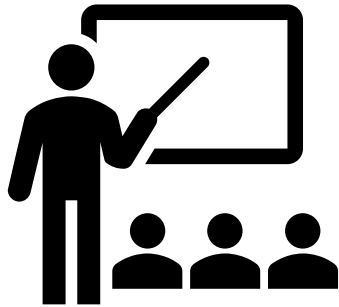
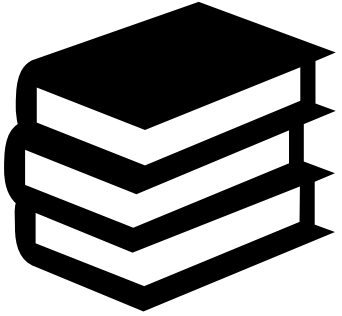
Implementation: Education - the journey towards the destination



Have several approaches and options:

- Trauma-informed v trauma-specific
- ‘Fit for purpose’: Keeping it real | Kia pono te tika and Te Pou Trauma e-learning, Whāraurau Introduction to trauma-informed care online courses, Le Va workshops, Te Rau Ora training, WITT Trauma-Informed Practice level 7 micro credential
- Mandatory training hooked into strategy, not just a ‘tick box’: e.g. leaders, NESP programme

Implementation: Education - the journey towards the destination



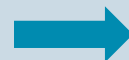
Have several approaches and options:

- Download or send links to resources e.g. Te Pou Trauma-informed approaches - A resource for leaders
- Provide professional development opportunities: deliver fit for purpose 'all-in' service-wide workshops e.g. pre-SPEC.

Readiness to implement a trauma-informed approach



Readiness tools allow organisations to:



evaluate current status
plan for their next steps
review what has been achieved



Can vary depending on the organisation's needs and vision



Could be used to check project status

Readiness checklist example

A. People To what extent do you think:	Still to start	Some way to go	Nearly there	We're there
A1. Kaimahi demonstrate willingness and are ready for practice change, and a commitment to use new practices if supported to do so				
A2. There are processes in place to co-design an organisation-wide trauma-informed approach throughout the process, with Māori, whānau, people with lived experience, other cultural partners, and the community				
A3. Kaimahi are familiar with the concepts of vicarious and secondary trauma, and moral distress				
A4. Kaimahi have a shared vision and are actively involved in plans to practice a trauma-informed approach				

Readiness checklist example

B. Organisation and service level <i>To what extent do you think:</i>	Still to start	Some way to go	Nearly there	We're there
B1. Service design is developed in partnership with Māori and is inclusive of mātauranga and tikanga Māori, along with people from other applicable cultures. Includes the concept of cultural safety				
B2. Leaders role model and demonstrate an organisational culture that reflects trauma-informed values and approaches				
B3. There is leadership commitment to an allocated budget to maintain a trauma-informed approach				
B4. Plans are in place to support all participants' wellbeing throughout the implementation process using trauma-informed principles				

Readiness to implement activity

Poll: Where would you say your organisation is currently at in becoming trauma-informed?

- A. We are at an early stage — building awareness and shared understanding
- B. We have started implementing changes in some areas of practice
- C. We are embedding trauma-informed approaches across teams and services
- D. We are well established — trauma-informed principles are part of our culture and everyday work
- E. Unsure / varies widely across the organisation

“Staff wellness is central to becoming a trauma-informed organisation.”

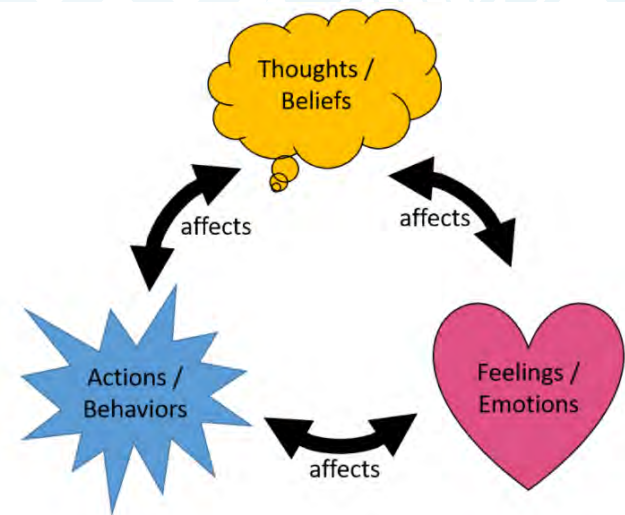
Menschner, C,. & Maul, A.(2016)

Poll:

How well do current systems in your organisation support kaimahi wellbeing?



Kaimahi wellbeing: focus on self-care



Organisational responsibility

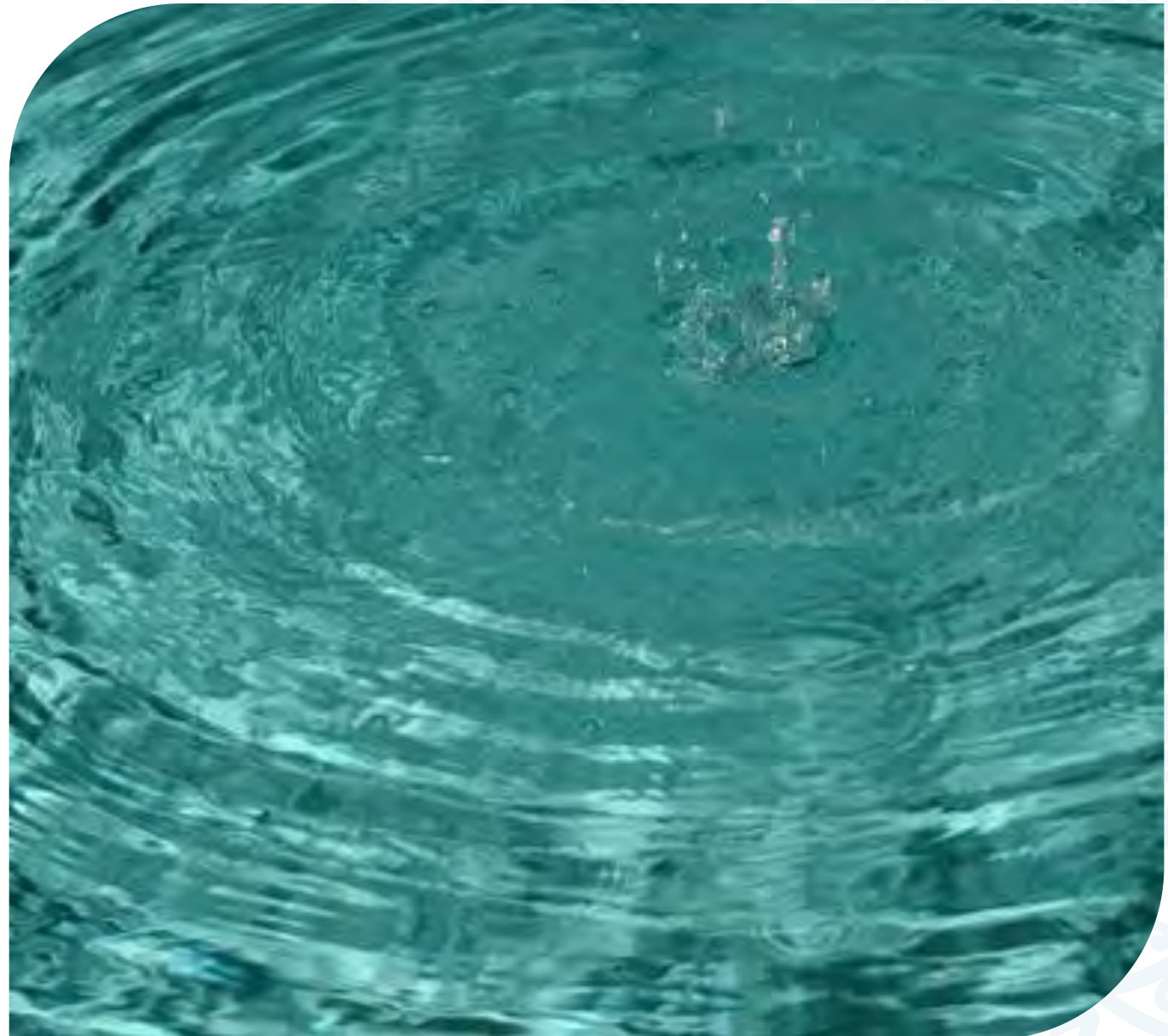
Recognise and respond

Provide reflective supervision and debriefing

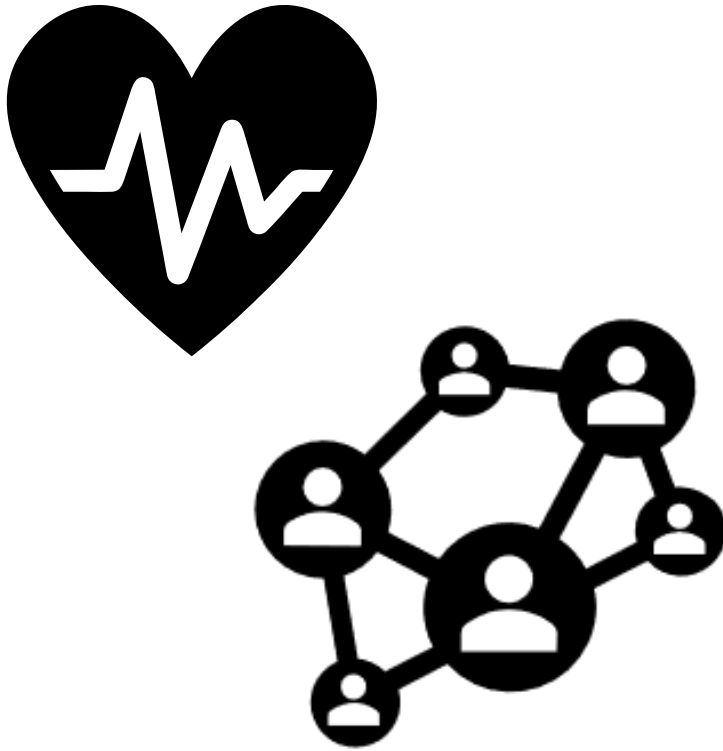
Value wellbeing, provide support

Normalise conversation about

- Vicarious trauma
- Burnout
- Emotional impact of work



Implementation: Vicarious trauma



- Indirect exposure to trauma (IET)
- Includes terms such as ‘compassion fatigue’, ‘compassion stress’, ‘vicarious traumatisation’ or ‘secondary traumatic stress’
- Often insidious, and/or a culmination of events e.g. understaffed, stress, poor self-care, personality, personal history, poor sleep
- Shared responsibility: Kaimahi and organisation
- Self-awareness: Know strengths and limitations, leave role at mahi, own routine/rituals
- Boundaries: Professional relationships
- Education: Prepared mindset, mitigation strategies
- Supervision



Ngā wawata

**Hauā te waka tapa i reira
Hauā te kai tapa i reira
Hangā te whare, kii e te
whāinga**

The people are arriving
Bring forth kai to nourish and
honour them

Ensure our structure has integrity
and our tikanga are sincere

--*Nā Matua Rawiri Wharemate*