

Trauma- & Violence-Informed Care (TVIC)

A Tool for Educators & Schools

What is TVIC?

TVIC is an approach that focuses on **preventing harm by creating safe environments and learning encounters** for students who have experienced (and may still be experiencing) violence and trauma. It is an inter-related set of school policies and educator-level practices based on knowledge about trauma and violence, how student's social conditions can be harmful, and taking a person-centred, strengths-based approach.

- Trauma-informed care (TIC) seeks to create safe care environments based on knowing the effects of trauma.
- Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care (TVIC) expands on this by:
 1. emphasizing that interpersonal violence, especially in the family, is particularly harmful
 2. highlighting that harm comes not only from peoples' experiences, but can also come from our social conditions
- TVIC shifts the focus from “what’s wrong?” (problem is located within the student) to “what’s happened, and is still happening?” (problem is located within the student’s life).
- TVIC makes us examine not only the effects of ongoing violence, but also social structures and practices that can be harmful, and look for ways to improve practices, and consider social conditions, to provide a better, safer educational environment.

Everyone needs to feel physically and emotionally safe; this is especially true for those who've experienced violence and trauma. Many people are currently in unsafe relationships or may live in unsafe conditions. Others may be feeling the effects of previous interpersonal, collective and/or historical violence or trauma.

This tool offers actions you can take to implement TVIC in your teaching practice, and advocate for this approach in your school.

4 WAYS TO TEACH AND WORK IN A TRAUMA- & VIOLENCE-INFORMED WAY

1

BUILD TRAUMA AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING.

All services taking a TVIC approach begin by building awareness of:

- The high prevalence of trauma and violence
- The significance of historical (collective and individual) and ongoing violence (interpersonal and systemic)
- How the impact of trauma can be central to one's development
- The wide range of coping strategies that people use
- The relationship of trauma and violence with substance use, physical health and mental health concerns

Consider trauma a risk factor.

- Students who experience(d) abuse and neglect are at higher risk of a range of physical injuries, and adverse mental and physical health outcomes in adulthood.
- Children's exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) is associated with physical health and mental health problems, alterations in mood, attention, concentration, relationship skills, intrusive memories, compromised learning outcomes, emotional distress and avoidance behaviours (such as school refusal).
- Students with a childhood history of abuse and neglect are more likely to smoke, misuse substances, and engage in risky sexual behaviours.
- Experiences of interpersonal violence, racism and discrimination can change neurobiological patterns and genetic structures that affect mental and physical health.

Consider intersections.

For example, children who experience abuse and live in poverty:

- have families or caregivers with less access to resources for financial independence; therefore, have fewer 'choices'
- are likely to experience stigma related to poverty and violence and may face stereotypes and assumptions about the parents' ability to care for them
- may not have the financial resources that their families need to afford childcare, lawyers, transportation etc., all of which increase their vulnerability to abuse, and;
- have disadvantages that compound if they experience additional forms of discrimination, e.g., related to race, age, literacy, ability or size (poverty and neglect can often look similar, and assumptions that students are neglected when they are living in poverty can further add to stigma)

2

EMPHASIZE SAFETY & TRUST.

You don't need to know a person's history of violence or trauma to provide TVIC. Everyone should be included in the classroom:

Teachers can:

- Create a welcoming environment, including through language (see below)
- Examine the welcoming procedures that consider students' possible trauma histories
- Adapt the physical space for comfort
- Be non-judgmental: make people feel accepted & deserving of your best care
- Communicate clear & accurate expectations about their classroom
- Help students and their caregivers think about safety
- Seek input from students and families about safe & inclusive strategies

Teachers can support their own safety and mental health through:

- Education & resources specific to vicarious trauma¹
- Accessing support resources (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs)
- Engaging in self-care (e.g., eating healthy, exercise, spending time with friends and family)

Language Matters!

Instead of:
"difficult child" or "child with behavioural problems"

Use:
"child who is struggling" or "child is trying to communicate the best way they can"

Instead of:
"abused child" or "abused youth"

Use: *"child" or "youth"*

Instead of:
"she doesn't want our help"

Use: *"our help may not be meeting her needs"*

¹ For more information on vicarious trauma, see our tool: [URL]

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FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICE, COLLABORATION & CONNECTION

Teachers can:

- Develop and use practices and relationships that allow for flexibility and encourage shared decision-making and participation
- Involve students in their learning
- Provide appropriate and meaningful learning options
- Consider choices collaboratively with students
- Actively listen, and privilege the student's voice
- Notice and support students in need

Think of TVIC as “universal precautions” to ensure that students in your care are not re-traumatized or harmed.

4

USE A STRENGTHS-BASED & CAPACITY-BUILDING APPROACH to support students.

Teachers can:

- Allow sufficient time for meaningful engagement
- Provide learning options that can be tailored to student's needs, strengths and contexts
- Seek out ongoing opportunities for development of knowledge and skills with respect to trauma- and violence-informed teaching and classroom management
- Help students identify their own strengths
- Acknowledge the effects of historical and social conditions
- Teach students skills for recognizing triggers, calming, and centering that are developmentally appropriate

Trauma- and violence-informed care requires you to examine your own experiences, power & assumptions, and adjust these to provide the safest and most appropriate learning environment.