

## Trauma-Informed Care

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Many people experience major life challenges, such as the loss of a loved one or physical abuse, as traumatic events. Trauma can happen across the age spectrum and can be described as “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience” that can result from single or multiple experiences. These experiences may cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Trying to manage feelings of trauma can dramatically affect how an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities functions in their day-to-day life; it’s often the direct support professional (DSP) who can offer the best support.

### What is Trauma-Informed Care?

Trauma-informed care is keeping the key elements (below) at the center of care, planning, and the decision-making process for all individuals. Keeping these elements in mind are critical to effectively care for adult survivors of trauma and abuse.<sup>1</sup> Here are the five basic elements in trauma-informed care:<sup>2</sup>

- **Establish Safety:** Ensure physical and emotional wellbeing
- **Trustworthiness:** Establish consistent boundaries
- **Choice:** Allow individuals to establish basic control over their lives
- **Collaboration:** Decisions should be made with the individual
- **Empowerment:** Focus on what the individual can do well

### Trauma-Informed Strategies:

Here are some suggestions to help individuals cope while living with trauma:

- **Time out:** Take time away from a situation
- **Exercise:** Go for a walk outside or go to a park
- **Conversation:** Talk to a friend or trusted family member
- **Rest:** Take a brief nap or practice meditation
- **Music:** Reflect by listening to a favorite piece of music

### Additional Resources:

- <https://www.nasdds.org/resource-library/co-occurring-conditions/mental-health-treatment/trauma-informed-care/understanding-the-effects-of-trauma-on-the-lives-of-those-we-serve-developi/>
- A Trauma-Informed Toolkit for Providers in the Field of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities:  
<https://www.acesconnection.com/fileSendAction/fcType/0/fcOid/468137553002812476/filePointer/468137553002812517/fodoid/468137553002812512/IDD%20TOOLKIT%20%20CFDS%20HEARTS%20NETWORK%205-28%20FinalR2.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5523127/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html)