

Information about Trauma & Trauma-Informed Practices

What do we mean by “trauma”?

Trauma involves a single experience, or repeated or multiple experiences, that overwhelm a person’s ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved in that experience. People who have experienced trauma often feel overwhelming fear, shame, and powerlessness.

Why is trauma important to understand in my work at YWCA Toronto?

Experiences of trauma Canada are common – approximately 3 in every 4 Canadians experience trauma in their lifetime. For women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals the rate of experiencing trauma is even higher. Trauma events can have significant impacts on overall health and well-being, particularly if these events occurred in childhood.

This means most YWCA Toronto participants have experienced some form of trauma. For example, many women accessing Shelters programs are fleeing violence; many women accessing employment services are living in poverty; and many girls attending childcare and/or camps have experienced difficult situations at home with their caregivers.

YWCA Toronto has made a commitment to organization-wide trauma-informed approaches. No matter your role at YWCA Toronto, it is important to recognize that these experiences affect the majority of those we serve, and to adjust our approaches so that we best serve the needs of our participants.

I am not a front-line worker so why does this apply to me?

Trauma-specific therapy and trauma-informed approaches are different. *Trauma therapy* is offered by qualified trauma therapists, who provide specific services to individuals focused on their trauma experiences.

Trauma-informed approaches acknowledge the prevalence and impacts of trauma, even if trauma has not been disclosed. It prioritizes the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of both participants and staff.

Working in a trauma-informed way means we work across the YWCA to shift culture, policies, training and awareness to create welcoming services and offer the best environment for staff and participant healing and wellness.

What should I do if I witness violence or trauma at work?

Trauma-informed approaches create safety for *everyone* in the organization. When we witness or experience violence or trauma at work, it is important to recognize the impacts this may have on us and our colleagues and take steps to care for ourselves and our team in order to do our best work.