Nationally, about 90% of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event at some point in their lives.² In Illinois, nearly two-thirds of adults report that they experienced at least one traumatic event in childhood.³

A TI approach is predicated on a set of key components known as the four “R’s”: 1) Realize the impact of trauma 2) Recognize how trauma manifests in individuals, communities, and systems 3) Respond by incorporating this knowledge into policies and practices 4) Resist re-traumatization.¹

With growing awareness of the adverse effects of trauma on physical, mental, and social well-being, “trauma-informed” and “healing-centered” approaches have gained increasing focus as systems and organizations aim to deliver services more effectively and equitably. While there are key differences between them, trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches are not mutually exclusive frameworks – both offer valuable methods that, when integrated, can enhance their effectiveness and deliver a comprehensive strategy for preventing trauma and promoting well-being. This fact sheet defines the essential elements of each framework and explains the benefits of an integrative approach.

Principles of a Trauma-Informed (TI) Approach

A TI approach is predicated on a set of key components known as the four “R’s”: 1) Realize the impact of trauma 2) Recognize how trauma manifests in individuals, communities, and systems 3) Respond by incorporating this knowledge into policies and practices 4) Resist re-traumatization.¹

A TI approach involves six principles:¹

- **Safety:** The environment is physically and psychologically safe for all.
- **Trustworthiness and transparency:** Trust is built through transparent decision-making and actions.
- **Peer support:** Opportunities are available to connect with and receive mutual support from those with lived experience.
- **Collaboration and mutuality:** Decision-making power is shared through trusting, equitable partnerships.
- **Empowerment, voice, and choice:** Individuals’ strengths and autonomy to make decisions about their own lives are honored.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender issues:** Cultural and gender-related experiences are recognized and respected, and the impact of historical trauma is acknowledged.
“Understanding and acknowledging that there are overarching generational, cultural, and societal issues that have caused trauma in the past and continue to re-traumatize individuals is the first step toward TIA implementation” (SAMHSA 2023, 2).

Principles of a Healing-Centered (HC) Approach

Healing-centered engagement (HCE), first coined by Dr. Shawn Ginwright in 2018, is a strengths-based framework that calls for a holistic response to trauma. It recognizes that trauma is collectively experienced and must be addressed by tackling the root causes of harm created by policies and systems. HC approaches are predicated on four key components: 1) Responses to trauma must be political rather than clinical 2) Restoration of well-being involves a grounding in cultural identity and collective healing 3) Recognizing assets rather than focusing on symptoms is what leads to healing 4) Realizing the need to heal the healers is necessary.⁴

An HC approach involves the “CARMA” principles:⁵

- **Culture**: Shared values and norms that define our collective identity
- **Agency**: Individual and collective power to take action and make changes in our circumstances and within systems
- **Relationships**: Ability to build and maintain healthy connections with others
- **Meaning**: Deep understanding of our identity, purpose, and life’s significance
- **Aspiration**: Ability to envision, pursue, and achieve personal and collective goals for progress and livelihood

“The healing-centered approach comes from the idea that people are not harmed in a vacuum, and well-being comes from participating in transforming the root causes of the harm within institutions” (Ginwright 2018).

What are the benefits of integrating trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches?

While the TI and HC frameworks each have unique elements, they complement and build on each other. TI approaches lay the foundational principles necessary to support the implementation of HC approaches by building awareness of trauma’s impact and promoting safer environments. HC approaches expand on TI principles by emphasizing strengths, cultural responsiveness, and holistic healing practices. Integrating these two approaches can produce a synergistic effect that addresses the immediate effects of trauma while working toward long-term, root-cause solutions.

By leveraging the strengths of both frameworks, we can foster holistic well-being and transformative change.
Integrating Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered Approaches

**TI Approaches**
- Safety
- Trustworthiness & transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration & mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, & choice
- Cultural, historical, & gender issues

**HC Approaches**
- Culture
- Agency
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Aspiration
- Holistic Approaches
- Collective Healing
- Advocacy
- Root-Cause Solutions

**TIHC**
- Safety & trust foster environments in which healing can occur
- Collaboration & peer support promote relationship-building, connection, & a sense of community
- Empowerment, voice, & choice facilitate strengths-driven HC approaches
- HC ensures TI is culturally responsive
- Immediate needs are addressed while working toward long-term solutions

**Resources for Further Exploring**
Learn more about trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches by checking out these resources:

- **SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach**
- **SAMHSA’s Practical Guide for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach**
- **Trauma and trauma-informed care resource list by the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative**
- **“The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement” by Dr. Shawn Ginwright**
- **Brief: Recognizing Healing-Centered Community Practices as a Complement to Trauma-Informed Interventions and Services by the Praxis Project**
Notes


