




# Building a Trauma-Informed Workplace

*Part 3 of the Spring 2026 Well-Being Series Workshops*



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# Spring 2026 Well-Being Series Workshops

[Register here for all three Spring 2026 workshops](#)

March 26 | April 23 | May 28

March 26: Stress First Aid Essentials



April 23: From Cynicism to Radical Acceptance - How to Cope During Challenging Times



May 28: Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Workplace



# Objectives

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Verbalize an increased awareness of the impact of trauma on individuals, team functioning, patient safety, and overall workplace wellbeing.
2. Describe actionable principles for working toward a trauma informed workplace.



PIN IT

# On a scale from Nicolas to Cage - how are you today?



Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) | use code **5786 0138**

# Are you familiar with the term "Trauma-informed care"?



menti.com  
**5786 0138**

Waiting for participants

0

Yes- I could speak to it

0

No- I haven't heard it before

0

Maybe I have heard of it, but I am not sure that I could speak to it

# What is Trauma-Informed Care?

- Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is an approach that assumes that an individual is more likely than not to have a history of trauma.
- Trauma-Informed Care recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms, acknowledges the role trauma may play in an individual's life and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.



# Trauma-informed care seeks to:

*Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Trauma-Informed Approach"*



Realize

- Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand paths for recovery;

Recognize

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in patients, families, and staff;

Integrate

- Integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and

Avoid

- Actively avoid re-traumatization.



Workplace stress costs U.S. employers \$500 billion annually in lost productivity.



Mental health conditions are estimated to cost employers in the United States up to \$193.2 billion annually in lost earnings due to absenteeism and presenteeism.



Anxiety and depression cost the global economy over \$1 trillion in lost productivity yearly.

# What is Trauma?

“A psychological, emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing.”

–The Center for Treatment of Anxiety and Mood Disorders, 2021

“An emotional injury that effects performance and well-being.”

–Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2022



# Types of Trauma

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**Acute trauma:** Results from a single stressful or dangerous event

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**Chronic trauma:** Results from repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful events (*includes Developmental Trauma*)

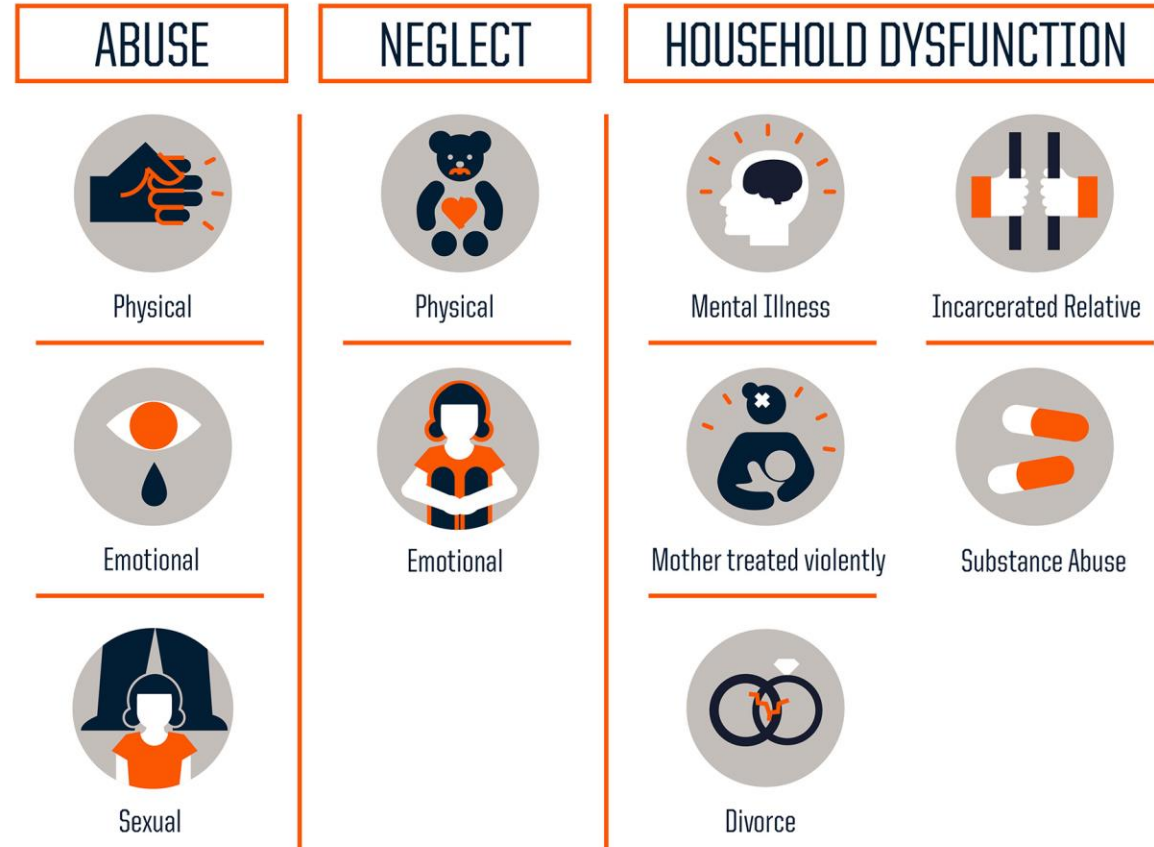
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**Complex trauma:** Results from exposure to multiple traumatic events (*including Community Trauma*)

17,500 adults asked about exposure to *adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)*:

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

(CDC and Kaiser 1995-1997)



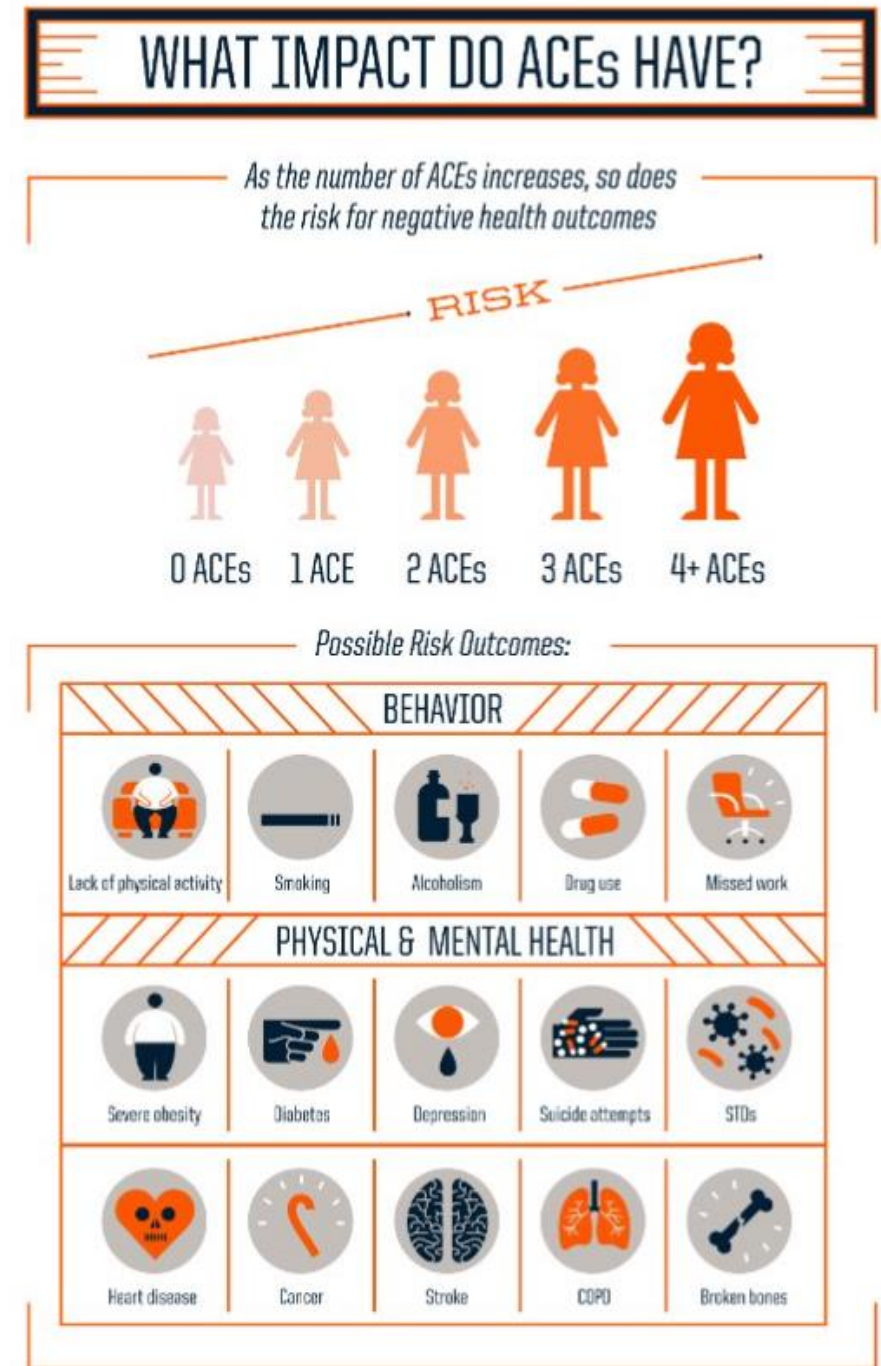
*\*Other factors: Bullying, systemic racism, other minority status, historical traumas*

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

(CDC and Kaiser 1995-1997)

For every event, participants got a point toward the total score:

- 67% had at least one ACE
- 12.6% had 4 or more
- **Conclusion: Early trauma physiologically effects brain- MRI scans showed measurable differences in amygdala (fear response)**



BUT wait...didn't the participants engage in high-risk behaviors that increased their risk?

Even without high-risk behaviors, they were at risk!

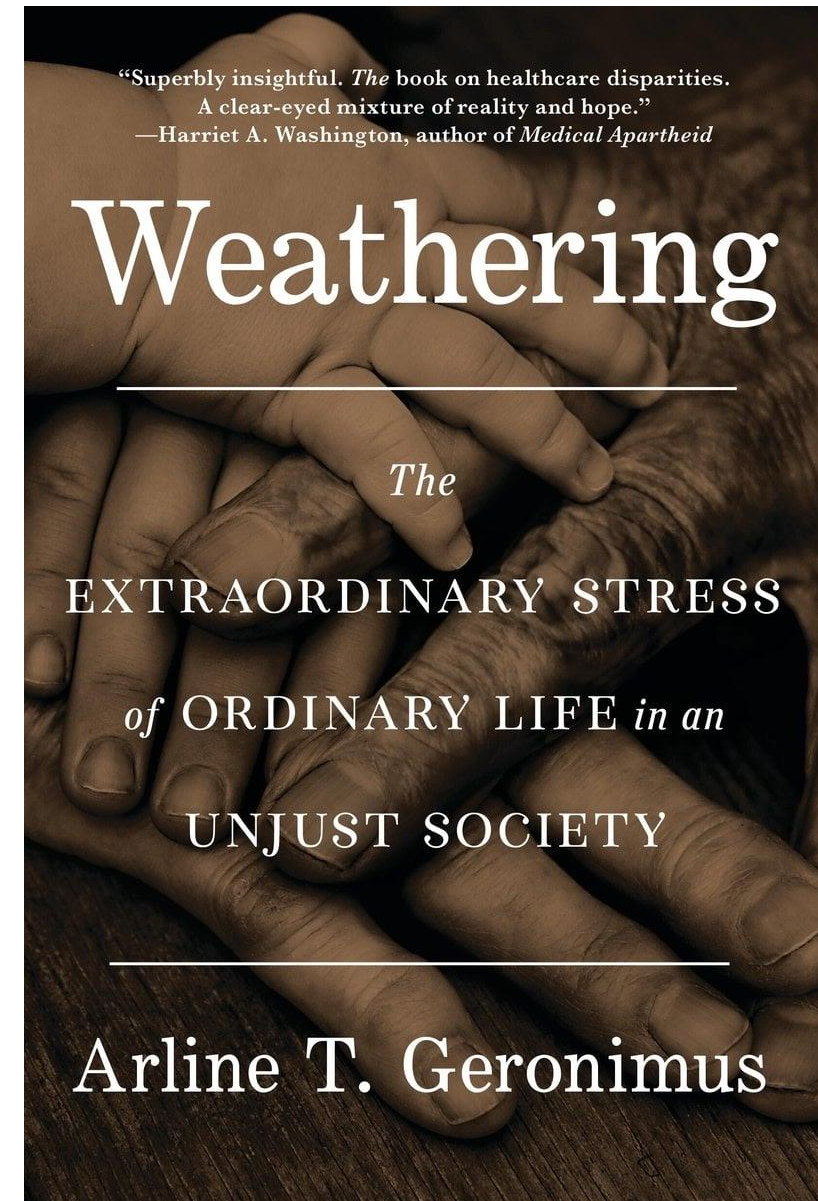
- Fight or flight stress response overacting- toxic stress-that effect on body (adrenaline, cortisol released)
- This system is activated over and over again- becomes maladaptive- effect on immune system, even DNA



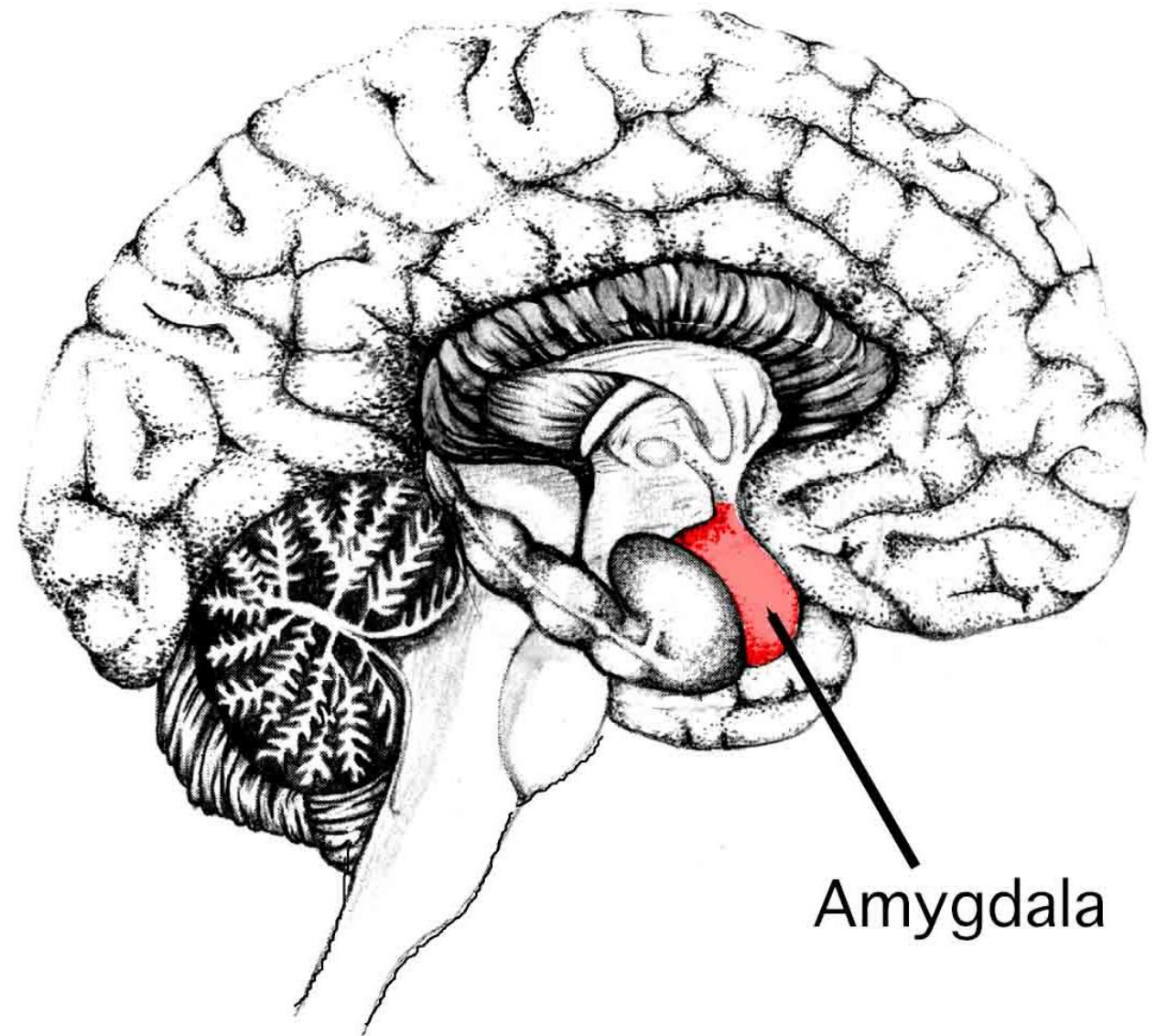
Dr. Arline T. Geronimus coined the term "weathering" to describe the effects of systemic oppression--including racism and classism--on the body.

In *Weathering*, based on more than 30 years of research, she argues that health and aging have more to do with how society treats us than how well we take care of ourselves.

She explains what happens to human bodies as they attempt to withstand and overcome the challenges and insults that society leverages at them, and details how this process ravages their health.



# The Emotional Watchman



Amygdala

# Trauma in the Brain

- A precipitating event occurs, and normal coping mechanisms do not work to resolve the situation
- When stress is high, reasoning is low

## FLIPPING *Your Lid*

Prefrontal Cortex  
Thinking Brain

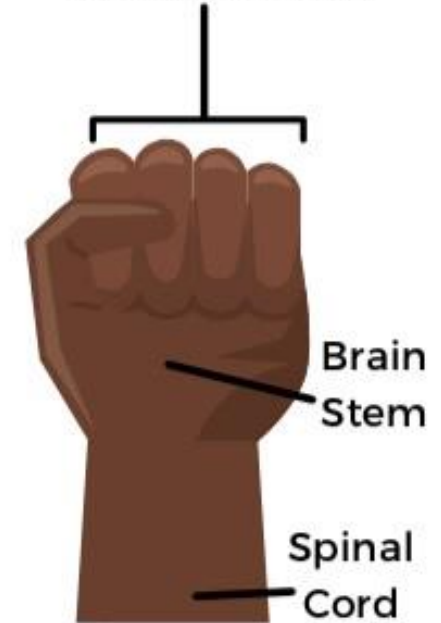


Amygdala  
Big  
Feelings

*Flipped Lid*

Lose access to your thinking brain and the amygdala activates "fight, flight or freeze" and you operate from a place of fear

Cerebral Cortex

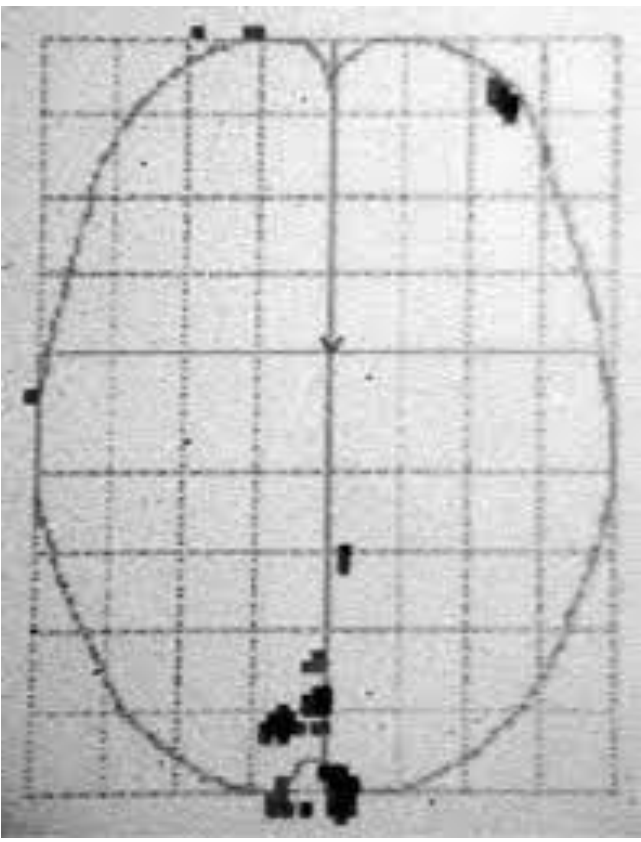
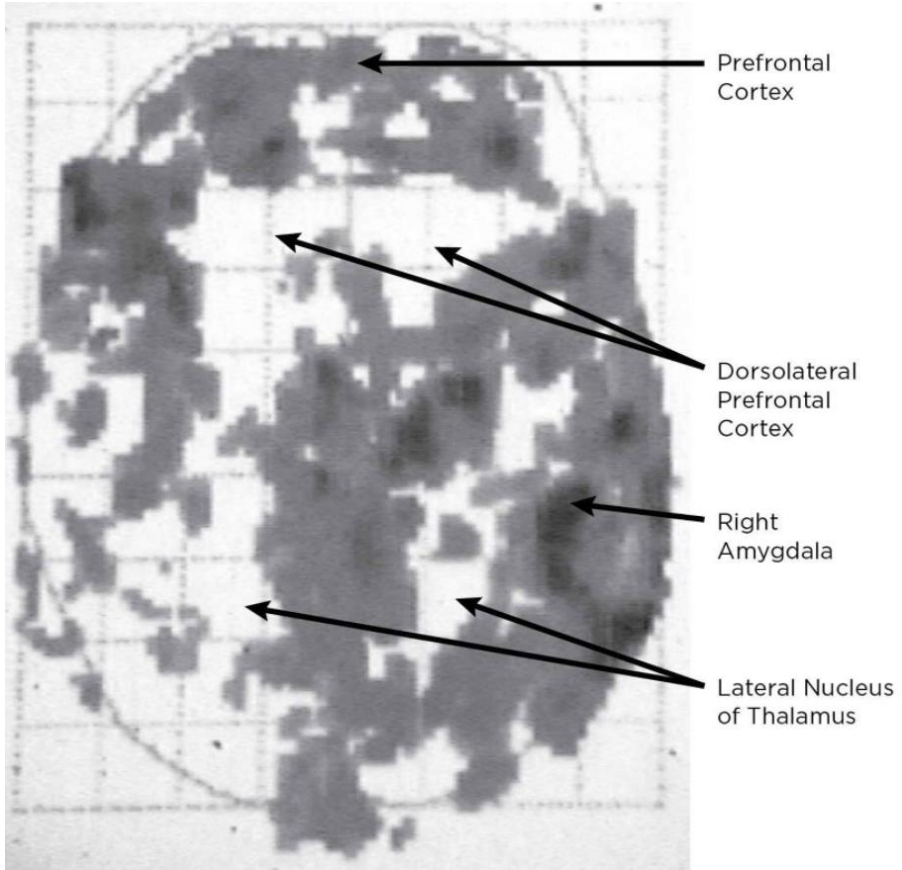
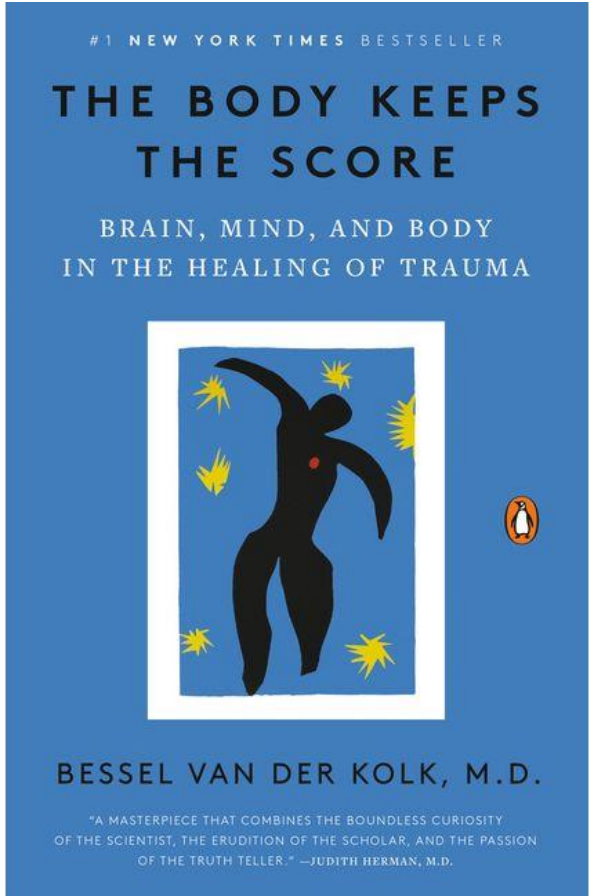


Brain  
Stem

Spinal  
Cord

*Calm Mind*

Every part of brain connected, so working in harmony and YOU are balanced and relaxed



Van Der Kolk, 2014

# The Impact of Our Work

“In the same way that oils splatter on a painter’s shirt or dirt gets under the gardener's nails, trauma work has an impact.”

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky *Trauma Stewardship*, 2009



# The Ripple Effects of Trauma in Healthcare Workplaces

An initial traumatic event such as a medical error, patient death or violent encounter in a clinical setting has a long-lasting negative effect on a healthcare team member's attitudes, behavior and other aspects of functioning.



Less obvious trauma might come from organizational requirements or demands or ethical challenges that prevent one from providing the quality of care they believe in.



Droplet-sized traumatic events add up over time, along with larger stressors, leading to the familiar symptoms of burnout—exhaustion, cynicism, a loss of sense of self and feelings of ineffectiveness or lack of accomplishment.



Secondary suffering continues to propagate with emotional, psychological and physical consequences moving out like waves in a pond from the central traumatic event. Ripples dampen over time and space, but many can be left in the wake of the initial wounding surge.

# The Impact of Trauma in Healthcare Workplaces

## Employee Well-Being

- Emotional exhaustion, anxiety, depression, PTSD, insomnia
- Increased risk of moral distress, compassion fatigue and burnout
- Higher rates of absenteeism

## Team Functioning

- Breakdown in communication and collaboration
- Increased conflict and decreased psychological safety
- Difficulty maintaining trust among staff

## Patient Safety

- Distracted or impaired clinical judgment
- Higher risk of errors, missed care, and delayed interventions
- Reduced patient satisfaction and trust

## Retention & Engagement

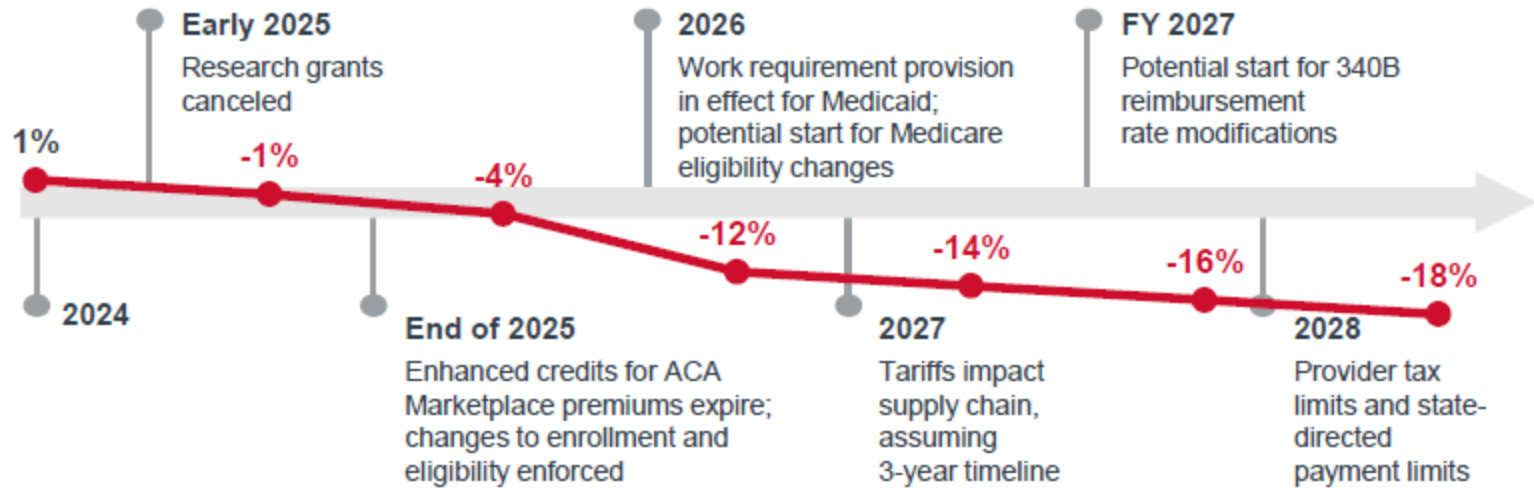
- Increased turnover and difficulty recruiting
- Reduced motivation and sense of purpose
- Loss of experienced staff impacting continuity of care



# OBBBA and its impact for hospitals at a glance

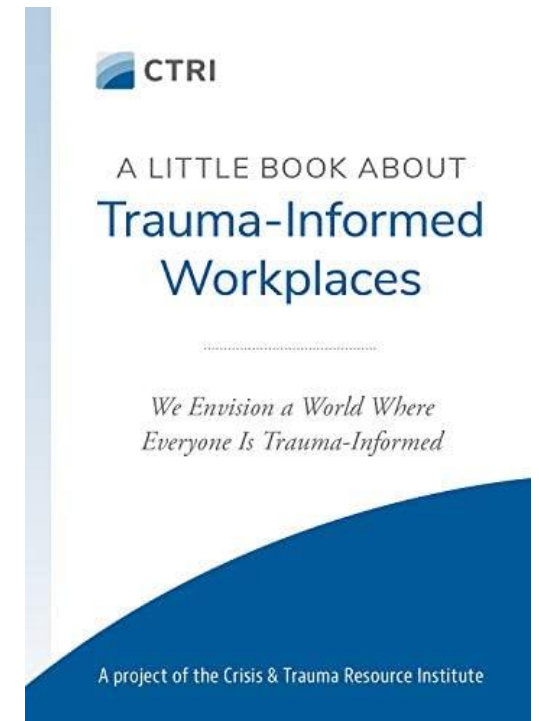
While some provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act took effect immediately, many of the biggest healthcare cuts will take effect over time. Several major changes to enrollment, eligibility, and affordability will take effect in the next few years, while Medicaid payment cuts to states will phase in over time starting in several years. As states begin to implement the policies over the coming years, the impact to health system margins will compound — and intersect with other executive branch actions.

## Key policy milestones and impact on system operating margin<sup>1</sup>



# What is a Trauma-Informed Workplace?

- Understand the presence of trauma, acknowledge the role trauma can play in a person's life, and promote work environments that support the individual and collective well-being of staff and clients.
- Actively works to mitigate the effects of trauma by creating a sense of belonging, connection and safety through attitudes, policies and practices.
- Organizations that are more trauma-informed are more resilient and better able to achieve their missions.
- On the other hand, workplaces that don't embody trauma informed principles can be home to disrespectful behavior, a lack of safety, and feelings of disconnection.



## What is something that has been challenging or even painful during the last several years that you are working on accepting?

- Climate change
- Perpetually challenging work/life balance
- Political vicissitudes
- Not enough time for myself
- Missing life events due to work/education
- The role that I trained most of my life for is not the role that the world needs me for

## What is something that has been challenging or even painful during the last several years that you are working on accepting?

- Apathy
- Distance from family
- Aging parents
- Parenting a challenging teen
- Unsafe behavior by teenage child
- Divorce
- Loss of a couple friends who used to be besties
- Aging
- Sudden passing of a loved one
- Aging



# TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKPLACES 2025



Written by Whitney Marris, LCSW

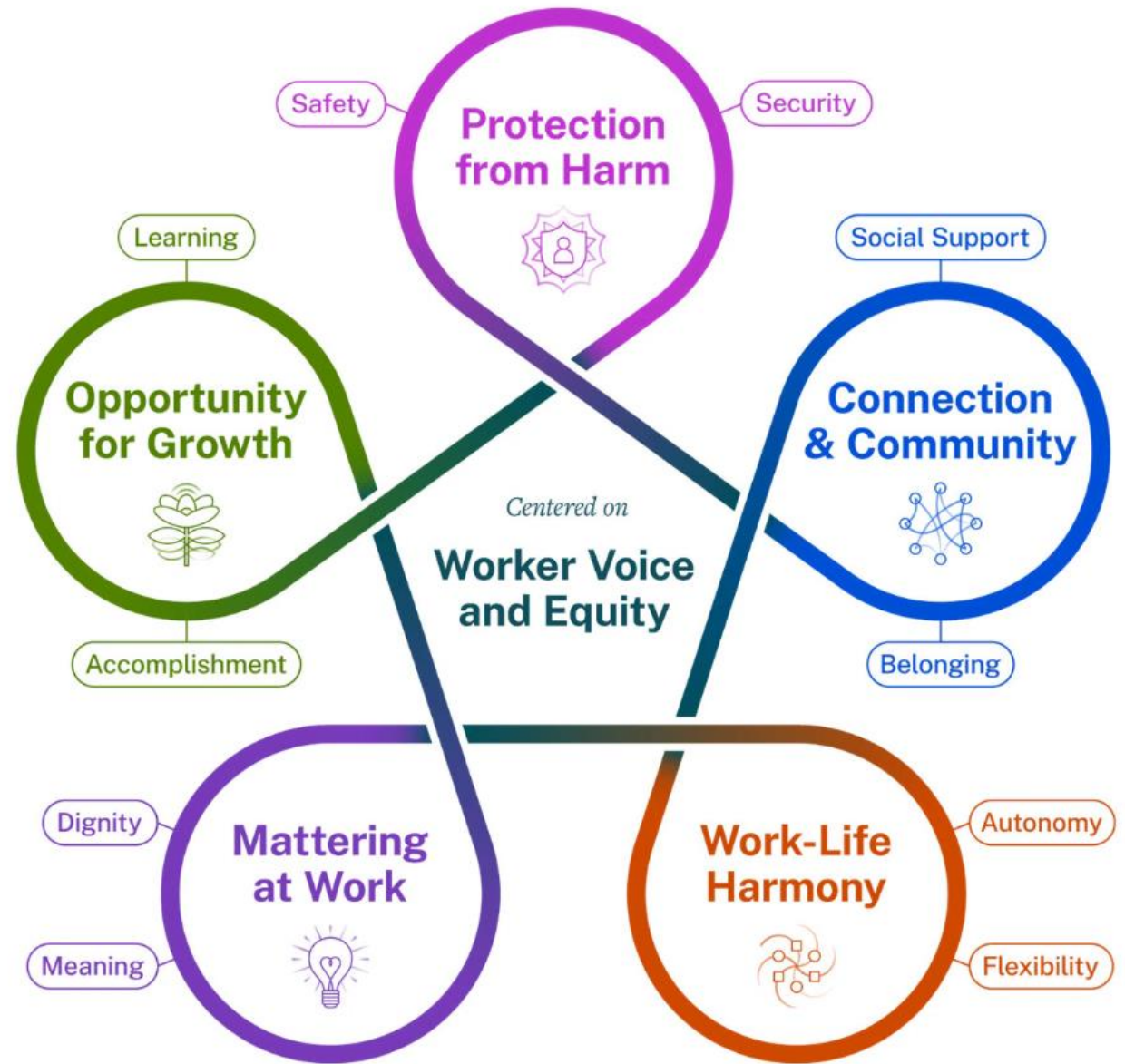
Edited and designed by Laura Braden, CTIPP's Director of Communications

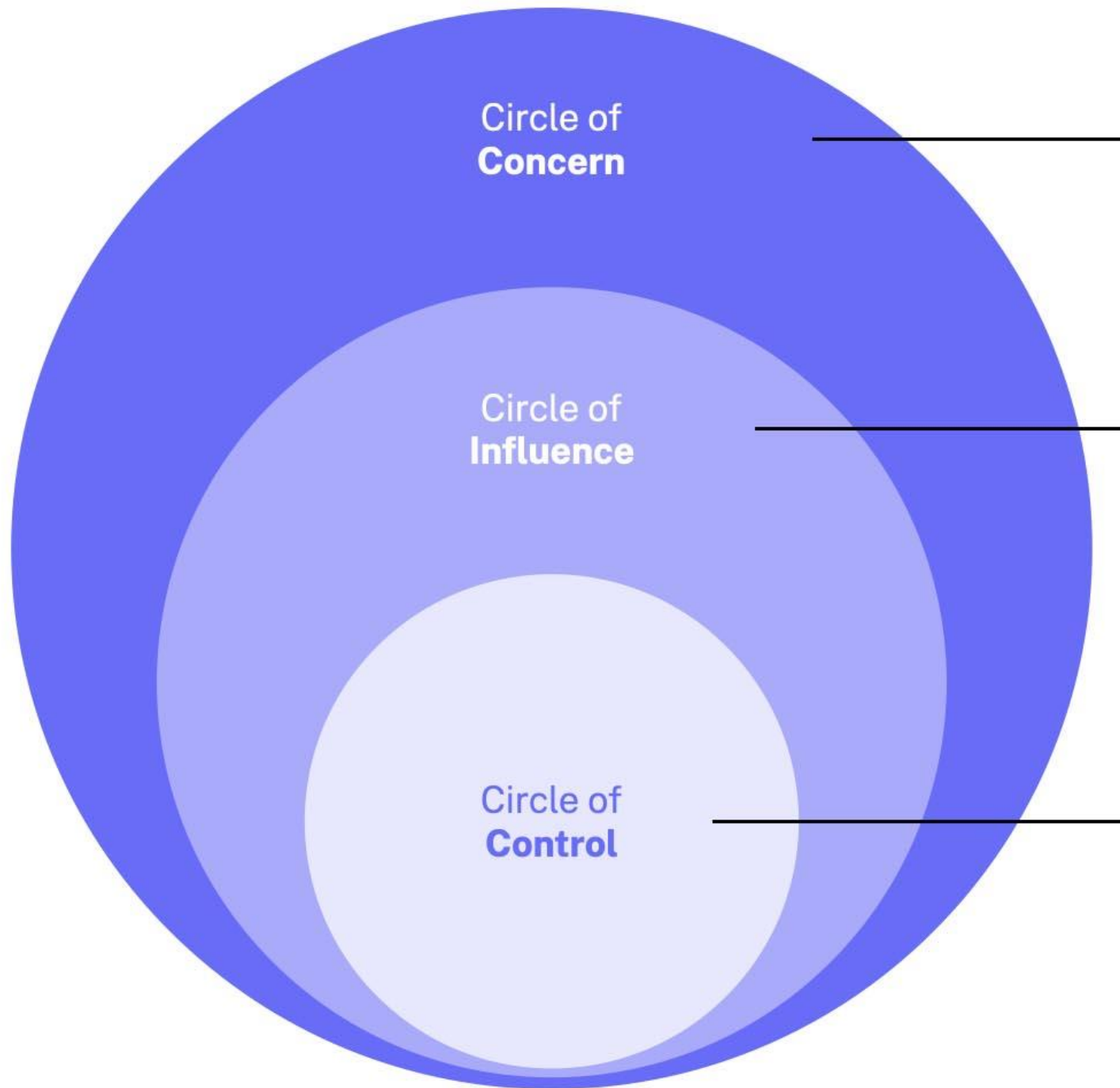
(Originally released in 2023. Updated in 2025 with new statistics and resources.)

# The Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being

*Our workplaces play a significant role in our lives.*

**Centered on the worker's voice and equity,** these Five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles. Creating a plan to enact these practices can help strengthen the essentials of workplace well-being.





Circle of  
**Concern**

Wide range of concerns of which we have no control over the outcome

Circle of  
**Influence**

The concerns we can do something about. We do not have control over the outcome, but can influence it with what we are able to control.

Circle of  
**Control**

What we can directly control or impact through our thoughts, words, and actions.

# Protection from Harm

The first Essential of this Framework is **Protection from Harm**. Creating the conditions for physical and psychological safety is a critical foundation for ensuring workplace mental health and well-being.

This Essential rests on two human needs: **safety** and **security**.



Prioritize workplace physical and psychological safety



Enable adequate rest



Normalize and support mental health

# Connection & Community

The second Essential of the Framework is **Connection and Community**. Fostering positive social interactions and relationships in the workplace supports worker well-being.

This Essential rests on two human needs: **social support** and **belonging**.



Create cultures of  
inclusion and  
belonging



Cultivate trusted  
relationships



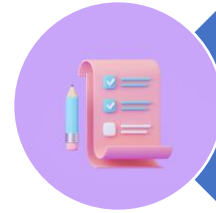
Foster collaboration  
and teamwork

# Work-Life Harmony

- The third Essential of this Framework is **Work-Life Harmony**. Professional and personal roles can together create work and non-work conflicts.
- The ability to integrate work and non-work demands, for all workers, rests on the human needs of **autonomy** and **flexibility**.



Provide more autonomy over how work is done



Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible



Increase access to paid leave



Respect boundaries between work and non-work time

# Mattering at Work

The fourth Essential of the Framework is **Mattering at Work**. People want to know that they matter to those around them and that their work matters. Knowing you matter has been shown to lower stress, while feeling like you do not can raise the risk for depression.

This Essential rests on the human needs of **dignity** and **meaning**.



Provide a living wage



Engage workers in workplace decisions



Build a culture of gratitude and recognition



Connect individual work with organizational mission

# Opportunity for Growth

The final Essential of this Framework is **Opportunity for Growth**. When organizations create more opportunities for workers to accomplish goals based on their skills and growth, workers become more optimistic about their abilities and more enthusiastic about contributing to the organization.

This Essential rests on the human needs of **learning** and a sense of **accomplishment**.



Offer quality training,  
education and  
mentoring

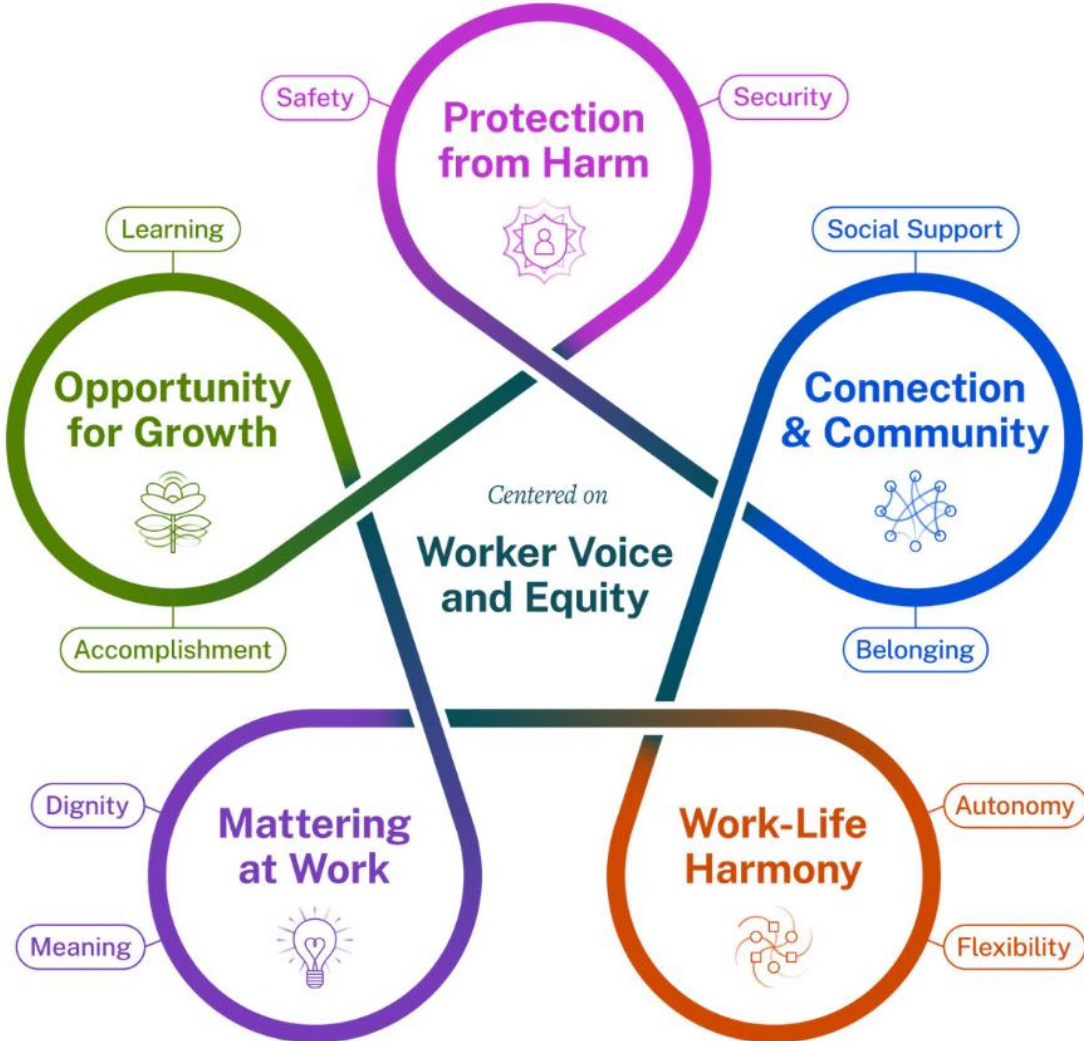


Foster clear, equitable  
pathways for career  
advancement



Ensure relevant,  
reciprocal feedback

# Discussion Question



How can workplace culture be realistically adapted to create a safer and more supportive environment for those with a history of/exposure to trauma?



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Waiting for participants

# Discussion

- How do workers describe feeling included (or not) in our workplace?
- How can our workplace better support both the physical and mental health needs of all workers?
- How might we give workers more autonomy or a bigger voice in their duties?
- What are some examples of how a unit/dept has implemented trauma informed strategies and the impact?



# Key Takeaways

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- **What is Trauma-Informed Care?**
  - Recognizes the widespread impact of trauma, actively resists re-traumatization, and promotes environments of safety, healing, and empowerment.
- **Workplace Impacts of Trauma**
  - Employee Well-Being
  - Patient Safety
  - Team Functioning
  - Retention & Engagement
- **The Surgeon General's model for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing**
  - Protection from Harm
  - Connection and Community
  - Work-life Harmony
  - Mattering at Work
  - Opportunity for Growth

## System Well-being Resources

### UW Medicine Well-being & Support Program

<https://faculty.uwmedicine.org/wellbeing-and-support/>

### The Whole U

<https://thewholeu.edu>

### WA EAP Employee Assistance Program

<https://eap.wa.gov>

877-313-4455

Access Code: UW

### UW Medicine Peer to Peer

<https://faculty.uwmedicine.org/p2p>

### UW SafeCampus

Violence Prevention & Support

<https://www.washington.edu/safecampus>

### GME Wellness

For UW Medicine residents, fellows, spouses & partners

<https://sites.uw.edu/uwgme/wellness/>

## Local Well-being Resources

### HMC Well-being & Resilience

<https://one.uwmedicine.org/sites/hmc/resilience>

(Requires AMC log in)

### UWMC Montlake & Northwest: CARE4U

<https://uwmedicine.org/uwcare4u>

(Requires AMC log in)

### Fred Hutch Cancer Center (FHCC)

Support our Staff (SOS): visit site on TogetherNet

[Fred Hutch EAP Link](#)

Premise Health Clinic: <https://ourcampusclinic.org>

## Community of Support

### All sites. All Roles. Always Welcome!

These sessions offer a little structure, a lot of tools, and always a chance for open sharing in a private space with colleagues who “get it.”

**1st Tuesdays:** 1:30-2:30 pm ([Zoom link](#))

Meeting ID: 998 0507 3686

Passcode: CARE4U

**3rd Thursdays:** 7:30-8:30 am ([Zoom link](#))

Meeting ID: 982 1032 2994

Passcode: CARE4U

## Need Urgent Help?

- Talk with a crisis counselor or crisis navigator 24/7
- Call or Text : 988



# QUESTIONS?



Please Provide Feedback!



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