


Trauma-Informed, Culturally Safe Approaches for the Animal Services Sector

Presented by Sareeta Lopez, Program Manager at the Vancouver Humane Society

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Land Honouring

- I am grateful to currently be living on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & seɬilwítlh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.
- We encourage you to learn more about the land you are living on by using the interactive map at <https://native-land.ca/>

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Research Background

Key term: Placed at risk

- Collectively refers to individuals and groups who are marginalized, recognizing that the vulnerabilities and risks are structurally rooted and often not within the control of the individual
- Placed-at-risk populations include: people experiencing open and pervasive poverty (poor nutrition, homelessness), people who use drugs, people experiencing mental health challenges, people who may be geographically isolated from services (rural or remote communities), and people dealing with current or past trauma (such as survivors of domestic violence, intergenerational or cultural trauma)

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Reflection


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Why is One Welfare important?

- More support for animal guardians, their pets, and organizations through collaboration with other professionals, social services, and community partners.
- Thinking about issues that exist in the animal services sector through a "One Welfare" lens means more collaboration with:
 - mental health professionals
 - veterinary clinics
 - animal behaviour professionals
 - homeless shelters & temporary housing
 - Indigenous communities, bands, Chiefs and Councils, and friendship centres
 - emergency departments
 - other social service organizations

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Activity: Systems Mapping

- Create a 'systems map' by thinking about some of the people, agencies, and services you connect with in your work. Then, you can add in some connections that you know exist in your community that you would like to work with. Some questions to think about:
 - What other services exist in your community that might be even distantly connected with the people and animals you work with?
 - What potential is there for collaboration?
 - If you are new to the area/community, what is your knowledge of local resources, and who could you collaborate with to help identify resources?

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Systems Map Example



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Early Intervention & Prevention

- **Early intervention and prevention** means that we are identifying and providing effective support to people and communities before an emergency or an issue presents itself.
- **Outreach-based practices** are the ways we can engage in early intervention and prevention practices, for example, by setting up a booth at a community event and sharing information about the low-cost spay and neuter services an organization offers, and why this is important.

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Now? How?

- Remember your why.
- Choose less, but better.
- Solve the problem at its root.

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What is Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP)?

A trauma-informed service provider, system or organization does the following:

- They realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential ways for healing
- They recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, people accessing animal services, others involved in the system
- They respond by incorporating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices

Klinik Community Health Care Centre, 2013

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What is Trauma?

- Trauma can be defined as an experience that overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope. Traumatic experiences can affect one's sense of safety, self-efficacy, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. It is also common for those who have experience trauma to feel fear, shame, helplessness, and powerlessness.

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2014

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What is the connection between TIP & animal protection work?

- Benefits for animals & their guardians**
 - Guardian feels better supported, safer, and more open to learning about resources that benefit the animals in their care
 - More likely to take advice and instruction about the needs and well-being of the animal in their care
 - Opportunity to improve living conditions for animals
 - More likely to reach out for/accept help before a situation becomes harmful for the animals
- Benefits for workers & organizations**
 - Less stressful interaction for all involved
 - Minimizes challenging situations
 - Seeing positive outcomes for guardian/animal = less burnout and compassion fatigue

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Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

- Understanding what triggers are, and what potential triggers for peoples accessing services might be
- Using accessible, non-triggering language
- Ensuring transparency in processes
- Centering voice, choice, respect, and sensitivity
- Meeting a person where they are at in their lives
- Unlearning assumptions and actively challenging biases through constant learning, reflection, and interrogation

of our own perspectives (e.g., reflecting on hiring practices and interactions with people who have different lived experiences than our own)

- Using a strengths-based approach (focusing on a person's strengths rather than just looking at the challenges they're experiencing)
- Using a non-judgmental approach
- Helping to create cultural safety by developing an understanding of communities and their histories

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Understanding Triggers

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Signs an Individual is Activated

- Struggling to speak, stumbling over words, or not speaking at all
- Appearing on edge – glancing around, looking down, avoiding eye contact
- Body appears tense or trembling, hands shaking
- Pale or flushed skin
- Breathing rapidly
- Increased sweating
- Dilated pupils

It takes 20 to 30 minutes for the body to return to normal and calm down.

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How To Implement Your Understanding of Triggers

- Attend to immediate needs to help alleviate triggers
 - Food, water, clothing, housing, transportation – share resources, offer snacks, hot water/ coffee
- Be transparent, consistent, and predictable as possible
 - Offer translation services – seek out volunteers
 - Allow a support person to be present if the individual feels that would be helpful, like a veterinary social worker or volunteer counselor – start with volunteers
 - If a promise is made (to make a referral, or follow up with a phone call) follow through in a timely manner
 - Acknowledge and take responsibility for miscommunication
- Clearly outline expectations
- Obtain informed consent
 - Ask the individual to share their understanding of what's been said

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Using Accessible & Non-Triggering Language

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Ensuring Transparency in our Processes

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Centering Voice, Choice, Respect, & Sensitivity

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“...if you see two people in a household, one of whom is sitting on the couch trying to keep [themselves] from crying, and you're going to remove a pet, I think it should make sense for you to double-check who is the actual caretaker for the pet.. They should talk to them and offer options... I lost the dog that I really really really loved because of [the abuser's] actions.”


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How to Center Voice + Choice

- Offer to work together to find solutions
- Ask the individual what their ideal outcome would be + what concerns they have
- Make a genuine effort to connect with the individual
- Allow the individual as much choice and control as possible in making decisions affecting them and their pet
 - Examples: Offer choices for how they will be contacted, how and whether messages can be left, who will be involved in their pet's care, what the priorities and goals of treatment will be, time of day for appointments
- Equalize power imbalances: check in with the individual to ask how the process has been for them


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How to Center Voice + Choice In Interactions With Clients

- "I'd like to understand your perspective."
- "Let's look at this together."
- "Let's figure out the plan that will work best for you."
- "What's most important for you right now?"
- "It's important to have your feedback every step of the way."
- "Please let me know at any time if you would like a break or if something feels uncomfortable for you."
- "You are the expert or the driver. I can be your GPS or map to help guide you."
- "If there are questions you are not comfortable answering, that's no problem. Just tell me to pass and we'll move on."
- "I invite you to ask me questions."
- Ask before offering information/resources, how they'd like to receive it, and when.

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Meeting a Person Where They Are at in Life

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How To Meet a Person Where They Are At

- Avoid placing expectations on the individual like, "You need to find a home," or "You need to find a job," before offering to help
- If the person uses substances, avoid placing judgment and use supportive language; avoid the terms "addict" and "substance abuse"
- Share resources if the individual would like them
- Talk with the person about what they hope to achieve, or their best hopes for the situation
- Be curious and ask questions
 - "What was it like for you to get here today?"
 - "What are you dealing with right now / what else is on your plate?"
 - "What would you like me to know about you?"
 - "What or who are your supports?"

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Challenging Biases & Assumptions

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What questions can we ask to challenge our biases?

- What other stories could there be?
- Do I really know what this person has been through?
- Where did my knowledge come from?
- Ask for feedback: "How was this conversation for you?"

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Strengths-Based Approach

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Tips for Using a Strengths-Based Approach

- "It's quite resourceful of you to have visited a petfood bank."
- "It's great that you were able to get creative and put together an online fundraiser."
- "I hear that Jesse has helped you buy pet food in the past."
- Ask the individual about their interests, so that you can develop a sense of their strengths based on what they tell you.
- Ask the individual what they think they are good at, or what has worked in the past when they've been in a tough situation.

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Non-Judgmental Approach

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Cultural Safety, Sensitivity, & Awareness


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Activity: Practicing a Trauma-Informed Approach

How can we respond to situations in a more trauma-informed way?

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TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES


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- Centering voice, choice, respect, and sensitivity
- Meeting a person where they are at in their lives
- Unlearning assumptions and actively challenging biases through constant learning, reflection, and interrogation
- of our own perspectives (e.g., reflecting on hiring practices and interactions with people who have different lived experiences than our own)
- Using a strengths-based approach (focusing on a person's strengths rather than just looking at the challenges they're experiencing)
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Break Time!


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Shifting the Question: Stigmatized vs. Trauma-Informed Thinking

<p style="text-align: center;">EXAMPLES OF STIGMATIZED THINKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are being manipulative. They are being resistant. They don't care about their animals. They are difficult. They can't take care of these animals. 	<p style="text-align: center;">EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED THINKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This person may have had previous negative interactions with social or animal services where they felt unheard, unsafe, and unsupported. This person is trying to connect in the best way they know how. They have survival skills that have allowed them to look after this animal so far. We have not been able to engage them in a way in which they feel safe.
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Cultural Safety

- People (for example, Black, Indigenous and people of colour [BIPOC], people who are gender diverse, people experiencing houselessness, people living with a mental health challenge, or people who use drugs) who are placed-at-risk and/or marginalized by oppressive systems and institutions (for example, patriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism), are more likely to experience trauma and adversity.

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Why is cultural safety essential for the animal services sector?

References: Poole et al., 2017; Turpel-Lafond, 2020; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008; Baba, 2013; Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, n.d.; Arriagaga, Halmann, & O'Donnell, 2020; National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2017; First Nations Health Authority, 2018.

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Key Elements of a Culturally Safe Approach

- Recognizing the role of history, society and past traumatic experiences, and their impacts on shaping a person's health, wellness and service experiences;
- Workers' self-reflection on their own assumptions and positions of power;
- Humbly acknowledging oneself as a lifelong learner when it comes to understanding another person's experience;
- Understanding that we cannot assume we know about another person's cultural experience, including that culture is an important part of a person's identity and is important to discuss in relation to service contexts;
- Developing an awareness of how workers' own cultural experience shapes their perspective;
- Recognizing that every person is the expert on their own unique experience

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Questions to ask when reflecting on your organization's cultural safety

- Who are the cultural communities you serve?
- What do you know about the history of these communities, as well as their current contexts? For example, the barriers that they might face.
- In what ways are you involved with the cultural communities in your local context?
- In what ways are you addressing any distrust of services that may exist because of historical, cultural, and intergenerational trauma?



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Practices to ensure cultural awareness, sensitivity & safety

- **Focus on connection + relationship building with clients, communities, and culturally relevant human services**
- **Have a community liaison** who works with members of the communities you serve and fosters relationships.
- **Build a cultural and historical understanding** of the communities you work with.
- **Understand and follow cultural protocols** when interacting with the communities you work with.

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Activity: Connecting Back to Early Intervention & Prevention

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Refresher: Early Intervention & Prevention

- **Early intervention and prevention** means that we are identifying and providing effective support to people and communities before an emergency or an issue presents itself.
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Cultural Humility

Cultural humility is an integral component of trauma-informed care. It draws on three principles:

- We engage in self-reflection and critique.
- We are aware of power and the difference between power over others, and power 'with' others.
- We develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others.

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Break Time!

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Practical Approaches to Implementing Trauma-Informed & Culturally Safe Practices

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Motivational Interviewing 'CAPE'

Compassion simply means caring about what is important to another person and wanting to help in a way that is in line with their definition of help. Compassion is also an intentional commitment to try to understand others' experiences, values and motivations without judgment.

COMPASSION **C**

ACCEPTANCE

EVOCATION

Partnership

EVOCATION

Source: Rosegrant, D. (2016). *Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: A Practitioner Workbook*, 2nd Edition. Guilford Press, New York, London.

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"This has been a really difficult decision, but your animal's well-being is clearly important to you."


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"I can tell you really care about your dog, so I'm going to let you know that I think he needs to be rehomed. "

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Activity: Practice Applying the Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

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<p>Compassion simply means caring about what is important to another person and wanting to help in a way that is in line with their definition of help. Compassion is also an intentional commitment to try to understand others' experiences, values, and motivations without judgment.</p> <p>COMPASSION</p> <p>C</p>	<p>We accept the person and what is important to them, as well as where they are at in their lives. A strong relationship, even if it's only brief, is characterized by acceptance. In doing this, we believe a person's absolute worth, their right to choose, as well as their strengths, experience, and potential.</p> <p>ACCEPTANCE</p> <p>A</p>
<p>We may be experts in the process of a specific role, but people are ultimately the experts in themselves. By partnership, we mean that collaboration when working with a person who is accessing services is key.</p> <p>PARTNERSHIP</p> <p>P</p>	<p>People have their own valuable lived and living experience, internal resources, and expertise about themselves. Evocation is about recognizing that people have everything they need. Our job is to help draw out their own ideas about change and reasons for change, rather than ordering reasons for change or telling people how and why to do something.</p> <p>EVOCATION</p> <p>E</p>

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The Experience Cube

<p>Sensory data (information you take in through your senses), primarily what you see and hear. What a video camera would record.</p> <p>OBSERVATIONS</p>	<p>The meaning you add to your observations (i.e., the way you make sense of them, including your beliefs, expectations, assumptions, judgements, values and principles). We call this the "story you make up".</p> <p>THOUGHTS</p>
<p>Your emotional or physiological response to the thoughts and observations. Feelings words such as sad, mad, glad, scared, or a description of what is happening in your body.</p> <p>FEELINGS</p>	<p>Clear description of the outcome you seek. Wants go deeper than a simple request for action. Once you clearly state what you want, there may be different ways to achieve it.</p> <p>WANTS</p>

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Activity: Practice Using the CUBE Method

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Reflection

- What are the most important things you learned through this experience?
- What is one thing you intend to carry back with you?
- What is something you commit to doing differently?


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Thank you!

Contact: sareeta@vancoverhumaneociety.bc.ca

Please scan the QR code to share your feedback with us via our short survey.



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