



# Trauma-Informed Leadership for Higher Education

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CUPA-HR Webinar

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# Presenter



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# Agenda

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- Overview and Definitions
- Scope of the problem
- Core skills for empathic leadership
- Creating a supportive workplace culture
- Leader Self-Care



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- **Overview and Definitions**
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# Definitions

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- **Leadership:** A one to many relationship designed to generate and achieve an objective that responds strategically to a set of circumstances. (Example: the picnic in the rain).
- **Trauma:** A “too much, too fast” experience that leaves unfinished business in its wake.
- **Trauma-informed leadership:** Leadership that is aware of and responsive to the scope and impact of trauma on people.

Everyone you meet is  
fighting a battle you  
know nothing about. Be  
kind. Always.

Brad Meltzer

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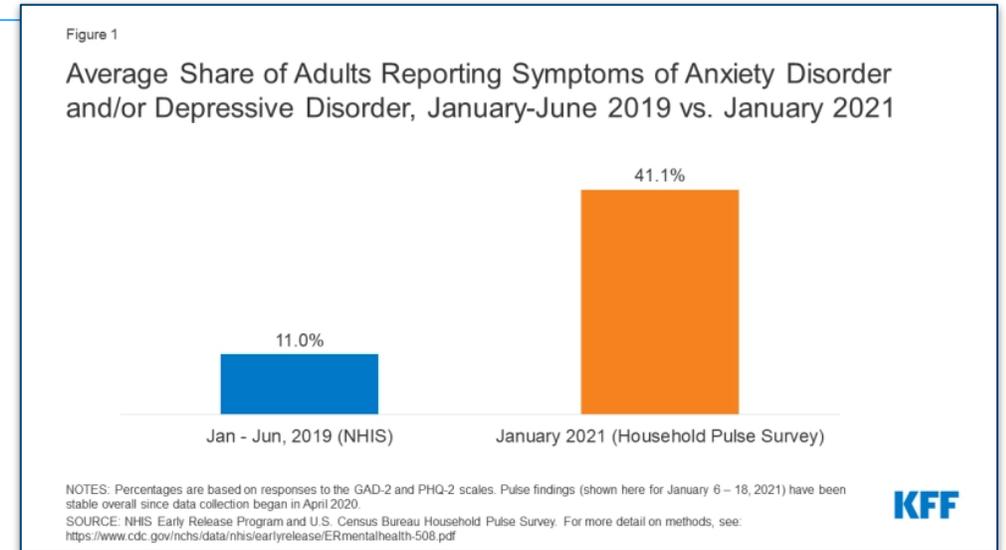
# Epidemics Before the Pandemic

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- In 2017
  - 4.3% of adults had thought seriously about trying to kill themselves
  - 46.6 million adults (17%) had some kind of mental illness
  - 14.5 million people aged 12 or older in 2017 had an alcohol use disorder, which represents 5.3% of people aged 12 or older
  - 19.7 million battled a substance abuse disorder (including alcohol)
  - 1 in 4 men and 1 in 3 women victims of physical violence by an intimate partner
  - 1 in 4 women of contact sexual violence by an intimate partner
  - 6.8% of Americans had experienced PTSD over the course of their lifetime
- 1 in 9 girls experience sexual abuse at the hands of an adult

# Fallout of the Pandemic

- Anxiety and depression on the rise
- For every COVID death, 9 are bereaved
  - Bereavements complicated by loss of contact
- COVID likely increased domestic partner violence but created barriers to reporting
- 56% of all households said worry and stress over the coronavirus caused them to experience at least one adverse impact on their mental health and well-being
- Allostatic load - constant wear and tear on our brain's stress response



# Impacts of Trauma in the Workplace

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- Fight/flight responses to normal workplace conflict
- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism (Decreased ability to focus or concentrate on the job)
- Personal role responsibilities intruding on job responsibilities

# Poll Question

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In the last year, I have experienced (check all that apply):

- Increased fight/flight responses to normal workplace conflict
- Increased absenteeism
- Decreased ability to focus or concentrate on the job (Presenteeism)
- Personal role responsibilities intruding on job responsibilities
- None of the above

# The Core Question

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- As a leader, you get results through your people.
- Your people may be walking wounded, preventing them from bringing their best.
- How can you help them bounce back...
  - *while* maintaining appropriate boundaries
  - *while* maintaining a culture of accountability?

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# Core Trauma-Informed Leadership Skills

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- Openness & Empathic Listening
- Creative negotiation of duties and deadlines
- Enlisting Support
- Maintaining Boundaries

# Poll Question

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My colleagues and/or the people I lead talk to me about personal issues that are impacting their work.

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

# Open Office Hours vs. Open Door Policy

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- Like all workers, leaders need uninterrupted time to focus exclusively on key projects and priorities.
- Instead of an “open door policy”, consider having regular open office hours making it easy for your people to get time with you when they need it.

# Opening the Door for Disclosure

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- I've noticed X.
- I don't want to pry, but I do want you to know that I'm open to hearing about any personal issues you might want to share.
- Sometimes sharing can be helpful. It can give me more context about how you are doing and help me guide you to helpful resources.

# The Listening Container

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- Privacy
- Freedom from Distractions
- Time limits
- Ground Rules - Confidentiality
  - Confidentiality is never absolute



# Basic Listening Skills

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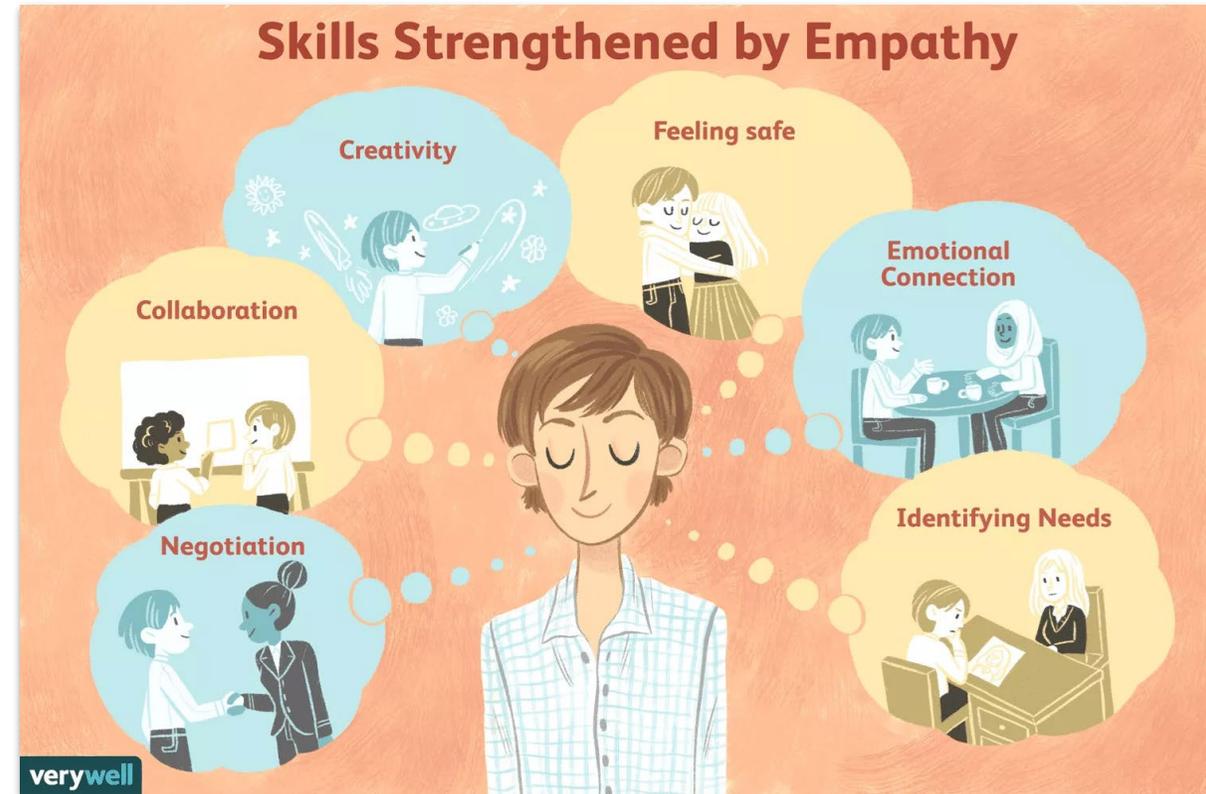
- Creating an invitation  
“I noticed that you seemed a bit down in that meeting. Is there anything you want to share? I have about 20 minutes before my next meeting, and I’m all ears.”
- Minimal encouragements  
What is the least you need to say to keep the other person talking?
- Open-ended questions  
“Tell me more about ...”
- Mirroring Statements (Paraphrasing)  
“It sounds like you’re saying X. Have I got that right?”

# Expressing Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand someone's feelings and to be able to see things from their point of view.

How to do it:

1. Start with a guess about what the person is feeling and check it out:  
"I get the sense you're really worried about this, am I right about that?"
2. Allow them to correct it and say what they're feeling in their own words.
3. When you're sure you get how the other person is feeling, make a validating statement: "I can understand why you'd be worried about returning to the office given your concerns about the pandemic."



# Connect Feelings to Needs

- Emotions are the register of when our needs are being met or not.
- Positive emotions indicate our needs are being met.
- Negative emotions indicate our needs are not being met.
- Empathic statements can help connect feelings and needs: “It sounds like you’re worried because you have a need for safety that isn’t being met. Is that right?”

## Feelings when your needs are satisfied

<b>AFFECTIONATE</b> compassionate friendly loving open hearted sympathetic tender warm	<b>CONFIDENT</b> empowered open proud safe secure	<b>GRATEFUL</b> appreciative moved thankful touched	<b>PEACEFUL</b> calm clear headed comfortable centered content equanimous fulfilled mellow quiet relaxed
<b>ENGAGED</b> absorbed alert curious engrossed enchanted entranced fascinated interested intrigued involved spellbound	<b>EXCITED</b> amazed animated ardent aroused astonished dazzled eager energetic enthusiastic giddy invigorated lively passionate	<b>INSPIRED</b> amazed awed wonder	<b>JOYFUL</b> amused delighted glad happy jubilant pleased tickled
		<b>EXHILARATED</b> blissful	<b>REFRESHED</b> enlivened rejuvenated

## Needs Inventory

The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

We have another list that might also be of interest to you: [a list of feelings](#).

<b>CONNECTION</b> acceptance affection appreciation belonging cooperation communication closeness community companionship compassion consideration	<b>CONNECTION</b> <b>continued</b> safety security stability support to know and be known to see and be seen to understand and be understood trust warmth	<b>HONESTY</b> authenticity integrity presence	<b>MEANING</b> awareness celebration of life challenge clarity competence consciousness contribution creativity discovery efficacy
		<b>PLAY</b> joy humor	<b>PEACE</b> beauty communion ease

# Core Trauma-Informed Leadership Skills

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- Openness & Empathic Listening
- **Creative negotiation of duties and deadlines**
- Enlisting Support
- Maintaining Boundaries

# Creative negotiation of duties and deadlines

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- Being able to meet deadlines and achieve goals enhances self-efficacy which builds resilience and is therapeutic.
- Adjusting deadlines and lowering performance standards should be done deliberately, temporarily, and clearly.

# Core Trauma-Informed Leadership Skills

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- Openness & Empathic Listening
- Creative negotiation of duties and deadlines
- **Enlisting Support**
- Maintaining Boundaries

# Enlisting Support

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- Regularly remind your people of any resources that are available
  - Employee Assistance Programs
  - Health coaching through Insurance
  - Other supports (Headspace, etc.)

# Enlisting Support

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- Consult with ADA point person if accommodations are significant or are needed long term.
- Some employees may be better served by transitioning to less demanding work roles while they cope with trauma.

# Core Trauma-Informed Leadership Skills

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- Openness & Empathic Listening
- Enlisting Support
- Creative negotiation of duties and deadlines
- **Maintaining Boundaries**

# Boundaries

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Caution is advised before:

- Picking up significant job responsibilities for an employee.
- Loaning money.
- Offering a place to stay.
- Creating inequities in how you treat different employees.
- Listening sympathetically while someone complains at length.



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# Poll Questions

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In my workplace... (true/false)

- people share their personal struggles with each other.
- people ask each other for help and support.
- people are familiar with benefits and resources that can help them with personal issues.

# Define a Vision for the Group

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Make a public statement to the group, such as:

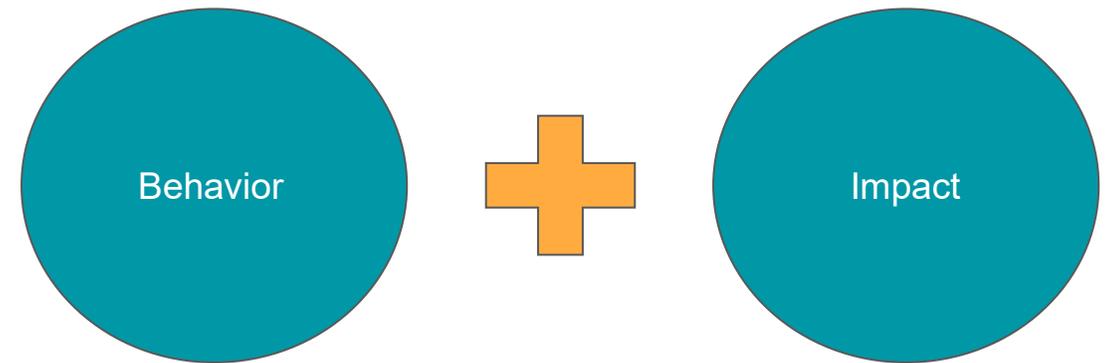
- “If you are having a tough time, or if a personal concern is getting in the way of your being at your best, I want you to know that my door is open and I encourage you to share whatever is comfortable about what is going on. I’ll do my best to create a safe and confidential space, and to respond with empathy.”
- “I also want this to be a place where it is ok for us to share our struggles with each other and ask for help. That makes this a better place to work, and helps us bring out the best in each other and get the work done.”
- “Help is available. [Identify any resources that are available.]”

# Reinforce supportive behaviors

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Use the appreciation formula to positively reinforce:

- Vulnerable sharing
- Help seeking behaviors
- Examples where people are helping each other through difficulties



# Walking the Walk

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- Vulnerable expression
- Publicly seeking help

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# Leader Self-Care

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- Leaders cannot be available to others unless they are adequately resourced, but ....
  - Leaders are often selected from the most driven and ambitious among us
  - Leaders often pick up slack when their people aren't at peak productivity
  - Workplace cultures do not always encourage self-care activities
  - Many paradigms of leadership emphasize steeliness and projecting an image of invulnerability ("Never let them see you sweat.")

# Coaching Leaders for Self-Care

- Choose an item from the Healthy Mind Platter that you haven't done in a while.
- Make a concrete plan to spend 15-30 minutes doing one of these activities.
- Reflect on the benefits.



# Poll Question

Which item from the healthy mind platter could you spend 15-30 minutes on sometime this week?

- Sleep time
- Physical time
- Focus time
- Time in
- Down time
- Play time
- Connecting time



# Have a Question?



Submit questions to our presenters  
using the Chat.

CUPA-HR Webinar

# Thank You



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