

# *Creating a trauma-informed workplace*

*Kyra Thompson*

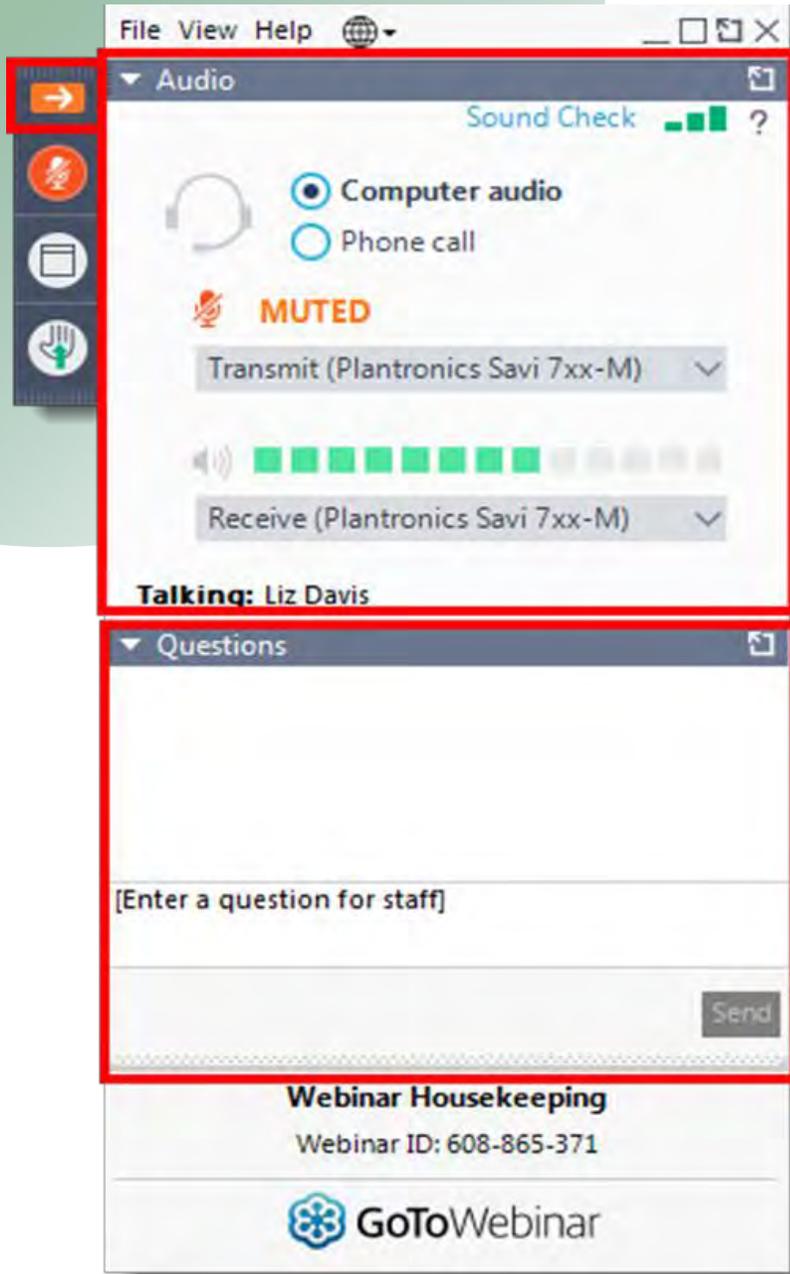


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Welcome!

← Your interface

← Questions and comments box

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# Overview

- Welcome and objectives
- Key principles of trauma-informed care
- Recognising trauma in the workplace
- Compassionate communication
- Building a culture of healing and resilience
- Q&A

# Objectives

1. Understand the core principles of a trauma-informed workplace: Safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.
2. Learn how to recognise signs of trauma in employees and respond in a supportive and non-judgmental way.
3. Gain practical tools for implementing compassionate communication strategies.
4. Develop actionable ideas for creating policies and practices that support trauma-informed approaches.
5. Learn how to foster a workplace culture that enhances well-being and resilience, and reduces burnout.



# SELF CARE



# Disclaimer: Self-care

We often relate what we are learning to our own lives.

Be aware of how today's learning impacts on you and do what you need to do to keep yourself safe and cared for.



# Key principles of trauma-informed care



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# What is trauma?

Single, dangerous, overwhelming, sudden, surprising, devastating events

- e.g. sexual assault, natural disasters
- Creates detailed, vivid memories
- May lead to flashbacks, hypervigilance, avoidance

Sustained, repeated, multiple, chronic, variable traumatic events

- e.g. abuse, combat, neglect
- Fear of re-occurrence
- Memories 'fuzzy' due to dissociation
- Helplessness, worthlessness, shame, guilt

# What is trauma?



Anyone can experience it.

Certain factors might mean some individuals find it harder to deal with than others:

- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Childhood experiences
- Other mental health difficulties
- Physical health
- Finances
- Family history

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## ***Reflection***

*Why might trauma-informed approaches matter?*



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## ***Reflection***

*What do the terms 'safety', 'trust', 'choice', 'collaboration', and 'empowerment' mean to you?*

*How are these ideas considered within your professional lives?*





# Recognising trauma in the workplace



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# THE TRAUMA RESPONSE

## FLIGHT

"run away from the bear"

remove self from situation

## FIGHT

"fight the bear"

when flight is not an option

verbally or physically attack

## FREEZE

"play dead"

when flight and fight are not an option

body shuts down - inability to think, speak, fight, or flight

## FAWN

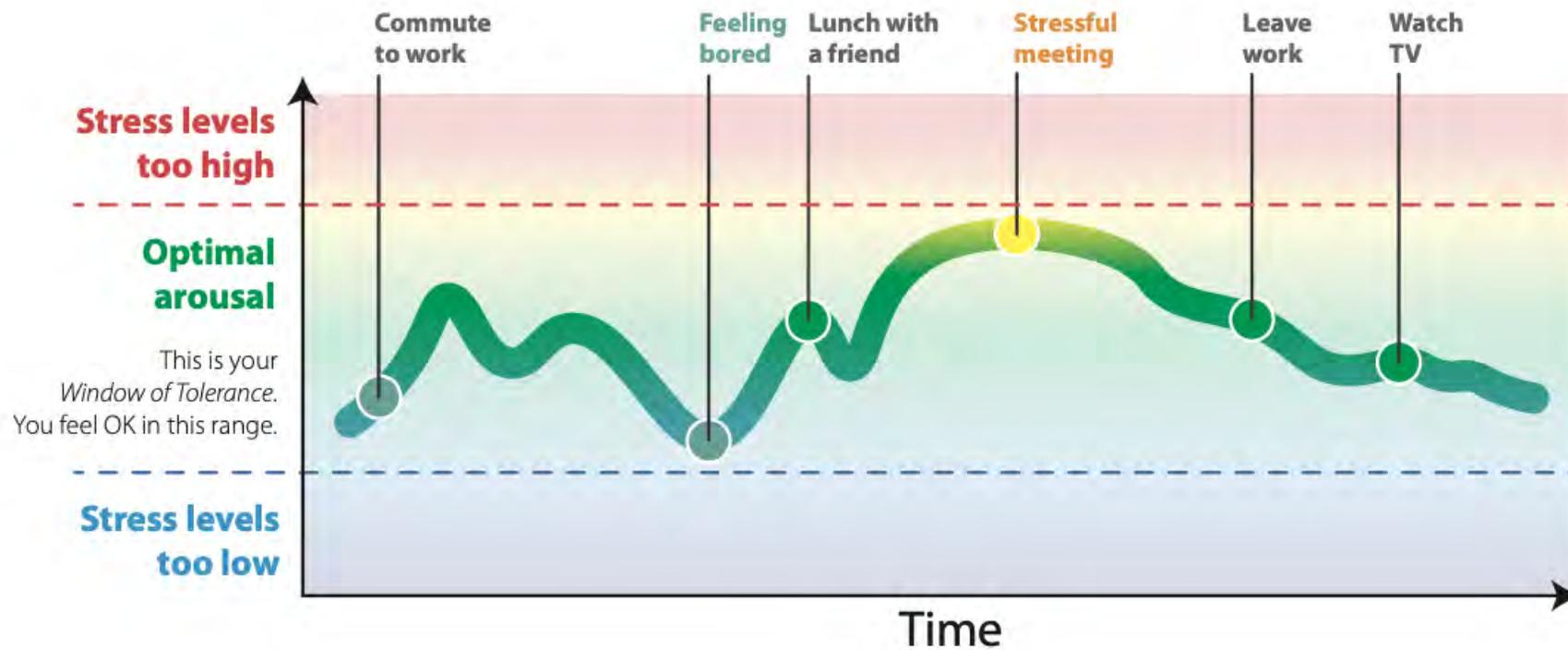
"keep the bear happy"

when there's no other option

do whatever it takes to avoid/diffuse danger

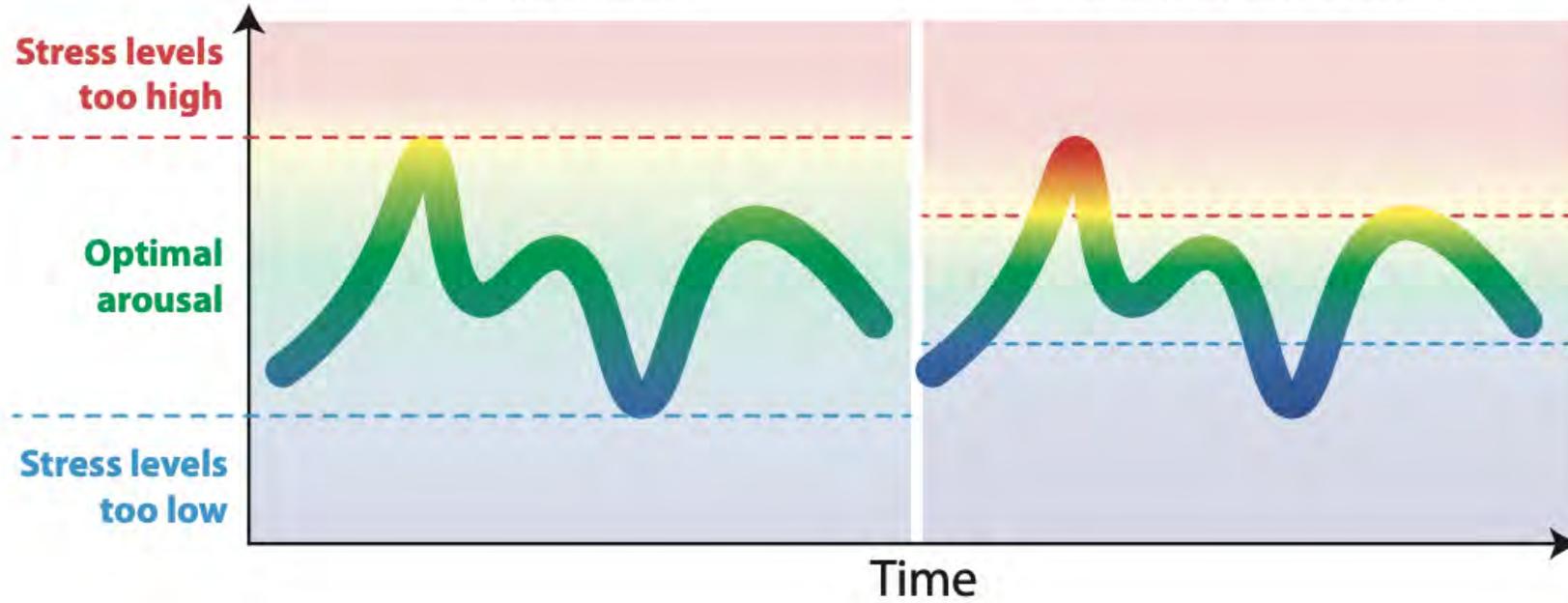


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Someone with a wide window of tolerance

The same events, but experienced by someone with a narrower window of tolerance



## **Question**

*Which of the following is NOT a common indicator of trauma?*

1. Sudden changes in mood or behaviour (e.g. irritability, withdrawal).
2. Consistent open communication about feelings and emotions.
3. Physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, or tension.
4. Difficulty concentrating or remembering tasks.
5. Avoidance of certain situations or conversations.



# What might this look like?

## Behavioural & Emotional Signs

- Changes in work ethic, irritability, withdrawal, mood changes.

## Physical & Interpersonal Signs

- Physical Manifestations of Trauma: Fatigue, anxiety, tension, difficulty focusing.
- Interpersonal Challenges: Difficulty trusting, conflicts, avoidance of collaboration.



# Compassionate communication



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# The power of language

Using non-judgmental, empathetic language

- Our words can be supportive but also unintentionally harmful

Example: Avoiding blame, reframing negative feedback into constructive, understanding, supportive language.



# Reflection

*How do the following statements make you feel?*

1. "You're always late and never contribute to our team meetings. What's wrong with you?"
2. "You've arrived late and haven't contributed to the last three team meetings. I am frustrated because, as a team, we have a need for efficiency and collaboration. Could you please help me understand what's happening?"
3. "What's going on with you? You're not your usual self and your work hasn't been good lately."



# Active listening

## Listening with intention

- Listen, reflect, validate emotions, and remain curious
- Example: "I wonder if you're feeling overwhelmed. How can I support you today?"



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# Setting boundaries and encouraging open dialogue

## Creating safe spaces

- Ensure employees feel comfortable sharing without fear of judgment or retribution.

## Examples:

- Regular check-ins or feedback loops
- Respecting employees' need for space when necessary
- Considering the environment/context you have conversations in

## ***Reflection***

*How are these trauma-informed principles considered in your previous/current workplaces?*





# Building a culture of healing and resilience



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# General considerations

- Social support
- Sense of control
- Help-seeking
- Resilience and coping skills
- Emotional release
- Psychological support



# Creating trauma-informed policies

## Flexible Work Arrangements and Accommodations

- Remote work options, flexible hours, and trauma-informed leave policies.

## Supportive Resources and Systems

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), access to mental health resources, counselling, peer support systems.

## Inclusive HR Policies

- Considering recruitment and retention: developing policies that consider employees' trauma histories and provide accommodations where possible.

## ***Reflection***

*How would you describe your workplace culture?*



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# Trauma-informed workplace culture

## Encouraging well-being

- Prioritizing mental health, encouraging self-care practices, work-life balance, and a wellness culture.

## Ongoing Education and Training

- Training for leadership and staff, trauma-informed training for all employees, with a focus on managers and HR.

## Fostering Long-Term Resilience

- Continuous improvement, making trauma-informed practices a core part of your organizational culture through continuous feedback and reflection.

# Takeaways

1. Embedding principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment to create a supportive workplace.
2. Consider signs like behavioural changes, emotional withdrawal, interpersonal changes, and physical symptoms.
3. Consider your language. Remain curious, empathetic, and communicate based on needs for constructive yet understanding conversation.
4. Reflect on current policies and support avenues; do they align with a trauma-informed approach to working?

Questions?



# Thank You

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