

{TIMBO}

It's a stressful world...

The unconscious activation of somatic trauma responses happens every day in all types of relationships, between health care worker and client, supervisor and staff, peer to peer, parent to child and family member to family member.

As parents, care givers, bosses, managers and friends, if we are not aware of our own unconscious responses to stress and adversity, we run the risk of perpetuating the cycle of stress or trauma activation in ourselves and others. The skills we teach in our program are simple, practical and can change the quality of your relationships and your life.

The three universal triggers of stress are:

1. Uncertainty
2. Lack of Control
3. Lack of Information

To be trauma responsive, we must notice if and when our own internal physical (somatic) responses are responding to one of these triggers, particularly in regard to those with whom we are in relation. We can respond first to the sensations in our own body. Without this kind of awareness and good tools for responding to it, we are very likely to respond to our own activation in habitual yet sometimes unhelpful ways.

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Learning to observe our own unpleasant sensations is hard work.

There may be many conscious and unconscious barriers to overcome. But with a little awareness and the willingness to practice you can begin to change how you feel in your own body, and in turn help others feel supported and safe. Here is a simple practice that anyone can use to create some space between a stresser and a habituated response:

Pause...

Take a moment to scan the sensations in your body before responding to what someone says or does. Common sensations include a quickened heart rate, sweating, a rush of heat in the chest, tightness in the chest, tightness in the throat, or a tingling or numbing feeling.

Breathe...

Consciously creating a pause by taking 5-10 deep abdominal breaths can create enough time to choose a mindful response to your sensations; and it can also have an immediate de-escalating effect for everyone involved.

Need a reminder? Print up the poster below and hang it on your wall at work, your fridge at home or anywhere that you can see it and be reminded that you have tools to help you and the people you live and work with.



5 Trauma Responsive Actions

1. Stop and notice

your own stress response (remember you'll feel this in your body)

2. Breathe

take several deep and mindful breaths

3. Consider

the encoded system of another individual may be activated! (this often happens in response to one of the three universal triggers of stress)

4. Remember

the universal triggers of stress are 1. Uncertainty 2. Lack of Control
3. Lack of Information

5. Help create

feelings of safety and trust by breathing into your own body, staying calm, offering information and choice where possible (this can deactivate the stress response)