

The Invitation

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.

I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.

*I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams,
for the adventure of being alive.*

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon.

*I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's
betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain!*

*I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own,
without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it.*

*I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the
ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic,
or to remember the limitations of being human.*

It doesn't interest me if the story you're telling me is true.

*I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation
of betrayal and not betray your own soul.*

I want to know if you can be faithless and therefore be trustworthy.

*I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day, and if you can source
your life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still
stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!"*

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have.

*I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the
bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.*

It doesn't interest me who you are, how you came to be here.

I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.

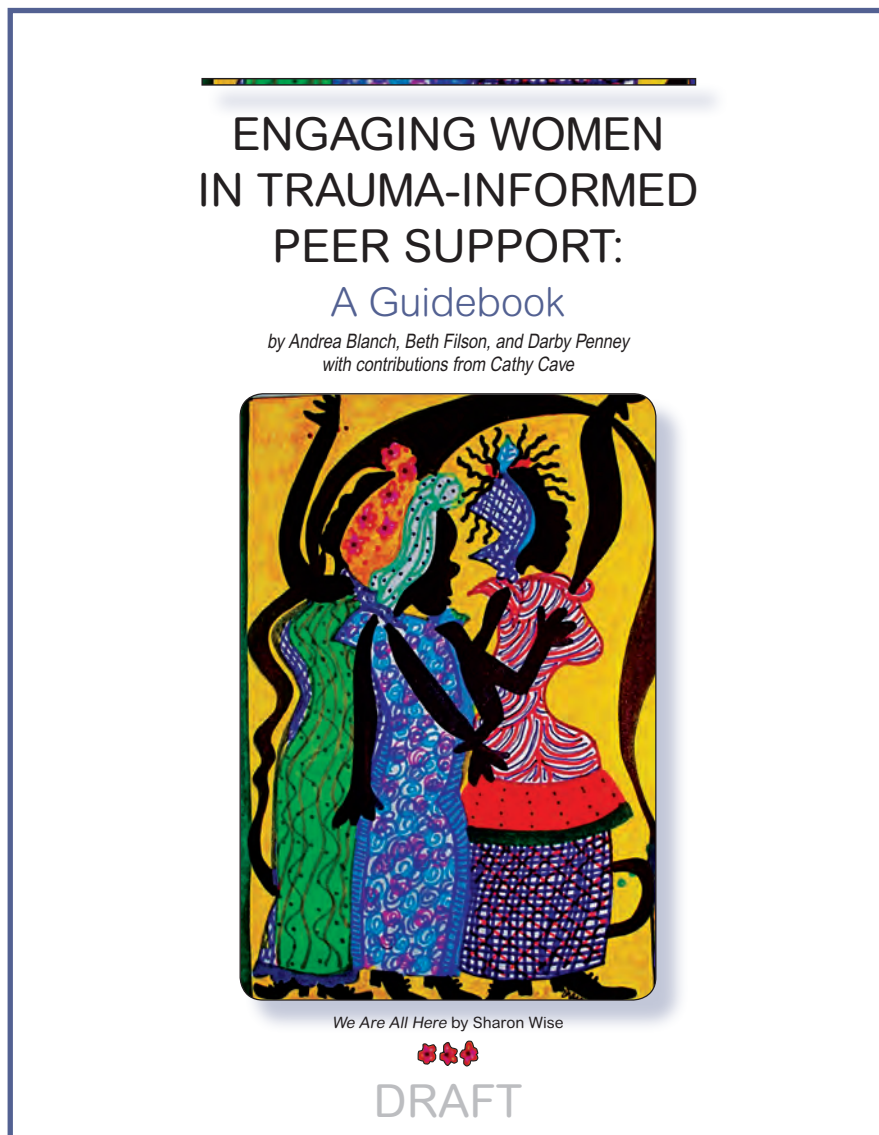
*I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away. I want to know if you
can be alone with yourself, and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.*

Oriah Mountain Dreamer



Engaging Women in Trauma-Informed Peer Support: A Guidebook

This guide was created by the National Center on Trauma-Informed Care as a draft technical assistance document to help make trauma-informed peer support available to women who receive or have received services in behavioral health or other human service systems. It is designed as a resource for peer supporters in these or other settings who want to learn how to integrate trauma-informed principles into their relationships with the women they support or into the peer support groups of which they are members. The goal is to provide peer supporters — both male and female — with the understanding, tools, and resources needed to engage in culturally responsive, trauma-informed peer support relationships with women.



The guide can be downloaded as a single file (8MB) or chapter by chapter through the link below.

<http://www.nasmhpd.org/publications/EngagingWomen.aspx>

Self-Care Check-In

One of the key components of trauma-informed practice is for everyone to actively engage in self-reflection and self-care. Trauma-informed organizations place high value on self-care for staff and the survivors we support beginning with you. Please take a few moments and complete your plan and consider any strategies that will help you stay as present as you can and feel emotionally safe.

If I start to feel distressed, numb, angry or overwhelmed during the training:

1. I can take a break.
2. I can tune out.
3. I can talk to _____ about my feelings.
4. I can watch or do something funny.
5. I can think about my_____
6. I can stretch, leave the room or go for a walk.
7. I can eat a nutritious or not so nutritious snack.
8. Or I can _____
9. Or _____

These things tend to add to my stress_____

What usually helps when I feel overwhelmed is_____

Tracing Trauma in Your Life and the Lives of Your Peers

Take a few minutes to review the possible sources of trauma in your own life. Notice if there are potential sources of trauma that you have never considered before.

Historical trauma. Historical trauma is usually thought of as resulting from mass acts of violence against an entire group, such as slavery, the genocide of Native Americans, or the Holocaust. But it can also occur in families. If your parents or grandparents were refugees, belonged to a persecuted religious group, or were abused as children, you may feel the impact of their trauma, even though you never directly experienced it.

Social violence. Social violence such as ongoing poverty, racism, dislocation, or living in severely polluted or degraded environments can also have a traumatic impact over time.

Childhood trauma. Children may be traumatized through emotional, physical or sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, incarceration of a family member, family separation, physical or emotional neglect, gang violence, bullying, or witnessing violence in the streets.

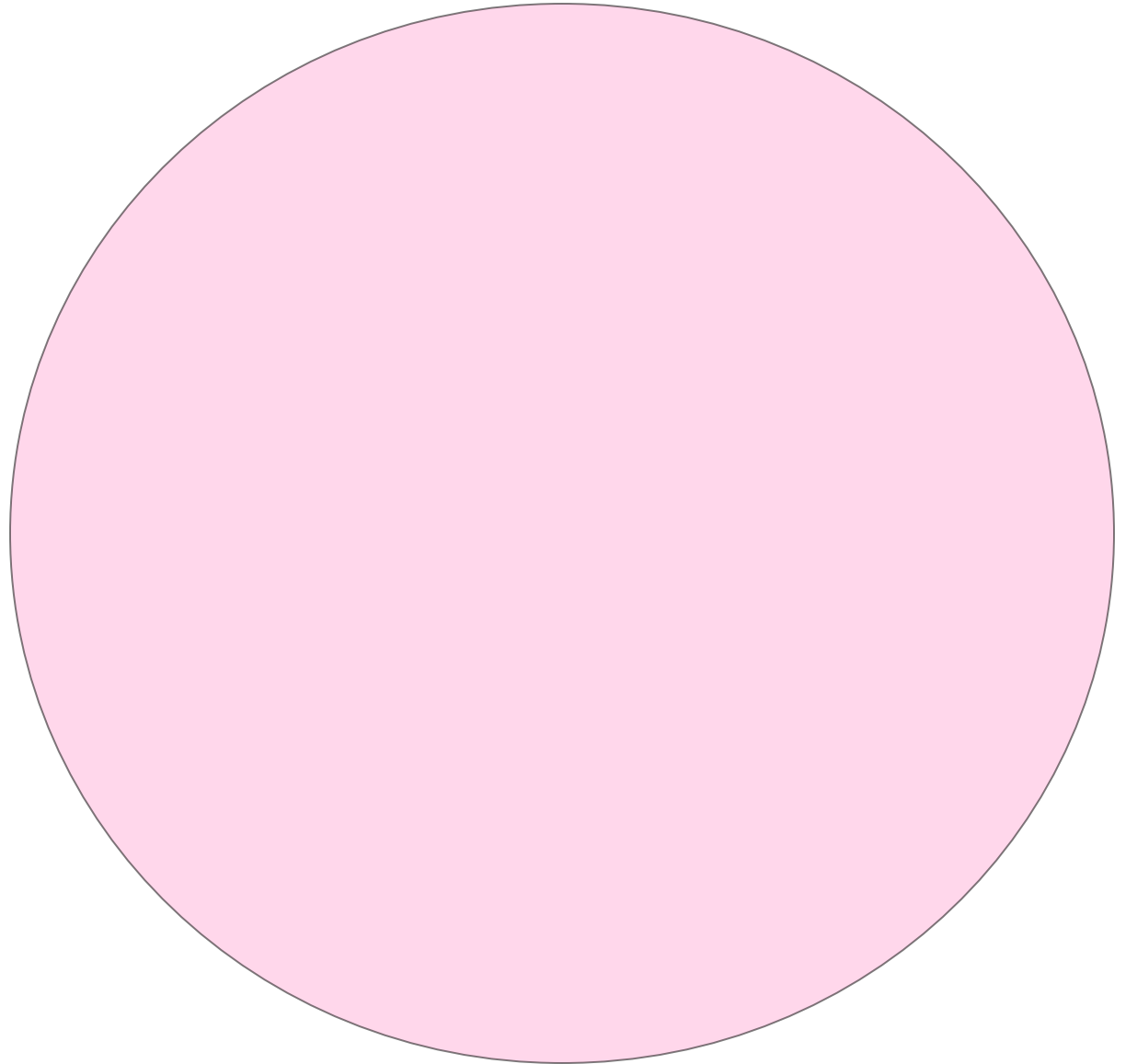
Interpersonal violence. Adults, especially women, may experience interpersonal violence in many forms, including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, workplace bullying, and experiencing or witnessing violent crime.

Institutional trauma. Institutional procedures like forced medication or shock, involuntary commitment, transportation by law enforcement, and seclusion and restraint are often traumatizing. Medical interventions and some routine aspects of institutional life, such as inflexible rules, authoritarian staff, and even the use of certain words or labels may be traumatic in less obvious ways.

Other traumatic events. Natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, acts of terrorism like 9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing, and wars can affect us - even if we are not immediately present. Groups and organizations can also be traumatized by events such as a death or staff injury or even an unexpected layoff or reorganization.

Do you consider yourself a “trauma survivor”? Why or why not? What about the people you work with? Do you think they consider themselves trauma survivors? Why or why not?

Who Am I?



What Makes Trauma-Informed Peer Support Unique?

Shery Mead & Cheryl MacNeil

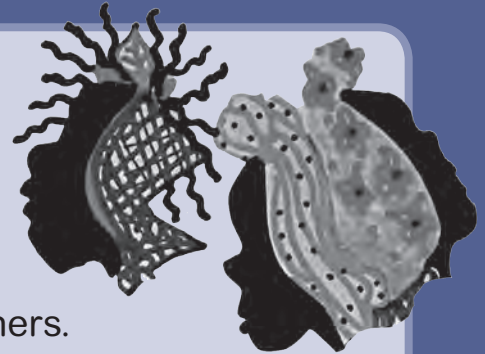
- **Peer support does not assume a problem orientation.** While people may start with the shared experience of mental health histories, conversations do not have to focus on that experience. When we are with others we assume “get it,” there may be more trust and openness which allows us to try on other ways of understanding our experiences.
- **Assessment and evaluation are not part of relationships.** Instead, people strive for mutual responsibility and communication that allows them to express their needs to each other without threat or coercion.
- **Peer support does not use a medical framework.** Instead, the focus is on building relationships that support learning and growth across whole lives. This might take the form of challenging one another’s language or assumptions about what they experience.
- **Peer support assumes full reciprocity.** There are no static roles of helper and helpee. Reciprocity is the key to building natural community connections. This is an enormous shift for people who have learned to think about community as a series of services.
- **Peer support assumes evolution as opposed to individual recovery from a specified illness.** The very fact of conversation changes the ways in which people speak and know. As Gergen explains, “We come to be aware that each truth about ourselves [and others] is a construction of the moment, true only for a given time and within certain relationships.”
- **Peer support requires people to rethink definitions of safety.** While the traditional system has concerns about liability, the responsibilities of peer support require people to embrace “relational” meanings of safety. Relational safety has been described as: the emotional safety one feels through validation; being involved in compassionate relationships; having a place where you can be who you are; having the tools and education to be in mutually responsible peer relationships; feeling like you are not being judged; and not feeling like you have to have all the answers. (MacNeil and Mead, 2005).

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SOCIAL ACTION PRINCIPLES FOR TRAUMA SURVIVORS

- We express our rage nonviolently and humanely.
- We are focused and strategic; we are aware of the effects of our actions on others.
- Our means are consistent with our ends. We are committed to not acting abusively, regardless of—and in resistance against—how we have been abused.
- We maintain compassion for ourselves and compassion for others.
- Our actions are linked to positive visions. We react against our own mistreatment and broader conditions of social injustice. We also take responsibility for translating that reaction into ideas and possibilities for a more just society.
- We know that we are not powerless in the present, despite the ways that we have been overpowered by abuse and trauma in the past.
- We act from a commitment to equal power relations. Our goal is to share power to the greatest extent possible—to step outside of the oppression paradigm which places people in subordinate and dominant roles.



– *Adapted from Steven Wineman,
Power-Under: Trauma and Non-violent Social Change*