



Camden and Islington
Trauma-informed network

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WHO WE ARE



Camden and Islington trauma-informed network is the collective effort of people with lived experience and those in roles across sectors. We formed in June 2021 with a shared interest in connecting the disparate trauma-informed approaches across the system and create a shared language and approach. We advocate for trauma-informed approaches that are rooted in the wider system. We do this by connecting people, and conversations because we believe that we are stronger together and need representation of the many, not the few.

WHY WE CREATED A COMMON PURPOSE

Our common purpose was developed between July 2021 and March 2022. In our working group, we recognised that we were all talking about being trauma-informed without yet knowing what each of us meant. We shared our many and varied definitions of trauma (and trauma-informed) and ways of being that embody the approach. We also considered why we wanted to work in this way, what we hoped to achieve and how we planned to work together. This framework was used as the foundational

activity at the network's December 2021 online learning event with our 50+ attendees. We came to see how each person's contribution represented a unique worldview, relationship to the system and an experience of trauma which shape beliefs around how we should approach trauma as a collective. The views, words and sentiments expressed through those activities have entirely shaped our common purpose.

OUR NETWORK PRINCIPLES

WE PROMOTE SAFETY

- Honest and open;
- Creating authentic connection;
- Hold experiences meaningfully and respectfully.

WE COLLABORATE AND INCLUDE

- Embracing diversity;
- Adapting to be accessible;
- Amplifying the silenced or less heard voices.

WE EMPOWER

- Seeing the strength in the survivor experience;
- Campaigning for action and change;
- Representing the frontline.

WE LEARN AND UNLEARN

- Listen and reflect, to understand;
- Perspective-taking to evolve;
- Asking what don't we know?

WE CONNECT THE SYSTEM

- Sharing learning across the system;
- Recognising system barriers and that change takes time;
- Creating an expectation for a trauma-informed system.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMA

We believe that through the power of community we can create the conditions for connection, healing and change needed to become more trauma-informed across our system. We advocate for a trauma-informed system where we are supportive, grounded and real. Being trauma-informed is how we are with one another, it relates to our felt experience and is not something that is 'done to' people or a target to be 'met'. It requires compassionate hearts, curious minds, a desire to connect and support from the environment.

"The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation."

Herman

WHAT IS TRAUMA? THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE

As a network, we recognise that because trauma relates to our most painful life experiences, it is not possible to capture the depth of its meaning in a single description or diagnosis. We aim to honour this by using our learning events to consider and share different approaches that people have found helpful. We will treat this subject with respect and care and we will not exploit people's pain.

“Trauma is the result of the most powerful human drives the human body can produce. It demands respect.” Peter Levine

Trauma can result from a single overwhelming experience or from multiple or cumulative experiences. It can occur from a direct experience or through observing and hearing about distressing events. It can be experienced by an individual or groups of people and it can show up in services, whole systems and passed down through generations of families. It can be developmental, vicarious, complex and post-traumatic. Trauma can emerge from an experience that should not have happened (such as violence and abuse), or from the absence of something that should have happened (such as being loved, held in affection and being kept safe).



Bessel Van Der Kolk and others have helped us to understand how trauma is stored in our bodies “...trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also that imprint left by that experience on our mind, brain and body”. Our personal trauma imprint can impact how we view ourselves and others, and how we trust and relate to one another.

“Our true nature is to be connected. In fact, if that wasn’t our true nature, there would be no human beings. The human species – or any species – could not evolve without being grounded in their bodies. You couldn’t have a bunch of intellectuals walking around out there in the wild, wondering in an abstract sense about the meaning of life, when there’s a saber-toothed tiger lurking behind the next bush.”

Gabor Mate

TRAUMA-INFORMED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING CONNECTIONS

“Trauma is not what happens to you. Trauma is what happens inside you, as a result of what happens to you.” Dr. Gabor Maté

Trauma often brings about disconnection from our mind and body, our community and our very sense of self, so being trauma-informed is about (re)creating connections. Working in a trauma-informed way is about understanding how our history, life experiences and pain may have shaped how we cope, react and relate to one another. Instead of categorising, labelling and blaming a person, (what’s wrong with you?), we are

curious and compassionate ‘what happened to you and how did you adapt?’. Support is non-judgmental and genuinely cares to understand you.

It trauma is about an experience of overwhelm; something unthinkable and difficult to name or put into words; terror, a lack of felt safety, power and control - trauma-informed principles aim to contradict and interrupt those experiences.

REFERENCES

Judith Herman Recovery from psychological trauma

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Levine, P. A. (1997) *Waking the tiger (P.11)*. Healing trauma. North Atlantic Books.

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Mate, G. (2008) *The Realm of the Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*. Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Bessel Van Der Kolk

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DESIGN APPENDICES

We worked with a designer to create a visual story of our network principles. The following pages shows her interpretation of the work we have done so far.

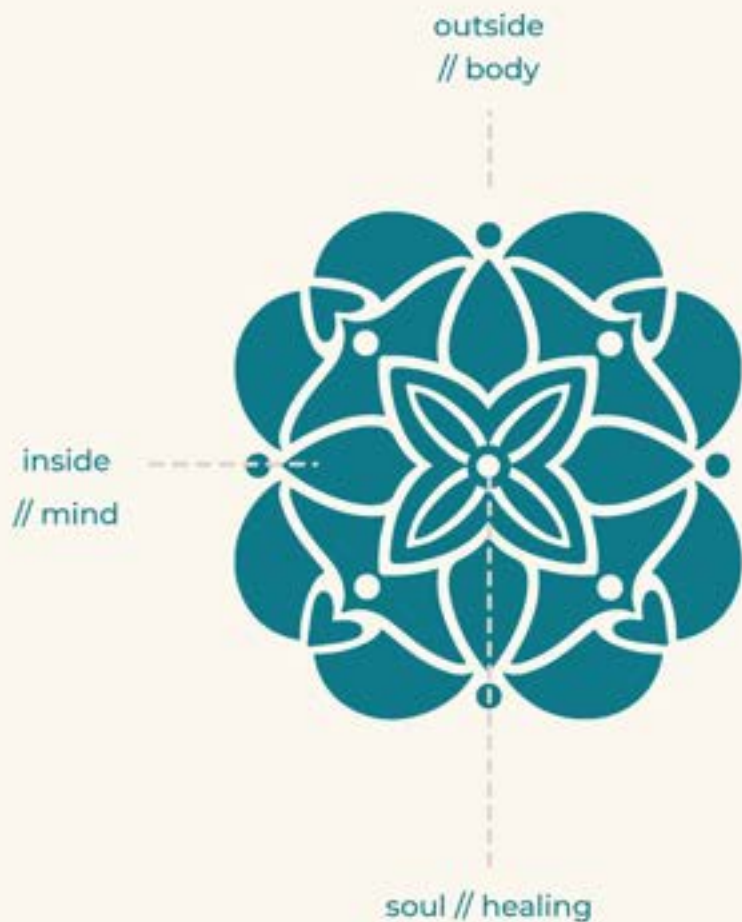


MANDALA

The mandala carries the symbology of interconnectedness, complexity, wholeness, and community power.

It also represents conditions for connection, healing and change.

It conveys how we are all connected, represents humanity and the need for people and relationships.



3 LAYERS OF MANDALA

The 3 layers of the mandala represent the human being, its entire structure and how one part affects the other (outside, inside and soul/healing).

Trauma is about disconnection (from self and community, body and mind, thoughts and feelings), the mandala represents people but also the power of the Camden and Islington trauma-informed network that aims to enable social connection.



SPACE TO RAISE A WARENESS ABOUT TRAUMA

First layer of the mandala, symbolises entry into this space and collaboration across the system, to learn and raise awareness about trauma.

It is a space of protection for all people who have suffered trauma.



TEAM CAMDEN AND ISLINGTON TRAUMA-INFORMED NETWORK

It represents the wide range of people that make up the team, with compassionate hearts, curious minds and the desire of these people to connect and support those who need it.



LOTUS FLOWER

The lotus flower is a symbol of man's infinite possibilities.

It is at the centre of the mandala signifying the purpose of Team Camden and Islington trauma informed network: renewal conditions for connection, healing and change.

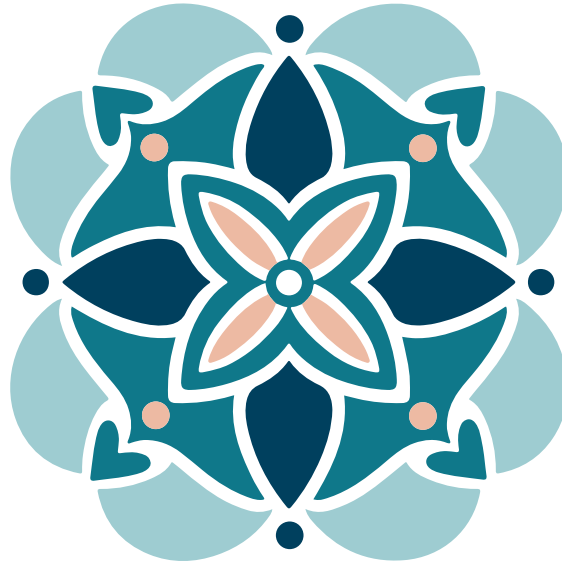


PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

They are in the center of the mandala, as a form of reception, security and protection.

The figure of people who experienced trauma connects to the lotus flower symbolizing renewal.





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