



TRAUMATIC STRESS  
INSTITUTE

# Staff Development Resource

## Guide Three

### On the Job Behavior

## Interpreting Client Behaviors

When clients act out, are disrespectful, threaten others or property, or have difficulty apologizing after they have caused harm, it is not unusual that you may feel that the client's behavior reflects negatively on you.

It can be helpful to remember the following:

*People with trauma histories:*

- ✓ *experience disrupted development*
- ✓ *Have difficulty with attachment*
- ✓ *Do not feel connected to people or places*
- ✓ *Do not believe they are worthy of good things in life*
- ✓ *Struggle to regulate and manage strong emotions.*

A Trauma-Informed Care approach provides additional tools, a new lens by which you experience and respond to your clients. Here are a few examples of how it can be different.

<b>Traditional Model</b>	<b>Trauma Model</b>
Asks: what's wrong with you?	Asks: what happened to you?
Priority is on control	Priority is on collaboration
Negative behaviors viewed as needing to be changed	Negative behavior viewed as adaptive
Primary agent of change is punishment and reward	Primary agent of change is relationships
Treater as authority and expert	Treater as collaborator

Can you think of one opportunity daily that you can experience your client's behaviors through a Trauma-Informed Lens?

How might you respond differently to the situation having this information?



## Creating and Fostering Hope

### Discussion:

Our clients come to us feeling hopeless. They are hopeless about their future, about connecting with others, and most especially about themselves. It is our job to be a beacon of hope in their lives.

We cannot provide hope to our clients if we are feeling hopeless ourselves. This is why it is essential that we pay attention to our own vicarious traumatization.

Consider a time in the past when you were feeling hopeless. How did you regain your sense of hope? Who and what helped you? What in your present life helps you maintain a sense of hope?

How can you use these insights in your work?



## Creating Hope: What to Do

1. Notice successes. Include rituals, both with staff and clients that celebrate successes.
2. Give clients opportunities to engage in activities in which they do well and can develop their talents (such as music and art lessons).
3. Study and talk about people who have achieved great things despite difficult backgrounds.
4. Praise.
5. Create opportunities for clients to help others, such as volunteering at a soup kitchen or an elderly home. Let older clients teach younger clients. If someone is talented in something have them teach others.
6. Showcase the clients' talents. Have art shows, poetry readings, talent shows, plays, concerts.
7. Advocate for timely planning for the clients' future.
8. Take them on field trips to places they might go to for school or work.
9. Bring in inspirational speakers that are relevant to their backgrounds.
10. Demonstrate that you believe in them.
11. Give the client's opportunities to be of service and to help others.

