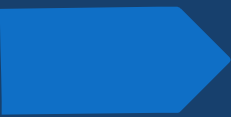


Trauma-Informed Leadership

A Strategic Approach for HR, Executive Leaders & Managers

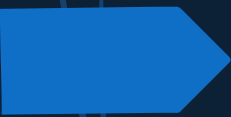


MEET OUR PRESENTER

Kelly Harwood, LPC

Director of Outpatient, School-Based, and Crisis Services

- Licensed Professional Counselor since 2007
- 12 years of leadership and staff management experience
- Leads and supports CRCSI's Trauma-Informed Care initiatives
- Focused on advancing CRCSI's journey toward becoming a fully Trauma-Informed Agency



Why This Matters

- ➡ Workplace experiences affect performance, engagement, retention, trust, safety, and culture. Human Resources is uniquely positioned to lead this strategy.

Scenario: The Difficult Employee

What Was Happening

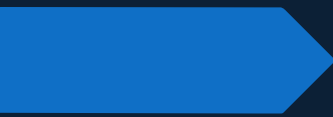
Sarah has been a high-performing employee for three years. Over the last two months, her supervisor notices:

- Increased absenteeism
- Missed deadlines
- Short, defensive responses to feedback
- Withdrawal from team meetings
- Emotional reactions when discussing performance concerns

Several coworkers have commented that Sarah seems "checked out" and "hard to work with."

The supervisor schedules a meeting to address the performance concerns.





What Does Trauma-Informed Mean?

- ➡ Recognizing that many employees have experienced adversity and designing leadership, policies, and practices that promote safety, trust, support and accountability.

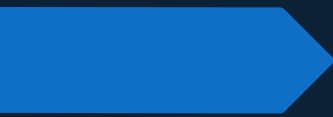


The Evolution of Trauma-Informed Approaches in the Workplace

- ▶ The notion of “trauma-informed” gained traction in response to the COVID pandemic.
- ▶ The pandemic was met with stress and uncertainty, giving rise to a need for responding to trauma outside of one’s personal life.
- ▶ Incorporating a trauma-informed approach is new for most employers but necessary because of the impacts of the pandemic.
- ▶ Trauma-informed care isn’t simply a clinical intervention.

Benefits to the Organization

- Higher engagement
- Improved retention
- Stronger leadership effectiveness
- Lower employee relations issues
- Greater psychological safety
- Improved performance through trust
- Reduced absenteeism and burnout
- Healthier culture and resilience
- Better risk management



Mindset Shift

- ➡ From: What is wrong with this employee?
- ➡ To: What may be contributing to this behavior and how can we support success while maintaining accountability?

Common Sources of Trauma

- ➡ Grief and loss
- ➡ Domestic violence
- ➡ Military service
- ➡ Medical crises
- ➡ Financial hardship
- ➡ Bullying and harassment
- ➡ Natural disasters and community violence



Important Considerations

Differences in how people experience trauma.

Avoid making assumptions.

Trauma shows up in different ways.

Behavioral:

- Avoidance
- Overworking
- Withdrawal
- Absenteeism

Emotional & Cognitive:

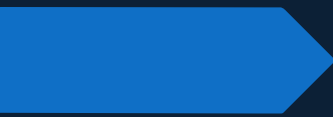
- Strong Reactions
- Hypervigilance
- Numbness
- Brain Fog

Physical:

- Panic
- Tension
- Fatigue

The 4 R's of the Trauma-Informed Approach

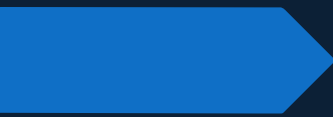




Trauma-Informed Approach in Action

➡ Missouri Model

1. Awareness – prevalence of trauma and its impact
2. Sensitivity – understand trauma-informed principles
3. Response – implement changes
4. Informed – implement and monitor trauma-informed practices



Five Areas HR Can Influence

- ➡ Psychological Safety
- ➡ Leadership Capability
- ➡ Policy Review
- ➡ Support Systems
- ➡ Compassionate Accountability

Psychological Safety

- ▶ Employees can speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, and raise concerns without fear of humiliation or retaliation.

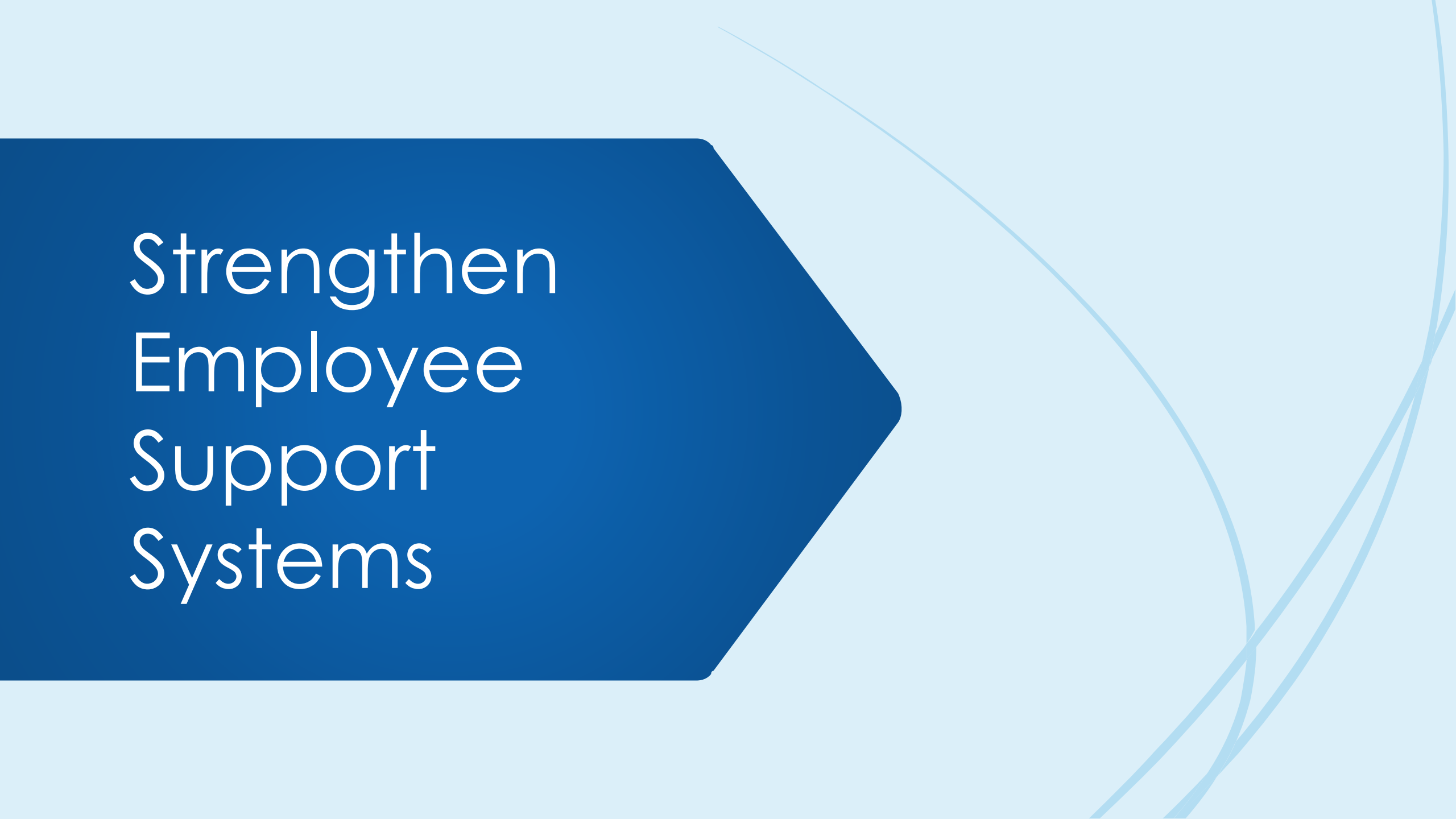
Trauma-Informed Leadership

➡ Managers should: Listen, Support, Refer. Managers should not diagnose, counsel, or investigate trauma.



Review Policies Through a Trauma- Informed Lens





Strengthen
Employee
Support
Systems



Balance Compassion with Accountability

- Public criticism
- Unpredictable change
- Loss of control
- Aggressive communication
- Workplace conflict
- Perceived unfairness

Common Workplace Triggers

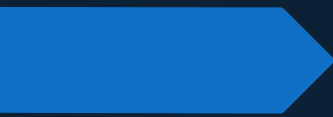
Triggered vs. Uncomfortable

- ➡ Feedback, deadlines and change may be uncomfortable but are often normal parts of work. Focus on respectful accountability while addressing legitimate concerns.



We know what Trauma
Informed is, now what
do we do with it?

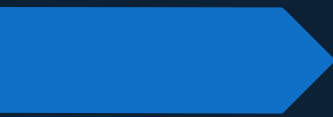




AWARENESS SKILLS

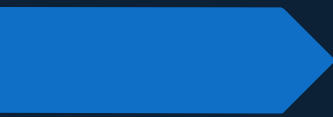
Awareness is the ability to recognize that employee behavior may have underlying causes without making assumptions

- ➡ Focus on Observable behaviors
- ➡ Common Signs of Distress



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- ➡ The Power of Curiosity
- ➡ Active Listening
- ➡ Validation
- ➡ Communication Clear and Consistent Expectations



RESPONSE SKILLS

- ➡ Acknowledge
- ➡ Support
- ➡ Refer

The Three Questions Every Manager Should Ask

What am I observing?

Focus on Facts

What assumptions am I making?

Challenge conclusions

How can I support success while maintaining expectations?

Balance empathy and accountability

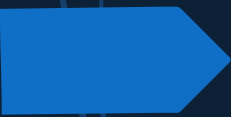
Leadership Takeaway

Trauma-Informed Managers Are Not Therapists

They are leaders who:

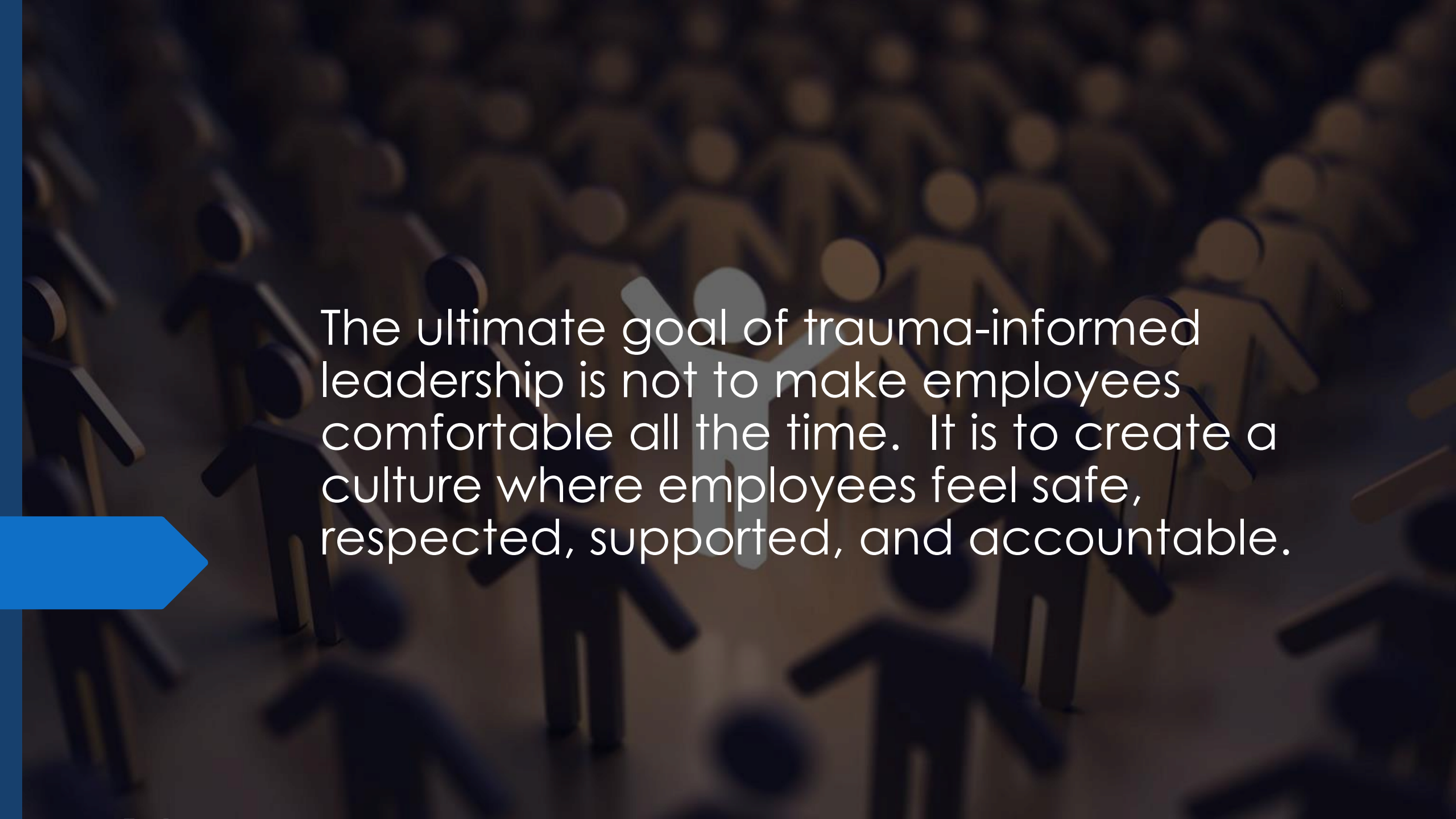
- ▶ Notice changes
- ▶ Stay curious
- ▶ Communicate respectfully
- ▶ Respond appropriately
- ▶ Connect employees to resources
- ▶ Maintain expectations

The goal is not to lower standards. The goal is to improve leadership effectiveness by combining empathy, psychological safety, and accountability.



Success Measures

- Culture
- Workforce
- Leadership
- Support
- Business



The ultimate goal of trauma-informed leadership is not to make employees comfortable all the time. It is to create a culture where employees feel safe, respected, supported, and accountable.



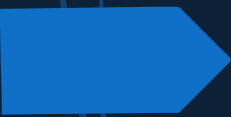
What changes when we shift from “What’s wrong with Sarah?” To “What may have happened to Sarah?”

The employee:

- Feels respected and heard.
- Is more willing to communicate challenges.
- Works collaboratively on a performance improvement plan.
- Utilizes available support resources.
- Re-engages with work responsibilities.

The supervisor:

- Maintains accountability standards.
- Builds trust and retention.
- Models' supportive leadership.
- Achieves better long-term performance outcomes.



Learn More About Trauma- Informed Care

As we continue our journey toward becoming a Trauma-Informed Agency, we welcome your questions and feedback.

For additional information, please contact:

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