

## Creating Trauma-Informed, Healing Centered Workplaces

Designing physical and virtual workplaces using trauma-informed, healing centered design is important because physical and virtual spaces have the power to influence, mitigate, and respond to a person's trauma-related sensitivity to stress.

When environmental cues cause heightened reactivity, it may negatively impact a person's physical and psychological comfort and their ability to engage with others. On the other hand, using a trauma-informed, healing-centered approach can facilitate healing for both clients and staff who have experienced trauma by eliciting feelings of **physical, psychological, and cultural safety, trust, connection, and empowerment** that may have been taken away or lessened by traumatic experiences.

**Co-Creation** is the core of healing centered design. This means that when designing healing centered spaces, give clients the opportunity to actively participate in the design. It is important to explore clients' experiences, needs, and values, and consider their input during the design process. As you design your workplaces, make sure to prioritize the **3 C's - Choice, Community, and Comfort** – to ensure that clients and staff feel as comfortable in the space as possible.

### Choice

- Client autonomy
- Shared decision making
- Valuing clients' lived experiences

### Community

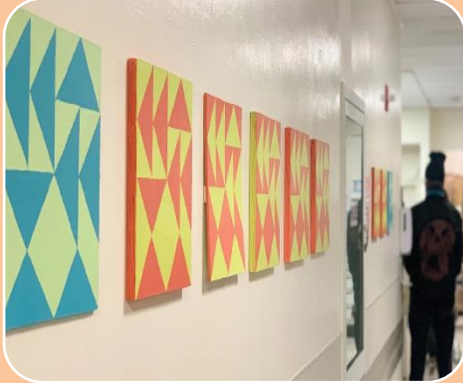
- Co-Creation
- Cultivating client-staff relationships
- Embracing culture and diversity
- Celebrating spaces

### Comfort

- Prioritizing clients' physical, cultural, and emotional safety
- Cultivating trust with clients

## 5 Elements for Designing Trauma-Informed, Healing Centered Spaces

The following are 5 of many healing centered elements that can be considered when designing healing centered spaces. It is important to remember that these elements can be applied to *both* the physical and virtual environments.



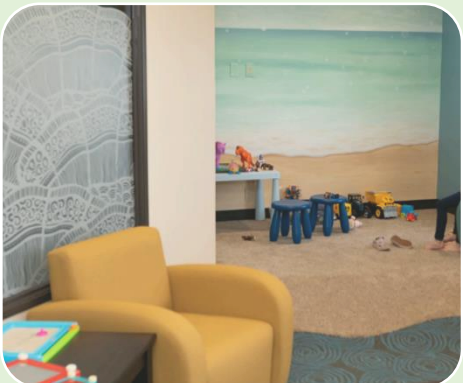
### Color

- Add color to blank and sterile walls
- Lighter colors evoke feelings of openness
- Warm colors can create activation
- Too many colors can feel overstimulating



### Lighting

- Lamps and dimmers can provide a sense of comfort, control, and autonomy
- Decorative lights create a relaxed, intimate atmosphere
- "Noisy" lights that buzz, hum, or flicker can create over-stimulation



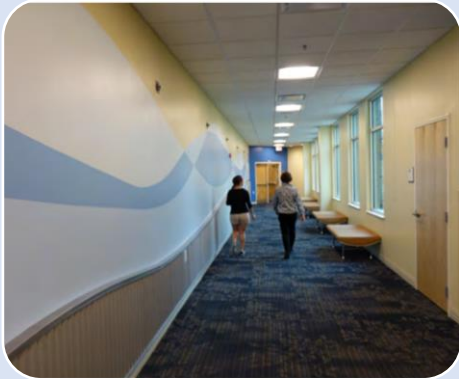
### Nature

- Views of nature can lessen fatigue, increase healing, and stimulate learning
- Add nature to spaces by using items like artwork, carpets, decorative colors, and natural or artificial plants



## Furniture

- Furniture set at eye level and circular tables create equity
- Moveable furniture creates autonomy
- "Soft" furniture increases physical comfort
- Sitting corner-to-corner at a desk or table engenders conversation



## Layout

- Crowded spaces can create feelings of social disruption, stress, and loss of autonomy
- Make spaces easy to navigate by creating clear sightlines and removing barriers
- Support easy navigation with colors, signs, and patterns

## Designing Healing Centered Virtual Workplaces

Healing centered design can also be applied to the virtual workplace. Changes can be made to improve the visual experiences of clients and staff, and communication in the virtual workplace should also be considered to make virtual workplaces more healing centered. The following are some tips and strategies for creating a healing centered virtual workplace:

### Choice

- Allow clients to choose how and when to communicate
- Ask clients and staff for their preferred name and pronouns
- Encourage clients to share feelings, questions, and concerns about remote interactions
- Collaboratively set community agreements
- Leave time for breaks and offer ways to take advantage of them

### Community

- Ensure that video and physical backgrounds are culturally sensitive
- Create opportunities for staff to form connections with one another
- Create spaces for real-time feedback
- Celebrate spaces

### Comfort

- Ask clients and staff about accommodations they may need
- Make sure that clients and staff understand how to use the technology before the meeting
- Address visual and audio quality concerns
- Check in with clients. Normalize their feelings and encourage them to do what they need to feel comfortable
- Address confidentiality concerns and use best practices for security
- Use body language strategically
- Create predictability by being dependable and consistent