

Middle Ground Expanded



Trauma-Informed Facilitation
Literature Review

Jenn Shepard
Project Evaluator
VRE Department
March 2022

Literature Review Topics

- What does it mean for something to be trauma-informed?
- What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?
- **Case Study: The Museum of Tolerance Model**
- What are the needs of staff who engage in trauma-informed facilitation?
- How might trauma-informed facilitation work in tandem with inquiry based facilitation?

"The concept **trauma-informed** refers to system of care that demonstrates an understanding and recognition of trauma as both **interpersonal** and **sociopolitical** and is therefore, **aligned with principles of social justice.**"

What does it mean for something to be trauma-informed?

From Carello & Butler (2015):

"To be **trauma-informed**, in any context, is to **understand** the ways in which violence, victimization, and other **traumatic experiences** may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to **apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services** so they accommodate trauma survivors' needs and are consonant with healing and recovery (Butler, Critelli, & Rinfrette, 2011; Harris & Fallot, 2001; N. J. Smyth, 2008)."

What does it mean for something to be trauma-informed?

From Knight (2019):

"In 2001, Harris and FalLOT introduced the term "trauma-informed" to refer to social, behavioral, and mental health services that **account for the possibility that clients may have experienced some form of past trauma**. Since then, an ever-expanding body of conceptual and empirical literature has further delineated the trauma-informed perspective, the **core characteristics of which are: trust, safety, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.**"

What does it mean for something to be trauma-informed?

From Carello & Butler (2015):

Five Principles of Trauma-Informed Settings:

- 1) Ensuring safety
- 2) Establishing trustworthiness
- 3) Maximizing choice
- 4) Maximizing collaboration
- 5) Prioritizing empowerment

What does it mean for something to be trauma-informed?

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's [Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response \(OPHPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for OPHPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work. Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by [OPHPR](#) and [NCTIC](#) was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

“If you feel safe and loved, your brain becomes specialized in exploration, play and cooperation; if you feel frightened and unwanted, it specializes in managing feelings of abandonment and fear.”

Bessel van der Kolk
psychiatrist and trauma researcher
Quoted in Armstrong et al. (2021)

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

From Armstrong, et al. (2021):

“A trauma-aware framework encourages us, as museum educators, **to think about** our work from the point of view of **the psychological needs and inner experience of the visitor** and adds an extra dimension of sensitivity to every aspect of what we do.”

- Include moments of pause and invitations for grounding and breathing together
- Exploration that includes noticing and describing with all of your senses
- Reminders to check in with yourself and where you are at a particular moment
- Include multiple ways to participate, providing choice (agency) and allowing for self-paced exploration.
- Encourage self-reflection and boundary setting (ie sharing only what feels comfortable and safe in the moment)

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Good listening

Respect for different perspectives

Skill at navigating emotionally charged situations

Support for different ways to engage

Modeling behavior

Self-reflection

Support for facilitators

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Good listening:

"Good listening means being willing to acknowledge one's own assumptions—to recognize that a listener's experiences and assumptions create a filter through which he or she listens. A good listener is aware of those filters, acknowledging how they might affect his or her response, and tries to listen objectively."

(Kadoyama, 2007)

Good listening includes **respect for different perspectives.**

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Skill at navigating emotionally charged situations:

“Community engagement sessions can quickly become emotional, change rapidly, and require high emotional intelligence and responsiveness from staff.” (Munro, 2014)

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Support for different ways to engage:

"Choice and voice, involves offering visitors multiple means of engagement and expression. Choice and voice provides visitors with agency to select a mode that best fits their lived experience and individual needs, while understanding that people's needs might change from visit to visit." (Armstrong et al., 2021)

In some instances, visitors may feel as though there is a prescribed way to engage with the facilitator, the exhibits, or other visitors. If there are narrow expectations on how visitors engage - through talking and listening, through sharing feelings or experiences - facilitators can feel they are acting as disciplinarians while trying to focus engagement along a certain pathway. (Munro, 2014)

Supporting different ways of engagement may help facilitators feel less disciplinary in their efforts to get visitors to engage and visitors more free to engage within their boundaries.

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Modeling behavior:

Facilitators model trauma-informed practices and self-care behaviors for visitors during facilitation activities. Practices include: self-reflection, vulnerability, sharing within one's boundaries, and compassion for others and their ideas.

The training program for new facilitators can also be an opportunity to model and reinforce trauma-informed principles (see Armstrong et al., 2021)

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Self-reflection:

"Reflection is the act of attempting to make sense of experiences in order to draw useful lessons for future practice. [...] Effective reflection requires identifying the core assumptions that underlie an individual's ability to see and interpret various situations." (Moore et al., 2020)

"Successful guides must share authentically of themselves to connect with their group. Guides cannot ask visitors to discuss very personal topics with each other without modeling such behavior for their group. [...] A practiced approach to self-reflection is necessary; coupled with a mindful appreciation of a variety of listening skills." (Katrach, 2018)

What are the characteristics of trauma-informed facilitation?

Support for facilitators:

Facilitators share of themselves and can find themselves in emotionally intense situations during the course of a facilitation session. Facilitators need to have avenues for self-care and support in being good allies for one another. Clear instruction for how to report problems that occur can offer protection for the guide and knowledge that there are actions they can take if an issue arises. (Katrach, 2018)

“Public facing work can be draining and stressful, even when we love it, and taking time to regulate our emotions and tend to our own nervous systems is crucial for our work and overall well-being. The care we extend to ourselves has an impact on everyone who enters into our field or the edges of our being.” (Armstrong et al., 2021)

The Museum of Tolerance & The Five Layers of Taking Care

Katrikh (2018)

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, CA is a multimedia museum designed to engage visitors with racism and prejudice found around the world, with a particular focus on the history of the Holocaust. The museum uses a Five Layers of Taking Care model to train frontline facilitators in how to facilitate difficult conversations and cultivate a brave space for visitors.

The Five Layers of Taking Care model starts with the museum staffer - or guide - and works outwards in concentric circles, focusing on the visitor, the group, the museum, and the world. The model emphasizes care, listening, and respect and acknowledges that the guide can have a big influence on setting the tone and building a sense of safety for visitors engaged in dialogue.

Reflexive practice and vulnerability are tools that guides can use to acknowledge their own lens and relationship to a conversation.

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

5 LAYERS OF TAKING CARE

GUIDE

We honor our own dignity and identity and support our needs to be treated respectfully at all times.

QUESTIONER

We acknowledge the courage of the visitor to speak and we listen to their opinions and questions with compassion.

GROUP

We consider the impact of every statement on group members and seek to redress possible harms or balance perspective.

MUSEUM

We uphold the values of this Museum and elevate free speech by addressing irresponsible or offensive speech.

WORLD

We promote policies and practices that honor diversity, inclusion, equity and justice beyond these walls – for all people.

Layer 1: The Guide

- A guide is anyone who engages with visitors for a specific purpose.
- Guides engage in a dialogue based approach. They are not keepers of knowledge, but help visitors reflect and connect.
- Guides should take care of themselves and be allies with each other.
- Guides need a variety of listening skills and practice in being neutral and objective in the face of unexpected situations.

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

5 LAYERS OF TAKING CARE

GUIDE

We honor our own dignity and identity and support our needs to be treated respectfully at all times.

QUESTIONER

We acknowledge the courage of the visitor to speak and we listen to their opinions and questions with compassion.

GROUP

We consider the impact of every statement on group members and seek to redress possible harms or balance perspective.

MUSEUM

We uphold the values of this Museum and elevate free speech by addressing irresponsible or offensive speech.

WORLD

We promote policies and practices that honor diversity, inclusion, equity and justice beyond these walls – for all people.

Layer 2: The Questioner

- It takes courage to speak, and guides listen to visitors opinions and questions with compassion.
- Guides acknowledge their own lens when answering questions.
- Guides recognize that there may be a variety of motivations behind asking a challenging question.
- Taking a moment to breath and be calm before proceeding can spread calm to others.

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

5 LAYERS OF TAKING CARE

GUIDE

We honor our own dignity and identity and support our needs to be treated respectfully at all times.

QUESTIONER

We acknowledge the courage of the visitor to speak and we listen to their opinions and questions with compassion.

GROUP

We consider the impact of every statement on group members and seek to redress possible harms or balance perspective.

MUSEUM

We uphold the values of this Museum and elevate free speech by addressing irresponsible or offensive speech.

WORLD

We promote policies and practices that honor diversity, inclusion, equity and justice beyond these walls – for all people.

Layer 3: The Group

- Groups formed of individuals that visit together (families, friend groups, school trips) arrive with pre-existing group dynamics. Setting ground rules can help prevent entrenched dynamics or behaviors from limiting group discussion and individual participation.

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

5 LAYERS OF TAKING CARE

GUIDE

We honor our own dignity and identity and support our needs to be treated respectfully at all times.

QUESTIONER

We acknowledge the courage of the visitor to speak and we listen to their opinions and questions with compassion.

GROUP

We consider the impact of every statement on group members and seek to redress possible harms or balance perspective.

MUSEUM

We uphold the values of this Museum and elevate free speech by addressing irresponsible or offensive speech.

WORLD

We promote policies and practices that honor diversity, inclusion, equity and justice beyond these walls – for all people.

Layer 4: The Museum

- The chosen facilitation approach should be aligned with museum's professed values and act to elevate them.
- The museum needs a robust training program to ensure that guides challenge their own assumptions while equipping them with the skills necessary to handle challenging conversations, heightened emotions, and the space to have regular check-ins.

The Museum of Tolerance & the Five Layers of Taking Care

5 LAYERS OF TAKING CARE

GUIDE

We honor our own dignity and identity and support our needs to be treated respectfully at all times.

QUESTIONER

We acknowledge the courage of the visitor to speak and we listen to their opinions and questions with compassion.

GROUP

We consider the impact of every statement on group members and seek to redress possible harms or balance perspective.

MUSEUM

We uphold the values of this Museum and elevate free speech by addressing irresponsible or offensive speech.

WORLD

We promote policies and practices that honor diversity, inclusion, equity and justice beyond these walls – for all people.

Layer 5: The World

- Conversations that happen at the museum are influenced by global events and in turn should be linked to global events. Link the museum conversations/experience to broader impact, help visitors understand their place and agency in world events.

Challenges of community engagement and care work are often conflated with the general conditions of overwork and burnout - but facilitation work is complex and relational, it is not just the workload but the type of work that makes it challenging.

What are strategies to support practitioners of trauma-informed facilitation?

Training in emotional intelligence, boundary setting, self-reflection and cultural competency are core components of trauma-informed facilitation. Adequate training supports facilitators in feeling competent and confident when navigating emotionally charged situation.

Because each engagement is unique it takes time for facilitators to learn to apply the suite of responses and approaches. Mutual support between facilitators and opportunities to share and reflect after engagement sessions can help grow feelings of competence and allows for space to acknowledge the challenges of the work.

What are strategies to support practitioners of trauma-informed facilitation?

Burnout for those practicing trauma-informed facilitation may look similar to other cases of overwork, but these staff members experience burnout specifically related to the toll of emotional labor. Some facilitators experience fatigue related to wearing the “mask” required to enact such facilitation, a face worn during extended periods where calm and neutrality are required.

Mutual support and opportunities to connect with others doing this work, having a **forum for feedback**, and **spaces to reflect and share** are necessary support structures.

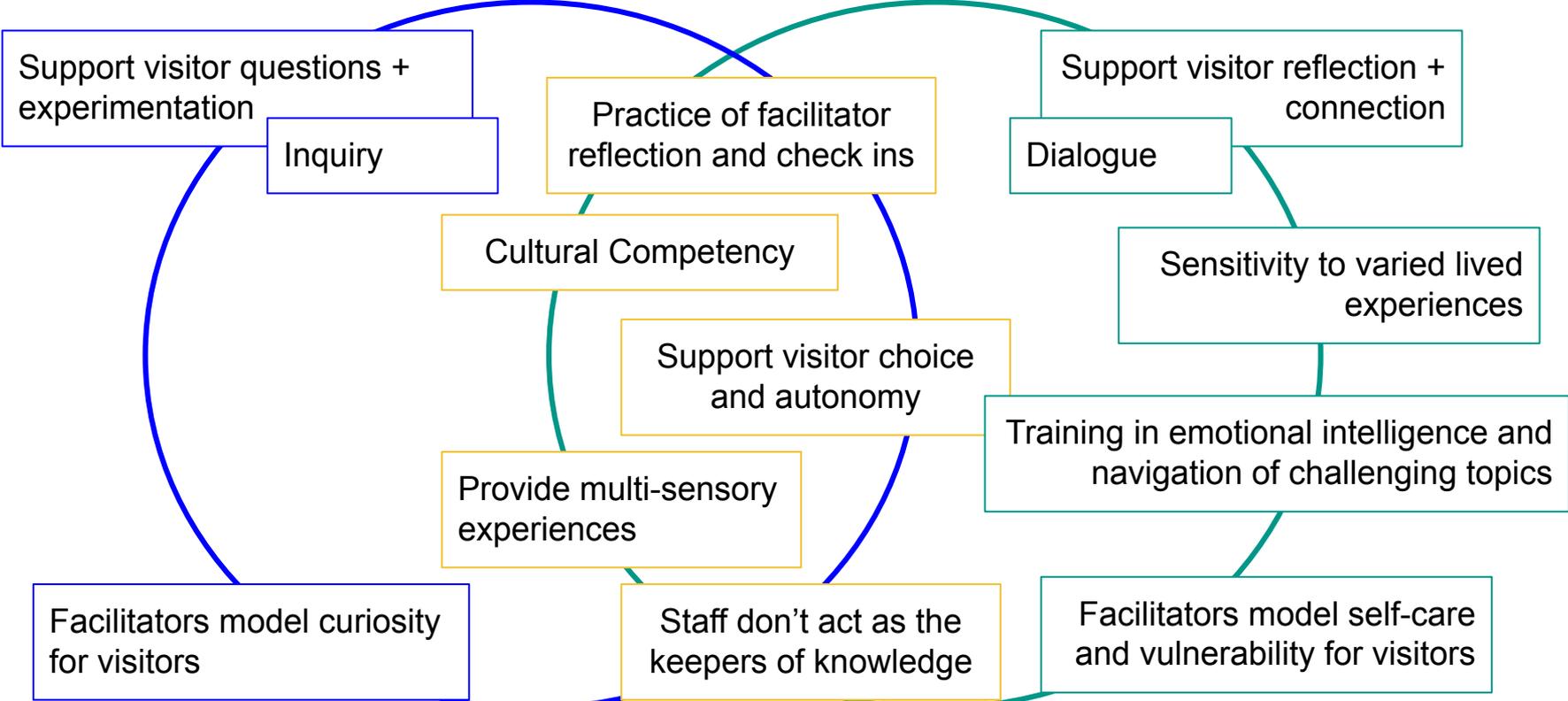
Tinkering at the Exploratorium has three facilitation goals: **Spark** initial interest, **sustain** participation, and **deepen** understanding.

- From the Tinkering Studio Facilitation Field Guide

How might trauma-informed and inquiry based facilitation work together?

Embedding trauma-informed principles in an inquiry based approach to facilitation may improve the experience of facilitation for both the visitor and the facilitator, especially when exhibits, art, or exhibitions are intended to evoke emotional reactions.

How might trauma-informed and inquiry based facilitation work together?



References

- Armstrong, Jackie, Laura Evans, Stephen Legari, Ronna Tulgan Ostheimer, Andrew Palamara, and Emily Wiskera. "Weaving Trauma Awareness into Museum Education." *Journal of Museum Education* 46, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 454–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2021.1981045>.
- Carello, Janice, and Lisa D. Butler. "Practicing What We Teach: Trauma-Informed Educational Practice." *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 35, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 262–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2015.1030059>.
- Exploratorium. "Facilitation Field Guide," n.d., 1.
- Infographic, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/00_docs/TRAINING_EMERGENCY_RESPONDERS_FINAL.pdf
- Kadoyama, Margaret. "The Hard Work of True Listening." *Museums & Social Issues* 2, no. 2 (November 2007): 201–6. <https://doi.org/10.1179/msi.2007.2.2.201>.
- Knight, Carolyn. "Trauma Informed Practice and Care: Implications for Field Instruction." *Clinical Social Work Journal* 47, no. 1 (March 2019): 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-018-0661-x>.
- Moore, Sabrina, Joseph Roche, Laura Bell, and Emer Emily Neenan. "Supporting Facilitators of Maker Activities Through Reflective Practice." *Journal of Museum Education* 45, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 99–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2019.1710688>.
- Munro, Ealasaid. "Doing Emotion Work in Museums: Reconceptualising the Role of Community Engagement Practitioners," n.d., 17.
- Schuch, Johanna Claire, Susan B. Harden, Kamille Bostick, and Heather A. Smith. "Museums Engaging Diverse Millennials in Community Dialogue." *Museums & Social Issues* 13, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 58–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15596893.2018.1610648>.