

Summary of Trauma Informed Child Rich Community Practice with Nicola Atwool October 2025

Connected communities provide better outcomes for all their members and crucially support our mokopuna to thrive. These connections are not a conceptual aspect of community, but felt and lived, tangible feelings of safety, support, connection to others and place- to whenua. Crucially connection is a protective factor where there has been trauma- protecting those who have experienced trauma to be able to heal, to be with the difficult legacies of trauma, and establish resilience and health.

We are all traumatised to some extent. Trauma is a subjective experience affected everyone differently. Talking about our trauma can create a system of “being fixed” of “there is something wrong with you” and often sits within a colonised approach- not recognising the impact of colonisation and the true journey of healing and recovery.

Children who are exposed to traumatic situations and environments need positive supportive experiences. Resiliency and healing is developed- we are not born with it. Relationships are key where adults can model regulation, relation and response.

The 6 guiding principles of a trauma informed child rich community

1. Safety- through a community lens- children and whānau feel safe in their community.
Always look for ways to build on that safety
2. Transparency and Trustworthiness- all people feel trust in each other and the services in community. Services talk to each other and build trust together
3. Peer Support- getting someone to support others in the journey they have already made- tell their story, peer support, mentoring from those who have walked that path before
4. Collaboration and mutuality- with each other and of services
5. Empowerment, voice, choice- empower the choices of individuals rather than telling them they need certain services
6. Cultural, historical, gender- remove stereotypes and be inclusive

Trauma informed practice needs to be targeted at the community level so community can be resilient and enhance the ability for whānau to thrive- to reduce risk and increase protective factors.

- Acknowledge harm
- “What has happened to you”
- Community structures are supportive
- Be reflective
- Don’t buy into Myths
- Foster social cohesion
- Compensation
- Growth and accomplishments
- Promote engagement and participation
- Embed trauma informed practice at all levels- individual, interpersonal, community, systems

Have a duty to care, not of care, so services aren’t restricted by their referral processes. There should be no wrong door. Ask “Did what we do make a difference and if so, how can we progress that?”

The whole of community needs to be on board if they are about wanting to create system change. We have a responsibility to also know our own trauma story.