

# RSAC

IS A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER THAT DISCUSSES A VARIETY OF TOPICS DEALING WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE AND HOW TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS.

April 2019

Issue: So what's the deal with trauma-informed practice?

# RSAC



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## It's time to grow.

April is closely associated with spring, and spring represents growth. The flowers begin to bloom, the trees grow a little taller, and newborn animals are welcomed into the world.

Think of this month as your time to grow. Start simple: wake up early, make your lunch the night before, get that ice cream cone you've been craving, plan your outfit a day in advance, reconnect with friends, walk around the lake, try something new, take your vitamins, challenge a fear of yours, apply for that job you always wanted.

Only you know what it is like to be you- Grow at your own rate.



illustration by @CLOUDY THURSTAG

## What We Have Been Up To

March 1st- Brennan, one of our counsellors, leaves for paternity leave

March 2/3 - First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training

March 5/6 - First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training

March 8th- International Women's Day

March 19th- Kate and Sarah provided two training sessions on trauma-informed care at Lutheran Home

## Upcoming Dates

April 1st - RSAC welcomes the addition of Charmaine Norbert who will be with us just over 3 months and will be delivering several workshops on trauma basics to clients on our waitlist.

April 2 Moose Jaw - Presentation to 15 Wing families on healthy relationships and consent for children and youth.

April 3rd - We are speaking with a Masters in Journalism student who requested our input on sexual harassment for a video project she is working on.

April 4th - Sarah heads to Metis Addictions Council Of Sask Inc (MACSI) with SASS to deliver training to program participants.

April 4th - Sarah and Kate will begin our complex trauma group.

April 11th- Meeting with Moose Jaw Partners Against Violence

## Upcoming Dates Cont'd.

**April 19th - Good Friday (Closed)**

**April 22nd- Easter Monday (Closed)**

**April 24th - RSAC employees are heading to Yorkton to meet with Corinne McArthur and several Elders for training in cultural competency to advance our goal of providing counselling that meets Indigenous needs.**

**May 2/3- First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training (Moose Jaw)**

**September 14/15- First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training- Open to the public and new volunteers. Contact to register.**



REGINA SEXUAL ASSAULT PRESENTS:

# COMPLEX TRAUMA: A WOMEN IDENTIFIED HEALING GROUP

For women-identified survivors of complex trauma including childhood sexual abuse, incest, developmental trauma, and intimate partner violence.

Education on trauma and its emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual impacts.

Tools for stabilization and increased experience of safety.

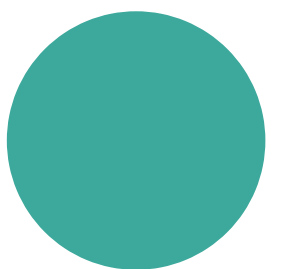
An opportunity to engage in expressive activities.

Safety in learning and sharing in a closed group of supportive members.

When and Where:

Thursday Evenings, beginning April  
4th, 8-week group.  
5:30-7:00 PM

Regina Sexual Assault Centre  
1830 MacKay St.  
Regina, Sk.



**ARE YOU INTERESTED  
IN JOINING OUR  
GROUP?**

Contact Kate or Sarah at  
306-522-2777.

A brief interview will  
determine if this group is  
right for you.

# So what's the deal with trauma-informed practice?

We are currently experiencing a shift in today's society. Adversity, trauma, and mental illness are slowly being removed from the private sphere to create opportunities of awareness and education for a better society.

Trauma informed practice (TIP) is an approach being recognized throughout many fields (human services, medical, justice, etc.) to promote this shift in society. You may have heard this term before, but what does it really mean, what does it look like in action, and what role does it play specifically in sexual violence?

Our counsellors, Kate and Sarah, have outlined the important facets of a trauma informed lens.

## What is trauma?

First things first, we need to fully understand what trauma is- It's complicated.

Trauma can be defined as an overwhelming experience that causes a person to feel as if their life, sanity, or loved ones are at risk. Helplessness, and emotional and bodily overwhelm are key factors in developing post-stress responses.

Trauma is completely subjective; different experiences are perceived differently by people depending on previous life experiences, expectations, and internal/external resources.

Those who have suffered complex trauma (multiple traumas), are at a much higher risk for developing health complications.

Trauma can present itself in many ways in our lives: sexual violence, abuse, immigration, parents divorce, medical procedures, natural disasters, death of loved ones, chronic pain, poverty, etc.

The important thing to note is how prevalent trauma is within our society. Almost every individual you know has experienced some sort of trauma in their lives. The statistics about sexual assault is a sad reality: 1 in 3 females, and 1 in 5 males will be assaulted in their lifetime. There are approximately 460,000 assaults in Canada each year, and 91% of sexual assaults are not reported to authorities (Stat Can).

## Understanding trauma and the brain.

Trauma effects every one differently. The effects may be short-term, although many present as long-term. There is some familiarity around the physical, emotional, social, and behavioural effects of trauma, but many professionals lack the understanding of what trauma does to the brain. Understanding how and where the brain stores traumatic memories is crucial to understanding triggers.

A trigger is any stimulus that is associated with the traumatic memory. When a traumatized person is triggered, the prefrontal brain (or "thinking" part of the brain) automatically goes offline, and parts of the brain that were active during the trauma are reactivated. The body does not know the difference between an actual threat and a triggered threat response. It is very difficult for an individual to move out of the triggered state into a more regulated state. Recovery will depend on self-awareness and self-soothing skills that can be taught.

## So what does Trauma informed practice look like in action?

Trauma-informed care is defined as practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing. A medical office or hospital can be a terrifying experience for someone who has experienced trauma, particularly for childhood sexual abuse survivors. The perceived power differential, being asked to remove clothing, and having invasive testing or questioning can remind someone of prior episodes of abuse. This can lead to anxiety or avoidance for receiving support. Trauma informed practice can help alleviate some of these stressors associated with receiving support.

## Here are some helpful hints to help you practice trauma-informed care:

- Assume people have trauma history or be aware of trauma history (no specific detailed required)
- Explain why you need to ask sensitive information
- Explain step by step what you are doing (especially with invasive procedures)
- Minimize conditions that might be triggering
- Notice, and celebrate, strengths, resources, and healthy coping
- Notice what helps the individual shift from their triggered state to regulated state
- Avoid victim blaming
- Ensure individuals feel as if they have freedom of choice
- Have resources available in case someone enters a triggered state (grounding, music, movement, etc.)
- Orienting: a mindful practice that helps people take in the actual, the in the moment experience of space and time
- Shifting: practices that allow a person to move from a state of hypo or hyperarousal to one that is more regulated (splashing face with cold water, moving to a different room, going for a walk, taking a nap, reading a book)
- Use politically correct and sensitive language

## Resources

Ridley, S., & McEvenue, K. (n.d.). Trauma-Informed Care for the Senior Population. Lecture, Regina.

Statistics Canada., & Gouvernement du Canada. (2012, December 19). Statistics Canada: Canada's national statistical agency / Statistique Canada : Organisme statistique national du Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/>

Tello, M. (2019, March 25). Trauma-informed care: What it is, and why it's important. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/trauma-informed-care-what-it-is-and-why-its-important-2018101613562>



Photos by @activistnyc

## RSAC

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[www.reginalsexualassaultcentre.ca](http://www.reginalsexualassaultcentre.ca)