**JOB AID: Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach**

**THE FOUR R’S OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**

1. Realize
2. Recognize
3. Respond
4. Resist

**1. REALIZE: WHAT IS TRAUMA?**

* A deeply distressing experience that overwhelms an individual’s ability to optimally use their internal resources and coping capabilities

Trigger: Anything that causes an individual to remember a traumatic experience, such as an

image, sound, scent, or sensation

* The hospital environment may hold many triggers for an individual. People may already have pre-existing trauma before entering the hospital. For patients, the stress of hospitalization may be traumatizing or re-traumatizing.

**2. RECOGNIZE: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

* Some examples of signs & symptoms seen with trauma are:
  + Physical: difficulty sleeping, unspecified pain, feeling tired
  + Emotional: mood swings, feeling numb, anxiety, sadness, dissociation, easily startled
  + Mental: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), flashbacks, intrusive thoughts
  + Behavioral: self-harm, re-enacting the traumatic event
* Reactions are influenced by many factors (age, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.). Since traumatic memories are often recorded in the body, some individuals may not have conscious access to them. They may have a reaction and not know why.

**3. RESPOND: ADDRESSING THE IMPACT**

* Key principles:
  + Safety
  + Trustworthiness
  + Peer support
  + Collaboration and mutuality
  + Empowerment, voice and choice
  + Cultural, historical, and gender issues

**The Pillars of Trauma:**

* **Safety**
  + Ensure the individuals’ physical, emotional, and social well-being.
  + Use words and body language that convey respect, calmness, patience, and acceptance of the other person.
  + Ask: “What is happening to you?” **NOT** “What is wrong with you?”
* **Connection**
  + Help the individual recognize their strengths and empower them in their choices.
  + Reframe conversations of shaming, threatening, and fear-inducing to ones of positive messages.
* **Managing Emotions**
  + Listen to the individual.
  + Provide emotional support by validating their feelings.
  + Use sentences that begin with:
    - “I understand…”
    - “I empathize…”

**4. RESIST: PREVENT RETRAUMATIZATION**

* Focus on what this individual might need to avoid having to relive their trauma in the future.
* Avoiding triggers can help individuals regulate their emotions in a healthy manner.
* Consider the unique needs of the person, such as background or cultural preferences.