

Advancing Trauma-Informed and Human-Centred Practice for Supporting Older Adults

*Supporting the mental health of Alberta's
aging population.*

Advancing Trauma-Informed and Human-Centred Practice for Supporting Older Adults is a new training initiative designed to strengthen the skills, confidence, and capacity of those who support older adults across Alberta.

Together, these sessions are designed to support continued learning, reflection, and skill-building for those who care for, serve, and walk alongside older adults.

Check out our website for a complete listing of training imagineinstitute.ca

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Supporting Older Adults

Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries and Navigating Challenging Conversations

6 hours

Trauma-Informed Practices for Working with Older Adults

6 hours

The ART of Trauma-Informed De-escalation Strategies for Working with Older Adults

6 hours

Navigating Loss and Grief, Self-Compassion and Self-Sustainability

6 hours

Building Psychological Safety in the Workplace: Cultivating Trust, Inclusion and Resilience

12 hours

Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries and Navigating Challenging Conversations

6 hours

This full-day training integrates evidence-informed practices from communication, psychology, trauma-informed care, and emotional intelligence frameworks to support sustainable relational health in the workplace. Participants will develop self-awareness, confidence, and practical tools to establish and maintain professional boundaries while engaging in challenging conversations with clarity, respect, and compassion.

Learning Objectives:

KNOW: Knowledge & Understanding

- Learn the core principles of trauma-informed communication, including safety, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.
- Understand the role of boundaries in sustaining emotional well-being, professional ethics, and relational trust
- Identify the psychological and environmental factors that contribute to difficult conversations and conflict escalation.

DO: Applied Skills & Practice

- Apply boundary-setting language and communication tools to maintain professionalism and compassion in complex interactions.
- Use conversation mapping and reflective preparation tools to plan, approach, and follow up on challenging conversations with clarity and care.
- Demonstrate the use of de-escalation and empathy-based dialogue techniques to reduce defensiveness and maintain safety.

BE: Professional Growth & Transformation

- Develop a sustainable practice of relational integrity, where boundaries are seen as expressions of care rather than control.
- Cultivate a calm, confident, and compassionate presence when navigating interpersonal stress or conflict.
- Foster a workplace culture grounded in trust, transparency, and mutual respect, supporting both personal and organizational well-being.

Trauma-Informed Practices for Working with Older Adults

6 hours

This one-day, evidence-informed training invites practitioners, caregivers, and service providers to explore how trauma shapes the experiences, behaviours, and well-being of older adults. Using a human-centered and relational lens, participants will examine the lifelong impact of trauma, how it may resurface in later life, and the ways loss, transition, and vulnerability can activate protective responses in the aging brain and body.

Grounded in current research from neuroscience, gerontology, and trauma studies, this training blends theory with reflection, discussion, and applied practice. Participants will learn to recognize trauma responses, apply trauma-informed communication and care strategies, and foster emotional and relational safety with older adults—whether in home visits, health care, outreach, or community settings.

By the end of the session, learners will walk away with practical tools, deeper empathy, and renewed capacity to engage older adults with dignity, safety, and respect.

Learning Objectives:

KNOW: Knowledge & Understanding

- Understand how trauma and adversity across the lifespan influence the aging process—physically, emotionally, and socially.
- Identify the ways trauma may present in older adults, including withdrawal, aggression, shame, hoarding, hyper-independence, and mistrust.
- Recognize the role of safety, choice, and control as central pillars of trauma-informed care for older adults.
- Explore the intersection of trauma with ageism, loss of autonomy, chronic illness, and cognitive decline.

DO: Applied Skills & Practice

- Apply trauma-informed communication and engagement strategies that prioritize emotional safety and trust.
- Integrate reflective listening, attention, and grounding techniques to de-escalate stress responses in older adults.
- Adapt assessment and goal-setting practices through a compassionate, person-first lens.
- Strengthen collaboration and boundaries when supporting older adults in complex emotional or relational situations.

BE: Professional Growth & Transformation

- Deepen self-awareness of personal triggers, biases, and values when working with older adults.
- Cultivate reflective practice and compassion resilience to prevent burnout and secondary trauma.
- Shift from a “fixing” mindset to one that emphasizes empowerment, connection, and mutual respect.

The ART of Trauma-Informed De-escalation Strategies for Working with Older Adults

6 hours

This one-day, evidence-informed training explores how trauma, aging, and neurobiological changes intersect to influence behaviour and communication in older adults. Participants will learn how to de-escalate moments of confusion, frustration, or distress through a trauma-informed lens that honours the person's history, autonomy, and dignity.

Grounded in neuroscience and relational theory, the session integrates principles from trauma-informed care, gerontology, and de-escalation research. Participants will examine how aging affects the nervous system, slowing cognitive processing, heightening sensitivity to loss, and sometimes reducing tolerance for stress or sensory overload. Through case examples, guided reflection, and skill-building exercises, practitioners will learn to recognize triggers, regulate themselves, and respond with empathy and precision to maintain both physical and emotional safety.

This training is designed for professionals who support older adults in home care, outreach, housing, and health care environments, and who seek to balance compassion with professional boundaries in high-stress or emotionally charged situations.

Learning Objectives:

KNOW: Knowledge & Understanding

- Understand how trauma and cumulative stress impact the aging brain, nervous system, and communication patterns.
- Identify common triggers for escalation among older adults, such as feelings of loss of control, sensory overload, fear of abandonment, or medical trauma.
- Explore how cognitive decline, sensory impairment, grief, and chronic illness can influence emotional regulation and perception of safety.

DO: Apply Skills & Practice

- Apply trauma-informed de-escalation techniques that preserve dignity, safety, and autonomy (e.g., calm tone, non-threatening body language, pacing communication).
- Implement environmental and procedural adjustments—such as reducing noise, providing clear choices, or allowing additional time—to prevent escalation.
- Practice collaborative boundary setting that communicates respect while maintaining professional and emotional safety.

BE: Professional Growth & Transformation

- Develop deeper empathy and patience through understanding how aging and trauma shape perception and behaviour.
- Shift from a control-oriented mindset (“managing behaviour”) to a relationship-based approach (“building safety and understanding”).
- Strengthen professional resilience by integrating self-awareness, compassion, and reflective practice into daily work with older adults.

Navigating Loss and Grief, Self-Compassion and Self-Sustainability

6 hours

Professionals supporting older adults often witness profound and cumulative experiences of loss—ranging from bereavement and declining health to the gradual loss of independence, identity, and belonging. These encounters can evoke deep emotional responses not only in clients but also in the professionals who accompany them. This one-day interactive training integrates evidence-informed grief models, trauma-informed practice, and self-compassion theory to help participants understand grief's many forms, respond with empathy and skill, and maintain emotional sustainability in their work. Through reflective dialogue, applied exercises, and practical tools, participants will strengthen their ability to hold space for others' grief while caring for their own well-being.

Learning Objectives:

KNOW: Knowledge & Understanding

- Understand the types of loss and how they manifest across the aging continuum.
- Recognize the diverse expressions of grief shaped by cultural background, developmental stage, and personal history.
- Identify the signs of compassion fatigue and cumulative grief in professional settings.
- Learn the core principles of trauma-informed grief support, emphasizing safety, choice, and emotional regulation.

DO: Applied Skills & Practice

- Apply communication and validation strategies that foster trust and meaning-making with clients experiencing loss.
- Use trauma-informed approaches to support clients through grief without re-traumatization or emotional overwhelm.
- Develop personalized self-sustainability plans, integrating micro-practices for regulation, boundary maintenance, and renewal.
- Engage in guided reflection and peer dialogue to normalize grief responses and strengthen professional community.

BE: Professional Growth & Transformation

- Cultivate a compassionate, steady presence that honors both their own humanity and that of those they serve.
- Embody self-compassion and emotional humility, recognizing that resilience arises from connection, not endurance.
- Develop the capacity to hold space for grief without internalizing it, maintaining empathy and perspective.
- Foster a work culture of openness, reflection, and shared care, reducing stigma around emotional vulnerability in professional roles.

Building Psychological Safety in the Workplace: Cultivating Trust, Inclusion and Resilience

12 hours

This two-day experiential training invites participants to explore what psychological safety looks, sounds, and feels like in their organizational context. Through guided discussions, self-assessments, and applied learning activities, participants will examine how fear, hierarchy, and unprocessed trauma can inhibit communication, collaboration, and innovation.

Drawing on evidence-based frameworks and trauma-informed principles, this program helps participants identify the relational conditions that allow people to speak up, make mistakes, and share ideas without fear of judgment or reprisal. Participants will practice concrete strategies to build inclusive, trust-based teams and to challenge processes that hinder safety and well-being for both clients and staff.

Learning Objectives:

KNOW: Knowledge & Understanding

- Understand the concept of psychological safety and its evidence-based links to team performance, innovation, and staff well-being.
- Identify the four stages of psychological safety and their application in human-service settings.
- Recognize how power dynamics, hierarchy, and past trauma can influence perceptions of safety and communication in the workplace.
- Understand the neuroscience of threat and belonging, and how stress and fear impact openness, creativity, and engagement.

DO: Applied Skills & Practice

- Apply psychological safety principles to strengthen trust and collaboration within teams and between departments.
- Practice communication strategies that model transparency, empathy, and curiosity during feedback or conflict.
- Engage in role-plays and case scenarios that simulate real-world challenges, including giving constructive feedback, addressing power imbalances, and navigating team mistakes.
- Develop practical action plans to embed psychologically safe practices into meetings, supervision, and daily interactions.

BE: Professional Growth & Transformation

- Embody a leadership mindset rooted in humility, curiosity, and accountability.
- Commit to shared responsibility for safety, understanding that trust and inclusion are ongoing practices, not static outcomes.
- Cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation to remain grounded and open when facing tension or feedback.
- Contribute to workplaces that model dignity, equity, and respect, enhancing the well-being of both older adults and those who support them.

