Trauma-informed Websites

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6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

1. SAFETY
2. TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY
3. PEER SUPPORT
4. COLLABORATION & MUTUALITY
5. EMPOWERMENT VOICE & CHOICE
6. CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, & GENDER ISSUES

(Image by CDC, 2020, based on SAMHSA, 2014)
Newer settings for applying trauma-informed principles

**Physical**
- Hospitals/clinics
- Schools
- Housing
- Workplace
- Prisons
- Yoga

**Digital**
- Websites
- Mobile apps
- Software
- Social media
- Online forms
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning
Every use of your web site or mobile app is a conversation started by your website visitor.

Ginny Redish

*Letting Go of The Words*
Treat people how you would in person
988 Lifeline Chat and Text

988 Lifeline Chat and Text is a service of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline), connecting individuals with crisis counselors for emotional support and other services via web chat or texting 988.

All chat and text centers in the 988 Lifeline network are accredited by either the American Association of Suicidology or the International Council for Helplines. 988 Lifeline Chat and Text is available 24/7 across the U.S. and certain territories.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is committed to providing individuals in emotional crisis with support, which can include connection to specialized services for different populations. Click here to learn more about these options.

Click here to access chat in Spanish.

Haga clic aquí para acceder al chat en español.

Ready to Chat?

To start a text conversation instead, send a text to 988. Your conversations are free and confidential.

After you complete the short survey and agree to the terms of service, we will connect you to a crisis counselor. There may be a wait time to connect. To speak to a crisis counselor now, please call the 988 Lifeline at 988.

1 Please note if you are using an iPhone browser to chat with us you must remain on the browser chat screen to stay connected. If you navigate away from the chat or access a different iPhone application your connection may be lost. Thank you.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Chat Survey</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Zip Code:</strong> *</td>
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<td><strong>Name/Alias:</strong> *</td>
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<td><strong>Age:</strong> *</td>
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<td><strong>What is your gender identity (how do you define yourself)?</strong> *</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Girl/Woman</td>
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Cognitive impacts of trauma

- Misinterpreting neutral situations as dangerous
- Intrusive thoughts and memories
- Flashback
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory
- Planning
- Problem-solving

(Hayes et al., 2012, Van Der Kolk, 2014; Ford & Courtois, 2020)
I get tired just looking at it.

– Participant in one of Melissa’s usability testing sessions
Trauma-informed approach

User experience heuristics
Visibility of System Status

Designs should keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate, timely feedback.
Interactive and maps have to show people where they currently are, to help them understand where to go next.

Match between System and the Real World

The design should speak the users' language. Use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the users, rather than internal jargon.
Users can quickly understand which station control maps to each heating element.

User Control and Freedom

Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action.
Just like physical spaces, digital spaces need quick "emergency" exits too.

Consistency and Standards

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.
Follow platform conventions.
Check-in counters are usually located at the front of hotels, which meets expectations.

Error Prevention

Good error messages are important, but the best designs carefully prevent problems from occurring in the first place.
Guard rails on curvy mountain roads prevent drivers from falling off cliffs.

Recognition Rather Than Recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible. Avoid making users remember information.
People are likely to correctly answer "Is Lisbon the capital of Portugal?"

Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

Shortcuts — hidden from novice users — may speed up the interaction for the expert user.
Regular routes are listed on maps, but locals with more knowledge of the area can take shortcuts.

Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

Interfaces should not contain information which is irrelevant. Every extra unit of information in an interface competes with the relevant units of information.
A minimalist three-legged stool is still a place to sit.

Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no error codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.
Wrong-way signs on the road remind drivers that they are heading in the wrong direction.

Help and Documentation

It's best if the design doesn't need any additional explanation. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users complete their tasks.
Information kiosks at airports are easily recognizable and solve customers' problems in context and immediately.
Trauma-informed website heuristics

- Created by communication design researchers at Michigan State University as they were creating a university resource website
- Developed iteratively with feedback from students and design colleagues
- Based on definitions published by The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC)
Trustworthiness

- Provides clear information about what will be done, by whom, when, why, and under what circumstances (including role clarity, rules, and expectations).

- Maintains respectful and professional boundaries, prioritizes privacy and confidentiality, and ensures interactions and rules are consistent with an emphasis placed on follow-through.

Reasons for your rating:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
No problem

Severe problem
Any of these help websites become more trauma-informed
Thank you!

Please reach out with questions or needs. Reach me at melissa@birdcallux.com