TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE FORCOACHES

CJ 720 FINAL PROJECT

Aria ZiaShakeri

Boston University | **BOSTON, MA**

- LITERATURE REVIEW

- TRAINING

  - INTRODUCTION

  - PRE-TRAINING PREPARATION

  - TRAINING

    - HOW TO:

      - ENVIRONMENT

      - COMMUNICATION

      - PLAYER EMPOWERMENT

      - SELF-CARE

      - CULTURE

      - COLLABORATION

- RECOMMENDATIONS

  - READINGS

  - LISTENING

  - WATCHING

- RESOURCE LIST

- PROJECT SOURCES

Literature Review

• *What is trauma informed care* ───────────────────────────────

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept

  of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach (HHS Publication No.

  SMA14-4884). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

  https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

  In this document, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

(SAMHSA) provides the foundation for implementing understanding the impact of trauma and

providing trauma informed care (TIC) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration, 2014). SAMHSA discussed trauma based on "the 3 E's:" the event or

combination of events, how the individual experienced this event, and the effects of the event

(2014). Trauma is a widespread public health issue and impacts people no matter their

background. SAMHSA's comprehensive guide defines 4 Key assumptions for TIC: Realize the

impact, Recognize the signs, Respond with care, and Resist retraumatization (2014). These key

assumptions are steered by the 6 key principles: Safety, Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer

Support, Collaboration and Mutuality, Empowerment, Voice and Choice, and Cultural,

Historical, and Gender Issues (2014). Implementing these assumptions and principles into

practice universally across numerous disciplines can create systematic change with how people

support each other and recover from adverse events.

───

• *Understanding trauma response* ───────────────────────────

Koslouski, J. B., Stark, K., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2023). Understanding and responding to

the effects of trauma in the classroom: A primer for educators. Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy, 1, 100004.

Koslouski and their colleagues (2023) describe the effects trauma has on children in classroom settings and provide strategies for teachers to respond to trauma response in children (Koslouski et al., 2023). In their article, they provide the context that nearly half of the students have experienced traumatic events and that educators are not yet equip provide trauma informed practices. They discuss how trauma can have extremely negative impacts on children's social, emotional, behavioral, and learning needs, and that it disrupts the brains development in areas of executive functioning (2023). They discuss chronic trauma leading to trauma responses making the brain go into "survival mode" – fight, flight, or freeze response. They also make the argument that trauma informed care is beneficial for all students regardless of trauma history. Koslouski (2023) drives the importance of having a "toolkit" of strategies to foster behavioral and emotional regulation like breathing and sensorimotor techniques.

• *Power of mindfulness practices to regulate* ——————————————————————

Andreu, C. I., Araya-Véliz, C., & García-Rubio, C. (2021). Benefits of a Mindfulness-based Intervention at School from the Perspective of At-risk Children. *Mindfulness, 12*(7), 1611-1623. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01624-6

Andreu and their colleague completed a qualitative study researching the benefits and effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions on children at risk in a low resource school in Santiago, Chile (Andreu et al., 2021). The researchers wanted to understand the impact on mindfulness-based interventions from the children's perspectives through a qualitative lens. To

understand this, they employed a qualitative study investigating 18 "at risk" children using semi-structured interviews (2021). In their findings, the researchers found that the children developed and increase in ability to recognize self-awareness, increase in relaxation and tranquility, and an increase in body awareness (2021). The children also reported an increase in their "ability to consciously relate themselves with their emotions, both unpleasant (fear, anger, anxiety), and pleasant" (2021). They reported increased ability to understand and openness to joyful emotions as well as an increased ability to self-regulate when unpleasant emotions arose (2021). In addition, they reported and increased ability to calm down when dysregulated. Students reported an increased ability to "not react with impulsivity and aggressive[ness]" by letting go of thoughts instead of reacting to them or suppressing them (2021). These interventions improve self-awareness, self-regulation, and improve social skills. Mindfulness-based interventions are a protective resource and is a suitable tool to improve emotional regulation.

• Power of positive role model on youth development ———————————————

Marcone, M. (2017). *The Impact of Coaching Styles on the Motivation and Performance of Athlete.* **Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education Synthesis Projects. 21. https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/pes_synthesis/21**

This synthesis by Marcone (2017), discusses the impact coaching styles have on players motivation and performance (Marcone, 2017). In their article they argue that coaching styles have a significant impact on athlete motivation and performance. They define two main styles: autonomy supportive style and the controlling style. Autonomy supportive style positively influences athlete motivation by considering athletes' perspectives, acknowledging feelings,

providing choices, and giving non-controlling feedback (2017). This style helps to fulfill psychological needs of players' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to the development of increased intrinsic motivation. This style would be closely related to a trauma informed practice. Controlling style is more closely related to a deficit model and predicates itself on negative feedback and power-assertive techniques (2017). This style leads to players relying on extrinsic motivation which related to decreased performance overall.

Atif, H., Peck, L., Connolly, M., Endres, K., Musser, L., Shalaby, M., Lehman, M., & Olympia, R. P. (2022). The Impact of Role Models, Mentors, and Heroes on Academic and Social Outcomes in Adolescents. *Cureus*, *14*(7), e27349. https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.27349

A study by Atif (2022) and their partners, involving 198 adolescents aged 11-18 explored the relationship between identified role models, mentors, and heroes and various academic and social outcomes (Atif et al, 2022). The data collected reports 70.7% of adolescents identified having a role model, with 44.4% having mentors, and about 30.8% reported having heroes (2022). The findings in this article suggest that having these influential figures is significantly associated with more positive outcomes in several areas, including higher interest in education, increased happiness, and safer behaviors (2022). The findings in this research supports the understanding that adolescence is a critical identity forming period and that in this time in children's lives adults and other figures significantly influence their decisions, behaviors, and future outcomes.

• *TIC and sports training/extracurricular activities* ——————————————————

LaRocca, D., Lohmiller, K., Brooks-Russell, A., James, K.A., Harpin, S., Frykholm,

J., Bartlett, M. & Puma, J. (2025). A Mixed Methods Evaluation of a Trauma-

informed Sport Training for Youth Sports Coaches. *Journal of Sport for*

***Development*. Retrieved from https://jsfd.org/**

LaRocca (2025) and their colleagues completed a mixed methods study evaluating a

trauma informed sports training for youth sports coaches and their attitudes towards trauma

informed care (LaRocca et al., 2025). This study gathered data through pre and post-test

surveying coaches and followed with qualitative interviews to provide further explanation for

coaches' attitudes and training experiences with 90-minute introduction to trauma-informed

approaches in sport via the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport (CHJS) (2025). The

training consisted of education on the brain's developmental hierarchy, trauma responses and the

fight, fight, flock or freeze reaction, different mental and physical reactions to stress, and shared

tools and strategies to implement these concepts into trainings and practices. The research found

that after the training's, coaches displayed significant positive attitudes related to trauma-

informed care (2025). Coaches also reported high satisfaction with the training and stated a clear

intent to use the information and skills in their coaching. In the qualitative reports, overall

coaches claimed the training provided new perspectives on youth behavior, emphasized the

importance of safe environments and relationships.

Berger, E., O'Donohue, K., Jeanes, R., & Alfrey, L. (2023). Trauma-Informed Practice in Physical Activity Programs for Young People: A Systematic Review. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 25(4), 2584-2597. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231218293 (Original work published 2024)

This systematic review by Berger and their partners (2023) examines trauma-informed physical activity (TIPA) programs for people 0-21 years old (Berger et al., 2023). Childhood trauma is a global public health issue with potential negative psychological, social, behavioral, and academic consequences. This review looked to identify types of TIPA programs, their outcomes, and facilitator perspective. Of the studies included, most resulted in positive social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for participants (2023). Benefits of TIPA programs for this demographic included increased interpersonal and social skills, reduction in internalizing and externalizing symptoms of stress and trauma, and improvements in academic and executive functioning (2023). The researchers highlight it is important to understand while physical activity offers many benefits, it can also be a site for further trauma if not implemented with trauma-informed principles. They note that while sport and activity can "contribute to numerous positive outcomes for young people, these are dependent on the facilitator, their pedagogies, and the culture they establish within their sessions" (2023).

Trainings

>   *Introduction*

>   This training manual is a "*how to*" guide designed to equip coaches with the knowledge, skills, tools and strategies to implement a trauma-informed lens into their practice. This manual will guide you in the understandings of what trauma-informed care is, creating a trauma-informed environment, identifying signs of stress and dysregulation, implementing strategies that promote the mental and physical health and well-being of your pupils, and empowering them to do great things. Embracing this approach will enhance your ability to support your players, pupil, and students, and foster a coaching relationship rooted in empathy, respect, and resilience.

>   Whether you're new to trauma-informed practices or seeking to deepen your expertise, this manual will serve as a comprehensive resource to integrate trauma awareness into every aspect of your coaching. With this guide we can create better spaces where healing, growth, and empowerment can flourish.

•••

>   This guide calls for the change to the traditional model of coaching. When most people think of great coaches, teachers, and mentors, they do not necessarily think of those who reduced their passion and motivation for the activities they loved to do. Yet, this is a reality for many people. The traditional deficit model of coaching, or controlling style, relies on fear, anger, and judgment to motivate their pupils (Marcone, 2017). These providers are difficult to approach, often provide negative feedback to their students, and remove choice and autonomy. This is deeply related to power-assertive and punishment techniques like running laps when late or having to complete extra assignments without reason. Generally, this traditional model creates

students and players who are less self-determined and externally motivated which correlates with poor performances and lack of enthusiasm (2017).

Alternatively, teachers, coaches, and mentors who provide autonomy-supportive coaching techniques improve their pupils' performances. This technique provides a strengths-based approach and foster growth in their students. This technique is pro-social; it considers its players perspectives, engages their feelings and emotions, provides them with reachable tasks, provide opportunity for pupils to take initiative, provide non-controlling and non-judgmental feedback, and prevent ego-involvement (2017). This creates intrinsic motivation and is associated with greater satisfaction and performance levels (2017).

Coaches, teachers, and mentors are extremely important and have a deep impact on human and youth development. In a study on the impact of role models on adolescent development, 70% of adolescents claimed to have a role model, 44% a mentor, and 30% a role model; however, none of these children claimed coaches or teachers as their positive figure. Millions of children have these figures in their lives (Atif et al, 2022). Creating more positive spaces where children can look up to have positive role models and adult figure in their lives is extremely important for the future of youth development.

According to an article by Yerís Mayol-García (2023), a writer and statistician in the Census Bureau's Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, children today are more involved in extracurricular activities than over the last two decades (Mayol-García, 2023). In the year 2020, the Census Bureau recorded 44% of male and 34.6% of female children ages 6-17 engaged in sports; 27.3% of male and 37.3% of female students engaged in extracurricular activities outside of sports including music, dance, languages, clubs, Scouts, and many other activities (2023). Massive chunks of the youth population are involved in activities. All these children are taught or

coached by qualified and trusted adults who have incredible influence and impact on their lives and developments as human beings. The influences have the potential to be positive role models for children of all ages, and this responsibility should be handled with the utmost respect and care.

Pre-Training Preparation

What is trauma?

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), trauma "is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more" (APA). Many different situations can elicit a trauma response. This can look like changes in behavior or appetite, truancy, emotional outbursts, lack of focus/attention, and/or withdraw (Koslouski et al., 2023). It can also lead to distress like irritability and frustration, increase physical complaints like head and stomach aches, or abnormal reactions to stimuli like sudden movements, loud noises and physical contact (2023). It is important to note that not every response is the same. Trauma compromises the body's stress response system, causing the body's survival instinct to be in overuse. Fight, flight, and freeze are the body's response to stress and when a person has experienced trauma, this response network misunderstands certain stimuli causing the response in the wrong moments (2023). This leaves individuals dysregulated causing impulsive behaviors and difficulty managing and regulating emotions.

What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, provides guidelines and explanations for defining trauma-informed. At its core, being trauma-informed

means that a program understands the widespread impact of trauma and integrates the following

knowledge into its practices:

The 4 R's of Trauma informed care is an essential understanding to TIC practice. A

system should **Realize** the impact of trauma, **Recognize** the signs and symptoms,

Responds by integrating this knowledge into practice, and actively **Resists**

retraumatization (SAMHSA, 2014). The 4 key assumptions can be adapted into general

practice with the 3 C's **Calm, Connect, Coach.** A coach/teacher should calm the

individual, connect with them, and then coach them.

In pairing with the 4 R's are the 6 Principles of TIC which are fundamental to practice. These

principles are:

Safety– throughout the practice everyone should feel "physically and psychologically

safe; the physical setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety"

(2014). **Trustworthiness and Transparency**– establishing clear and honest

communication, maintaining confidentiality, and being accountable for actions. **Peer**

Support– providing opportunities for peers connect and support each other.

Collaboration and Mutuality– connecting with individuals to make sure their needs are

met and promoting shared decision making. **Empowerment Voice and Choice** –

supporting individuals to claim the autonomy and take control of their lives. **Cultural,**

Historical, and Gender Issues– Understanding the impact of diverse experiences.

Universal Practice

Implementing TIC does not just need to be for people who have experienced traumatizing

events. Implementing this care can be a universal practice for all players/students regardless of

their history. Koslouski (2023) makes this case in their article. TIC address common difficulties

that many children, adolescents, and teenagers face no matter their trauma history. TIC address areas of challenge such as attention, memory, emotional and behavioral regulation, flexible thinking, improving language and communication skills, relationship building, and self-esteem. TIC is a good universal practice to implement. It provides individuals with strength based tools to overcome hardship, provides them with a growth mindset, and teaches individuals to be resilient. Everyone could use more supportive and inclusive environments to work on self-improvement.

Trainings

- HOW TO TIC:

  - ENVIRONMENT

    - Creating an environment that is on par with trauma informed practices is essential. Players, students, pupils, and instructors themselves should feel physically, emotionally, and mentally safe in their environment.

    - Kids should be actively and intentionally welcomed.

    - Build trust, transparency, and predictability into the schedule. Kids should be coming into a predictable environment. Have a routine when individuals arrive and start practice. Be transparent with kids about attainable and incremental goals, expectations, and boundaries.

    - Fostering belonginess

      - Fostering a positive team culture is fundamental and solidifies environmental safety. Belonginess is proven to increase self-esteem and self-confidence, improves relationship building skills, and reduces

the frequency of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Afroz, & Tiwari, 2021).

- Celebrate individual and team accolades
- Quickly address any instances of bullying or ostracization

o COMMUNICATION

- Using clear and empathetic language helps students and athletes feel more valued and safer. This language empowers them and ensures they feel heard and respected. It encourages positive development and a growth mentality.
    - Examples of Trauma-Informed Language
        - "I noticed how much effort you put in; let's focus on building from there." Not "you're not trying hard enough."
        - "Let's work on improving this skill together." Not "you keep making mistakes."
        - "How can I help," not "what's wrong with you"
        - "It's okay to feel nervous about the game; it shows you care about doing well."
        - "I notice you seem upset—do you want to take a break or talk about it?" Instead of "Why are you acting like this?"

o PLAYER/STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

- Empowering players and students helps them to regain control. It builds confidence, reduces stress, encourages engagement, and promotes resilience.
    - Provide choice and options for activities and levels of intensity
    - Involve players in the decision making process

- Highlight strengths to promote growth mindset

- Respect personal boundaries

o SELF-CARE

- Promoting self-care is essential for maintain and managing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Both players/students and instructors should be implementing this practice.

- For Players:

    - Encouraging rest, recover, and healthy sleeping habits

    - Teaching stress management techniques

        - Mindfulness and grounding techniques

            - Belly/Abdomen breathing

            - 5-4-3-2-1 Senses

            - Body scans

    - Promoting healthy diets and hydration

- For Coaches:

    - Prioritize personal mental and physical health

    - Set boundaries with pupils; don't overextend yourself

    - Seek peer support

    - Implement stress management techniques

        - *See above

- Take time to integrate self-care into practices

    - Lead mindfulness breaks

        - *See above

- Foster positive team culture during down time

o CULTURE/CULTURAL HUMILITY

- See diversity from a place of understanding not bias

  - Poverty/SES, race/ethnicity,

    - Understanding there will be differences; come from a place of curiosity not judgement

o COLLABORATION

- Understand the collateral communication is crucial to your pupils' development and well-being

  - Recognizing the boundaries of confidentiality. Share relevant information about students' needs or challenges if necessary

- Build upon network of support

  - Regularly communicate with parents, teachers, guardians, and other care providers

- Create an open communication culture

  - Encourage athletes to share their thoughts and feelings while ensuring confidentiality and respect.

- Train and support coaching staff on these principles

Recommendations

- Reading

    o *The Body Keeps the Score* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk

    o Trauma-Sensitive Coaching

    o Preston Junger | The Role of a Youth Coaches: Shaping More Than Just Athletes

    o Tess M. Kilwein PhD, ABPP, CMPC | Creating Trauma-Informed Sports
      Environments for Athletes

    o Randye Hoder | The Real Damage Bullying Coaches Can Inflict on Kids

- Listening

    o Jeff Friedman | Trauma Informed Podcast

- Watching

    o Finnley Pratt | TEDxSaintAndrewsSchool | How youth sports coaching needs to
      change

    o Not Good Enough

    o McFarland, USA. Movie: Disney+

Resource List

- Center for Healing and Justice through Sport (CHJS)

- CHJS: Nothing Heals Like Sport – A New Playbook for Coaches

- US Center for SafeSport

Sources

Afroz, S., & Tiwari, P. S. N. (2021). Importance of belongingness in healthy youth development.

Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 9(6), 225-230.

American Psychological Association (APA). *Trauma*. American Psychological Association.

https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma

Andreu, C. I., Araya-Véliz, C., & García-Rubio, C. (2021). Benefits of a Mindfulness-based

Intervention at School from the Perspective of At-risk Children. Mindfulness, 12(7),

1611-1623. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01624-6

Atif, H., Peck, L., Connolly, M., Endres, K., Musser, L., Shalaby, M., Lehman, M., & Olympia,

R. P. (2022). The Impact of Role Models, Mentors, and Heroes on Academic and Social

Outcomes in Adolescents. *Cureus*, *14*(7), e27349. https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.27349

Berger, E., O'Donohue, K., Jeanes, R., & Alfrey, L. (2023). Trauma-Informed Practice in

Physical Activity Programs for Young People: A Systematic Review. Trauma, Violence,

& Abuse, 25(4), 2584-2597. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231218293 (Original work

published 2024)

Koslouski, J. B., Stark, K., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2023). Understanding and responding to

the effects of trauma in the classroom: A primer for educators. *Social and Emotional

Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1, 100004.

LaRocca, D., Lohmiller, K., Brooks-Russell, A., James, K.A., Harpin, S., Frykholm, J., Bartlett,

M. & Puma, J. (2025). A Mixed Methods Evaluation of a Trauma-informed Sport

Training for Youth Sports Coaches. *Journal of Sport for Development*. Retrieved

from https://jsfd.org/

Marcone, M. (2017). *The Impact of Coaching Styles on the Motivation and Performance of*

Athlete. Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education Synthesis Projects. 21.

https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/pes_synthesis/21

Mayol-García, Y. (2023). *Girls take lessons, join clubs more often than boys but boys

play more sports*. Census.gov. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/07/children-

continue-to-be-involved-in-extracurricular-activities.html

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). SAMHSA's

concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach (HHS Publication No.

SMA14-4884). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf