

A Book Review of Trauma-Informed Practices With Children and Adolescents

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Abstract

Trauma-Informed Practices With Children and Adolescents provides practical approaches to working with children and adolescents that combines research from leading trauma experts and translates it to techniques that are simple to implement in practice. According to Wilcox, the trans-disciplinary approach in this book is infused with a strength-based perspective and the latest research in developmental neuroscience to produce a comprehensive text on best trauma-informed practices (TIPs) for working with children and adolescents.

Keywords: Advanced generalist practice, social work, children, adolescents, trauma-informed

Trauma-Informed Practices with Children and Adolescents (Steele & Malchiodi, 2012) is a must-read for social workers in both micro and macro settings. The authors are William Steele, PsyD, MSW and founder/former director of the *National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children* (TLC) and Cathy Malchiodi, PhD, LPAT, LPCC, a research psychologist and art therapist. Both have worked nationally and internationally with individuals, communities and organizations affected by trauma; they are also widely published and have served on many national boards and received numerous honors.

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Despite their experience and expertise, they exhibit humility and an appreciative curiosity for learning and collaborating across disciplines for a holistic, consilient approach to trauma-informed practice and systems of care. To wit, twenty-six contributing authors are featured throughout the book, including professors and practitioners from pediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, public health, social work, art therapy, occupational therapy and speech language pathology.

This trans-disciplinary approach is infused with a strength-based perspective and the latest research in developmental neuroscience to produce a comprehensive text on best trauma-informed practices (TIPs). The authors make a strong case for the use of evidence-supported, sensory-based interventions as a complement to traditional evidence-based cognitive interventions while providing a thorough overview of relevant research, theory and semi-structured practice tools to enable practitioners to successfully assist individuals with traumatic experiences.

According to the authors, the book is intended for all helping professionals who work with children and adolescents. However, TIPs extend to interventions with adults and to organizations and communities as well. As Dr. Lennis G. Echterling points out in the book's Foreword that reading *Trauma-Informed Practices with Children and Adolescents* was "perfect preparation" for him as he traveled to Beirut to conduct a seven day workshop for adult survivors of land mine explosions.

The authors' experience and the substantial list of current references add to the importance of *Trauma-Informed Practices with Children and Adolescents* for students as well as veteran practitioners. It is an interesting narrative in a well-organized format. In fact, form follows content in the book's layout: the reader is led through the process as it occurs in interventions, with well-placed case studies and side bars from contributing experts. They begin with a thorough definition of trauma, its effects on mind and body, and include Bruce Perry's neurosequential model of therapeutics (NMT) and the resulting need for sensory-based interventions. Distinctions are made between trauma reactions, grief and PTSD, with a caveat to avoid a pathology-oriented stance and to determine an individual's response from a neurodevelopmental perspective in terms of flight, fight or freeze reactions, trauma response and individual worldview. The eight principles of Trauma-Informed Practice are listed, which are very similar to NASW Principles.

The authors illustrate that accurate, trauma-based assessments are key to preventing misdiagnosis, unsuccessful treatment and occasional secondary trauma that can occur with misinformed, but well-intentioned professionals. Various TIP assessment tools are presented, to be integrated with a development audit and other standardized assessment measures for a complete bio-psycho-social-cultural-spiritual assessment. According to the authors, “the real value of a tool is not necessarily the information it yields, but the interpretation of that information within a trauma-informed context” (p. 43). In trauma-informed practice, assessment is ongoing.

Following assessment, an individualized restorative plan is developed in collaboration with the consumer. Core goals of a restorative plan include *belonging, mastery, independence* and *generosity*, with a strength-based perspective to consider the *challenges, connections and courage* of an individual with traumatic experiences. Establishing safety and self-regulation while creating and sustaining trauma-informed environments are integral for the reparative and restorative work operationalized in this book. *Trauma-Informed Practices with Children and Adolescents* brings together social work principles of person-in-environment and cultural competency with positive psychology, neuroscience and sensory-based therapies to enlighten practitioners and enable them to guide trauma survivors to become trauma integrated “thrivers”. Read it soon and refer to it often.

References

Steele, W., & Malchiodi, C. (2012). *Trauma-informed practices with children and adolescents*. New York: Routledge.

About the Author(s)

Amy has worked in both administrative services (non-profit development and fundraising) as well as direct services, including four years in child welfare, seven years in community mental health and a year in residential treatment. She is currently in her advanced year of Wichita State University's MSW program. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Amy Wilcox at awilcox7@cox.net.