

QUANTIFYING TRAUMA

Education Chapter 5

Big T & little t TRAUMA

When we try to define trauma by the event rather than the impact, we end up gatekeeping trauma rather than caring for the people who are suffering from the continuing emotional toll.

Big T-Trauma

Threats or experience of physical harm or death

Little t-trauma

Threats or experience of psychological harm or threats to livelihood

THOUGHTS

METAPHORS

Tangles

Trauma is like a 'rat's-nest' tangle with many strands entangled. It's slow and painful work to pull them all out gently in a way that doesn't cause damage.

Fractures

Trauma is like hairline fractures that compromise the structural integrity. When events exceed our resilience, it leaves us vulnerable - not stronger.

Infection

Trauma is like an infection healed over. It looks fine. Until you poke it. The healing journey is painful and requires time and space for recovery.

Blister

Complex-trauma is like a persistent rubbing. It's not that big of a deal, until it happens over and over and over again. But an open sore can be infected like any other wound.

HOW DOES THAT COUNT AS TRAUMA?

Education Chapter 5

Knowing that the experience of the event makes a situation count as trauma, consider these examples. Each of the following examples are real scenarios of little-t traumas. There's always so much more to the story than what's said in a single statement. Imagine additional details for this event that would cause it to be more distressing than it seems on the surface. Consider factors like how many times the incident happened, previous trauma-history that made them feel sensitive to the issue, factors regarding the interpersonal relationship, what happened after this statement. Remember, trauma is rooted in helplessness. What could have happened that made this person feel helpless?

"My manager would say, 'Let's talk about this after the meeting.' But we never would."

"And then he said, 'You really should know this by know.' It makes me want to cry just thinking about it."

"Well, she told me that I worked for her and this is the job."

If we can imagine details to make it traumatic, maybe we can assume there's more information that we don't know the next time someone mentions trauma and we just don't get it. Trauma isn't about how you'd experience it; it's about how they did.

CONTINUING EMOTIONAL TOLL

Education Chapter 6

Triggers

Something that reminds the brain of the negative event, consciously or unconsciously, in a way that evokes the emotional response of that event in the present moment.

Flooded

When an emotional response is so strong that it tells the body that you're currently in danger. This activates the amygdala, deactivating the thinking brain as the body enters survival mode.

BEWARE DEALING WITH THE SYMPTOMS INSTEAD OF THE ISSUE

COPING STRATEGIES

- Constant double checking and deep attention to details to ensure excellent quality (even if it causes undue stress, missed deadlines, and misses the purpose of the work)
- Getting confirmation regarding next steps before proceeding (even for irrelevant details, processes or answers they should already know, low-stakes decisions, things that are their responsibility to make the decision for, etc.)
- Seeking reassurances regarding the quality of the work and state of the relationship (even constantly asking, "Are you mad at me?" "Is this good?" "Do you like it?")
- Self-presenting as a highly competent individual (even when assertions of ability exceed the truth)
- Underrepresenting of abilities and skills (even requiring galvanizing from leadership to convince them to do something they're more than capable of)
- Unperturbed by criticism (even when that criticism is constructive feedback from their supervisor that needs to be implemented)
- Attuned to criticism (even to the degree that they exaggerate criticism to mean more than was intended or seeing criticism where there was none)

QUICK AS A NEURON

- The Brain makes life-saving assumptions
- But sometimes our brains overgeneralizes
- This brain association is an involuntary act.
- A trauma-response is not the fault of the person who experienced a trauma.
- Trauma-history doesn't excuse behaviors, but being trauma-informed equips us with better skills to mobilize our team to reach their goals.

NOTES



IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

Education Chapter 6

Thinking about your own workplace behaviors, can you think of ways where you're trying to manage your fears or anxiety through controlling the symptoms instead of the issue?

Thinking about your leadership, do you see any of these behaviors on your own team?

Have you been trying to deal with the symptoms of the problem rather than the source of the problem? What ideas do you have on how to approach these situations differently?

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA RESPONSES

Education Chapter 7

WHAT WE DONT SEE

Post-Traumatic Wisdom
Trauma Skills
Internal Narratives
Standard Operating Procedures
Elevated Response

THOUGHTS

ELEVATED RESPONSES

Adrenal Response

Fight | Flight | Freeze | Fawn

Polyvagal Theory

Sympathetic (Watchdog)
Parasympathetic (Owl) | Dorsal (Possum)

Red-Zone/Green-Zone

Red | Orange | Yellow | Green | Blue

WHAT WE DO SEE

- High anxiety around seemingly simple tasks - emails, public speaking
- Cognitive - trouble remembering, focusing, having the ability to even think
- Executive Functions - underfunctioning, overfunctioning
- Physical - tiredness, nausea, hyperarousal, dissociating
- Behavioral - avoidant, procrastination, perfectionism
- Teamwork Disruptions - distrust, interpersonal tension, boundaries, defensiveness
- Emotional Apathy - hopelessness, burn out

NOT ALWAYS TRAUMA

- A genuine threat is present
- Personal issues are also happening
- Biological needs are unmet

It's not ethical to burn out your people
People are capable of learning lessons in a non-traumatic way
Healing from trauma doesn't erase the valuable lessons we gleaned from the experience.

INTERNAL NARRATIVES

Education Chapter 7

Internal Narratives can be causally mentioned. Find them in the quotes below. Have you heard anything similar to these from your team?

If you heard your team saying any of these things, how might you respond using the Trauma-Informed Leadership Tools?

UNDERLINE THE NARRATIVE

"Oh yeah, I volunteered to take on that extra project. I mean, I don't want anyone to think I'm just coasting - I have to prove I belong here."

"I was going to bring it up in the meeting, but I don't want to be difficult. I'm sure they've already made up their minds anyway."

"Hey, I just wanted to follow up on that request from last week... sorry to be a bother! I know you're super busy."

"I reminded them three times, and it still didn't get done. Clearly, I have to do everything myself."

"I was going to suggest a different approach, but it doesn't matter, no one listens to me anyway."

"I stayed late last night fixing the report. I know it was fine, but I have to be the best at what I do."

"Oh, you guys went to lunch without me? No worries! People forget about me all the time."

"That's not what I meant at all! Ugh, I hate being misunderstood."

"Of course, my project is the one with all the problems. Why does this always happen to me?"

RESPOND WITH TIL TOOLS



SELF - REFLECTIONS WHAT ARE YOURS?

Education Chapter 7

Post-Traumatic Wisdom

Trauma Skills

Internal Narratives

Internal SOPs

Elevated Responses

ELEVATED RESPONSE PRACTICE

Education Chapter 7

Following along with the video, mark what the main actor in each clip is illustrating.

1

<input type="checkbox"/> Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> Fawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Flight	<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze

Watchdog Owl Possum



2

<input type="checkbox"/> Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> Fawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Flight	<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze

Watchdog Owl Possum



3

<input type="checkbox"/> Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> Fawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Flight	<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze

Watchdog Owl Possum



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<input type="checkbox"/> Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> Fawn
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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



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Watchdog Owl Possum



18

<input type="checkbox"/> Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> Fawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Flight	<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze

Watchdog Owl Possum



HEALING FROM TRAUMA

Education Chapter 8

THE HEALING JOURNEY

- Recognize there's a trauma-response
- Believe recovery is possible
- Find the tools
- Use the tools
- Endure the hardwork
- Celebrate Healing

NON-PRIORITIES?

- relentless busyness
- must be liked
- perfection required
- harmony at all costs

WHEN IS IT DONE?

- No raw emotions
- triggers aren't triggering
- Nothing Left to Say
- Come to Terms

RESEARCH

50%

OF THE WORKFORCE HAS BEEN TRIGGERED BY THEIR WORKPLACE TRAUMA

69%

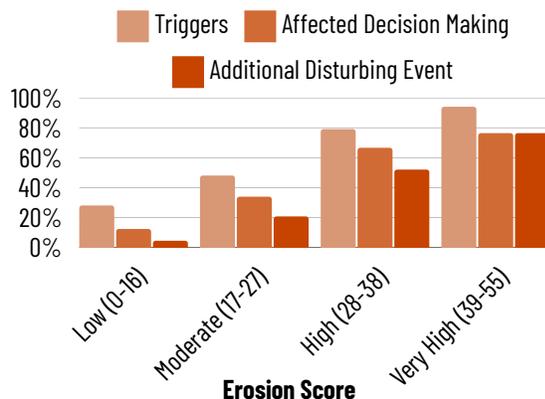
OF THOSE WHO WERE SO TRIGGERED IT AFFECTED DECISION MAKING, INITIATED ANOTHER POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC EVENT

HOW LEADERS HELP

- Psychological Safety
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Network with Resources

NOTES

Compounding Trauma by Erosion Score



Erosion score reflects the frequency and severity of events that erode psychological safety. A high erosion score indicates they had experienced these events more frequently.

Those with a higher erosion score were more likely to be triggered, more likely to have affected decision making, and more likely to have an additional disturbing event.



UNDERSTANDING OUR RESOURCES

Education **Chapter 8**

What resources does your company offer for people who need support in trauma healing?

If you're unsure of the answers, go find out. These resources could include in-house services, policy provisions, insurance benefits, and more. How would your team access these resources if they needed them?

What things can you provide for your team specifically?

(i.e. creating a free library of books for heavy topics)

TRAUMA IMPACTS THE WORKPLACE

Education Chapter 9

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

- Attachment Trauma
- Rules and Reprimands
- Other Developmental Traumas

ADULTHOOD TRAUMA

- Authority & Trust-Based Trauma
- Current Trauma
- Secondary Trauma

THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS

Team Trauma: Are there traumatic experiences that have happened to your team as a whole?
(company wide lay-offs, shifts in management, pay-cuts, fires, natural disasters, mold, bugs, power outages)

Secondary Trauma: Check the headlines. Is there anything that would be good to hold space for in your team meetings?
(disasters, war and unrest, etc)

WORKPLACE TRAUMA & TRIGGERS

Education Chapter 10

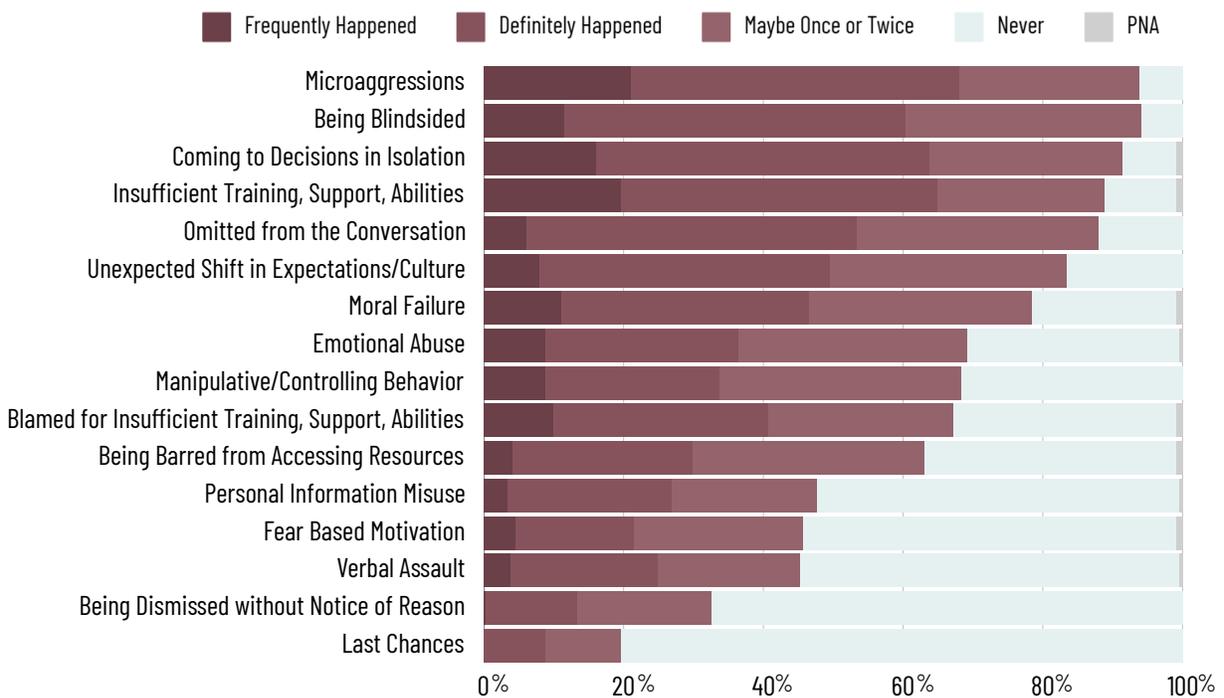
BIG T TRAUMA

- acts of violence
- sexual harassment
- natural disasters
- global pandemics

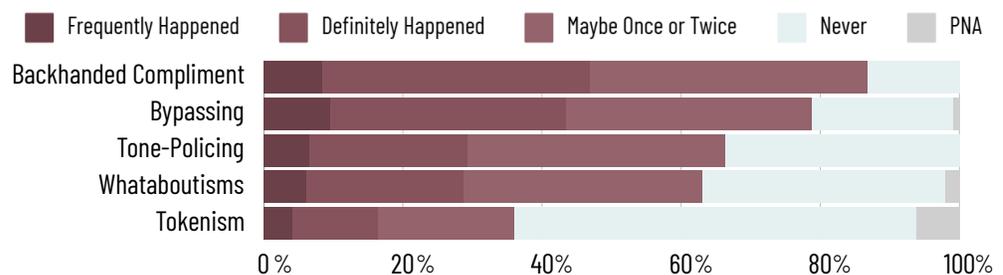
OPTIONS

- Employee Assistance Programs
- On-site/virtual counselors
- Crisis Management company

Frequency of Events that Erode Psychological Safety



Frequency of Microaggressions



Erosion score reflects the frequency and severity of events that erode psychological safety. A high erosion score indicates they had experienced these events more frequently.

TEAM EVALUATION: TRAUMAS

Education Chapter 10

Frequency of Events that Erode Psychological Safety
in your workplace to your direct reports

	Frequently Happens	Definitely Happens	I don't think this happens	I intentionally work to make sure this doesn't happen
Backhanded Compliment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bypassing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tone-Policing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whataboutisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tokenism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being Blindsided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coming to Decisions in Isolation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient Training, Support, Abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Omitted from the Conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unexpected Shift in Expectations/Culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moral Failure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manipulative/Controlling Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blamed for Insufficient Training, Support, Abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being Barred from Accessing Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Information Misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fear Based Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal Assault	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being Dismissed without Notice or Reason	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Last Chances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where you answered "I don't think this happens," ask your team explicitly to confirm your impressions. Where you answered 'frequently happens' or 'definitely happens', prioritize these issues regarding how impactful they are and how easy they are to mitigate.

What areas do you need to be focusing on to intentionally mitigate these events? How can you mitigate these events?

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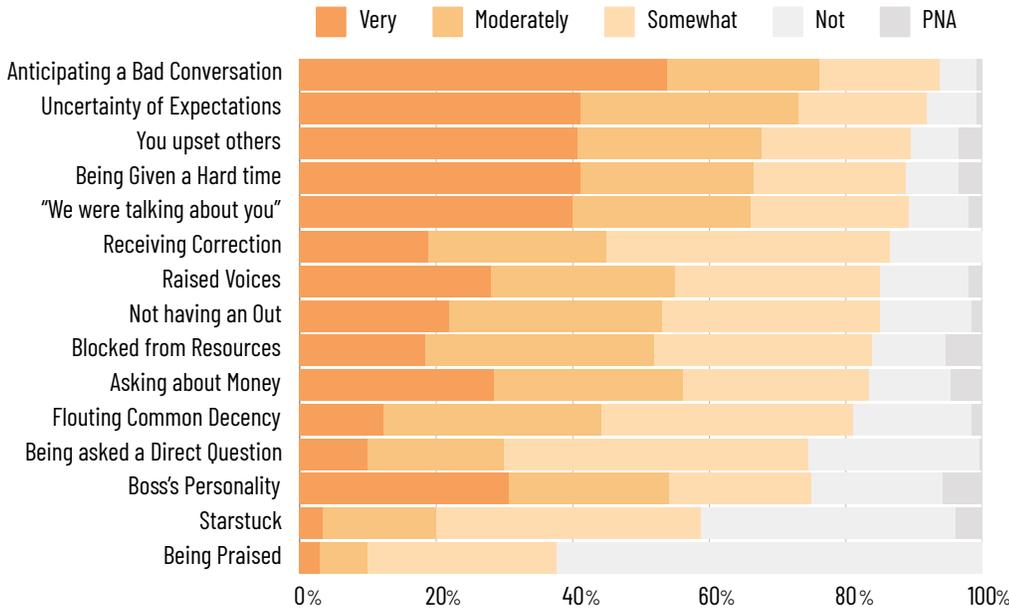
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COMMON WORKPLACE TRIGGERS

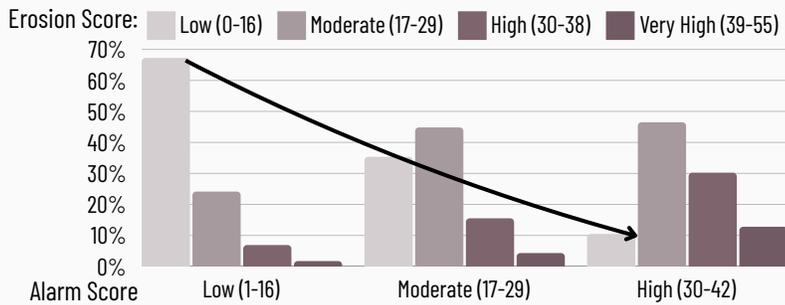
Education Chapter 10

Rates of Stress from Common Workplace Triggers



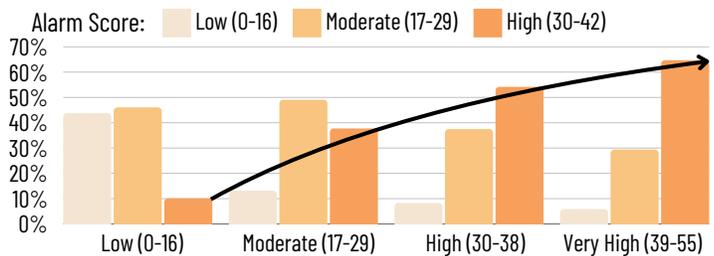
Alarm score reflects the severity of alarm experienced from these workplace experiences. A high alarm score indicates they are more likely to experience alarm from common workplace triggers.

Erosion Score by Alarm Score



Individuals with low erosion scores are **6.7x more likely** to report low alarm scores compared to those with high erosion scores

Alarm Score by Erosion Score



Those with a high+ erosion score were **7.4x more likely** to have a high alarm score than low alarm score.

TEAM EVALUATION: TRIGGERS

Education Chapter 10

Thinking about your direct reports, what's the most stressed you've seen someone become because of these triggers?

Levels of stress caused by common workplace triggers
in your workplace for your direct reports

	very stressed	stressed	I don't think this causes stress for my reports	I intentionally work to mitigate the stress of these triggers
Anticipating a Bad Conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uncertainty of Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You upset others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being Given a Hard time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"We were talking about you"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving Correction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raised Voices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not having an Out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blocked from Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking about Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flouting Common Decency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being asked a Direct Question	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boss's Personality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Starstuck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being Praised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where you answered "I don't think this happens," ask your team explicitly to confirm your impressions. Where you answered 'very stressed' or 'stressed', prioritize these issues regarding how impactful they are and how easy they are to mitigate.

What areas do you need to be focusing on and how will you work to intentionally mitigate unnecessary stress from these events?

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SELF-EVALUATION TRAUMA & TRIGGERS

Education Chapter 10

Which of the common workplace traumas have you experienced? Did you experience them as traumatic - do/did they have a continuing emotional toll?

Which of the common workplace triggers alarm you? Can you think of what previous experience taught you to be alarmed by that?

Has there been a time where you were disproportionately upset at work - in your own estimation or as described by others? With this trauma-informed education, can you identify what made that feel so hard?

RESILIENCE BUILDING

Education Chapter 11

RESILIENCE

personal philosophy we hold about our own self-efficacy

ENDURANCE

how long we can believe in our self-efficacy while enduring hardship, before we fall into a sense of helplessness.

When an event – or the cumulative size of the events – exceeds our resilience:

- we question our self-efficacy
- we feel stuck in helplessness
- we can experience that as traumatic

In healing, they become empowered and build resilience

As leaders, we can support our team's human strategic avoidance of felt helplessness by providing:

- empowerment and choice
- reasonable accommodations
- cards on the table

HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Doing the hard thing

Doing the work of emotional processing heals trauma and helps people revise their philosophy of self-efficacy to become more resilient. Failure to do so may appear more resilient but can mask harmful internal narratives.

3 P's of Learned Helplessness

Personalization | Pervasiveness | Permanence

Help build your team's resiliency by directly addressing these 3 P's.

HSSS

Humor | Social Support | Stories

Essentials of Resilience

- Purpose
- Endurance
- Equanimity
- Self-Efficacy
- Psychological Safety

Time to Recover

Teams need time to restore a sense of normalcy and regain enthusiasm before the next challenge.

Goldilocks Challenge

Keep each team member in the Goldilocks window - the challenge is not too hard, not too easy

Evaluate whether the stressor is individual or systemic.

notes

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GOLDILOCKS WINDOW

Education **Chapter 11**

Label the post-its for each of your direct reports and consider their workloads to evaluate if they're in their Goldilocks Window right now. Is their workload or work tasks too hard, too easy, or just right? How can you tell? If they're not in their Goldilocks Window, get curious. What do they need to get back in their Goldilocks Window? (Step 1 is usually having a curiosity-led conversation.)

