

5

How Relationships Rupture & Repair

Rupture: Why Becoming Trauma-Informed Matters for All of Us

How we understand trauma can change how we interact with one another especially when ruptures happen (ruptures can be any level of conflict or relationship breakdown. Whether you're at school, at work, or at home, understanding the impact of trauma means that you handle relationships differently, and it means that you handle yourself differently.

Take, for example, Olivia, who grew up in a single-parent home with an emotionally abusive mother who was dealing with a substance abuse issue. Without another adult to turn to for support, Olivia might face a number of issues growing up, such as:

- unhealthy relationships with older partners in an attempt to escape her home,
- physical altercations with her parent that leave her afraid for her own safety, and
- consistent depression that goes both undiagnosed and untreated.

This might lead to additional choices in adulthood that put her at risk, such as:

- choosing a job that regularly puts her in harm's way,
- a continued pattern of unhealthy relationships or early exits from potentially healthy ones, and
- consumption of the same substance abused by her mother throughout her life.

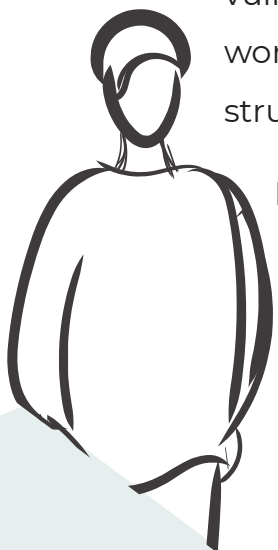
The ruptures run deep. Even if Olivia made her healthiest choices and had every opportunity to work and live in healthy spaces, her nervous system and biology would still be deeply impacted.



It's not just Olivia. Gallup's recent data shows "daily stress, worry, sadness and anger have been trending upward for American workers since 2009."

Gallup's 2020 data shows that 43% of workers are experiencing daily, global stress - and 70% of the most vulnerable (disengaged) workers said they were actively struggling or suffering.

43% = 70%



If somewhere between 43% - 70% of us are walking around with enough trauma to affect our daily life, then our workplaces are full of folks who simply don't have capacity to navigate workplace dynamics that can make life worse.

When we have trauma-informed approaches to the way we work together, we see productivity increase, we see conflict decrease, we see people and employees retained at a higher rate. It's not just squishy soft skills anymore. It actually is the glue that holds workplaces together.

Business doesn't care too much about belonging - but our brains do. If employers keep expecting people to leave their stress and suffering at the door, the door will become a wall.



Employees who have experienced ACEs are more likely to run into trouble at work - with their relationships, how they process tasks, or how they perform their jobs. A trauma-informed workplace creates a safe space for employees to utilize coping skills that help them deal with the effects of ACEs and other trauma. Such a workplace gives employers the ability to build better, stronger relationships with all of their employees.



Understanding trauma helps you relate better to your coworkers and employees. It also helps you better understand how you might work - both with them and alone. Knowing how someone you have a relationship with processes information and experiences allows you to communicate better with them so that they understand what you are asking for, while giving you the space to better ask for what you need.

7

**How
Workplaces
& Systems
Can Help**

A FINAL WORD

Part of being human means we get hurt - often by our closest relationships. It would be so much easier if we could forgive, forget, and choose to let go of what hurt us in the past, but that's not the way trauma works. Instead, Olivia's childhood trauma and her own responses to it are something she'll carry with her for the rest of her life.

But carrying trauma doesn't mean Olivia can't recover from it or move forward, it just means she needs the right support system to be successful - both in her personal life and in the workplace. Trauma recovery takes time and effort, and it's always worth it.

This handbook (along with the accompanying workbook) is an introduction to creating more trauma-informed workplaces, and whether you are just like Olivia or have someone like Olivia working for you, we hope you have learned how to understand trauma better, how it impacts all of us, and why it's important to create workplaces that are safe and healthy for every member of your team. The more you invest in creating a trauma-informed workplace, the more successful your organization will be in the long run.

The next steps you take for yourself and your organization are going to change the way you do work. That can be scary, there's no doubt about that, but it will also result in a working world that gives people the space and ability to come as they are so that they can better serve themselves and others. We can't wait to see how you change your world to make work a healthy and safe place to be.

For every Olivia.

