



International Association of Trauma Recovery Coaching  
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## THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE CERTIFIED TRAUMA SPECIALIST

Certified Trauma Specialists recognize that the human mind and body are designed to respond to trauma. In doing so, it will employ a variety of strategies, all in service of surviving that trauma. Any strategies that an individual's mind and body employ, consciously or unconsciously, are adaptive.

Certified Trauma Specialists do not ascribe to the traditional Western medical model, where adaptive strategies are pathologized, stigmatized or labeled as disordered. They do not see trauma survivors as broken or in need of fixing. Instead, Certified Trauma specialists recognize that it is trauma which is abnormal and disordered, not an individual's adaptive strategies employed to survive that trauma.

Certified Trauma Specialists recognize that trauma impacts individuals in many ways, that two individuals can experience the same trauma and have differing responses. Their responses can be influenced by a variety of factors:

- beliefs, traditions, and worldviews handed down to them by prior generations
- traumas experienced by members of prior generations that caused their ancestors to develop adaptive strategies that influenced how they operated in the world, especially how they operated as a parent, grandparent or family leader
- how much trauma they have already experienced in their lives given trauma's cumulative nature
- whether they are part of a community which is typically marginalized where they live, such as individuals who are members of ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, gender identity and differing ability communities

- their physical health, including the health and development of their nervous system
- the dysfunctionality or functionality of their childhood

Certified Trauma Specialist recognize that the aftereffects of trauma can take many forms, and some individuals will have multiple aftereffects while others will have only one. They may also differ in severity and significance. These might take the form of:

- Toxic shame
- Living in Autonomic Nervous System survival states
- Having internal parts that are living in extreme roles in service of survival
- Limiting beliefs such as unworthiness and learned helplessness
- Addictions to substances or processes
- Physical illness such as auto-immune disorders, migraines and chronic pain
- Disconnection from their Self/Authentic Self/Higher Self
- Disconnection from others and the world at large
- Disconnection from their bodies and emotions

Certified Trauma Specialists recognize that just as all human beings have the capacity to implement strategies to survive trauma, they also have the capacity to direct their own recovery when provided with the appropriate support and resources.

There is no power differential between Certified Trauma Specialists and their clients as this violates the client's agency and disempowers them, preventing them from tapping into their inner wisdom and guidance which directs them to what they need to do to heal from their trauma.

Given this, Certified Trauma Specialists utilize peer-to-peer, collaborative, mutual, intra-developmental relationships in every aspect of their work with trauma survivors.

In service to their client's healing work, Certified Trauma Specialists embody the qualities of compassion, courage and curiosity.

While working with trauma survivors, Certified Trauma Specialists always seek to be grounded in the present moment, centered in their Self, and anchored in the Autonomic Nervous System state of parasympathetic ventral vagal which allow for nourishing social interactions with their clients and prevent triggering, activation or dysregulation.

Certified Trauma Specialists focus on helping a client build up their strengths, healthy beliefs, and positive coping strategies rather than extinguishing “negative” behaviors and beliefs.

Certified Trauma Specialists provide education about trauma to their clients to help them understand and normalize their experiences.

Certified Trauma Specialists recognize that trauma causes individuals to disconnect from themselves, the world and other human beings in order to minimize potential threats to their safety. They prioritize interactions with trauma survivors being safe in every possible way. When possible, they provide multiple ways for survivors to interact with them and access information that address the needs of survivors, such as booking appointments or accessing forms online rather than requiring in person or over the phone interactions.

Recognizing that trauma survivors may hold a set of beliefs that see the world, other people and themselves as unworthy or unwelcome, Certified Trauma Specialists intentionally interact with survivors in ways that reflect their true worth; respect their autonomy, needs and values; and welcome their presence.

Certified Trauma Specialists model healthy communication and relationship skills with trauma survivors.

Certified Trauma Specialists recognize trauma responses in their clients and respond with compassion rather than blaming, shaming, pathologizing or punitive behaviors.

Certified Trauma Specialist never stop developing their professional skills. They acknowledge areas of growth in their skills and seek training, information and supervision to build their strengths in those areas.