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From trauma-informed to trauma-responsive:
advancing supportive practices for healing



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The terms trauma-informed and trauma-responsive are often used in practices and systems designed to support individuals who have experienced trauma, but they have distinct meanings and approaches.

Trauma-informed

Awareness focus: being trauma-informed means understanding the prevalence and impact of trauma on individuals and communities. It emphasises the importance of recognising trauma's effects on behaviour, emotions, and relationships.

Core principles: trauma-informed care is guided by principles such as safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment and cultural humility.

Knowledge-based: it involves training and educating individuals and organisations to identify signs of trauma and avoid re-traumatising practices.

Foundational approach: it focuses on creating a safe and supportive environment but does not necessarily include actions to address the trauma directly.

Trauma-responsive

Action-oriented: trauma-responsive moves beyond awareness to actively integrating trauma-informed knowledge into concrete policies, practices and behaviours.

Healing-centered: it includes responding to trauma in a way that promotes healing and resilience, such as implementing specific interventions or programs tailored to meet the needs of trauma survivors.

Accountability: trauma-responsive systems hold themselves accountable for ensuring that every interaction and service delivery supports recovery and avoids harm.

Transformation: it seeks to transform organisations and systems to address trauma comprehensively, fostering environments that are not only informed but actively healing and empowering.



Key difference

Being trauma-informed means understanding trauma's impact and incorporating that awareness into environments and interactions.

Being trauma-responsive means actively using that understanding to implement practices and systems that directly address and support healing from trauma.

In summary, trauma-informed is the foundation of knowledge, while trauma-responsive is the application of that knowledge into tangible action and change.

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MCN Consulting integrates a trauma-responsive approach into their work with clients, communities and organisations.

Currently in progress, Maree's PhD thesis explores entrepreneurship as a healing modality for trauma among Northern Australian Indigenous women, enhanced by a trauma-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem: an integrative approach.

If you would like to learn more about this research, please contact Maree mcnaroba@gmail.com

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