

A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH TO TEAM BUILDING

A practical guide for leaders.





WHAT IS A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH?

A trauma-informed approach considers a person's history of trauma and the 'why' of their behaviours. It means thinking about what might have happened to someone during the course of their life to cause a reaction to a present day circumstance. Consideration and understanding of cultural, historical and gender issues should be top-of-mind when taking a trauma-informed approach. Experiences of trauma are common and taking this approach recognizes the impact historical trauma can have on an individual's well-being throughout their life.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR TEAM?

A trauma-informed approach on a team brings an understanding of the prevalence and effects of trauma in all experiences. This may include internal team interactions as well as the impact of external stressors. Teams who are able to recognize the impact historical trauma can have on their members are able to respond when problems come up with empathy and compassion. They are able to look at the bigger picture when a team member may be behaving in a way that is confusing and unpredictable and as such are able to offer better support. By considering trauma and responding in a compassionate and curious way, teams are able to develop trust and cohesion. These teams are well positioned to value diversity and resilience which will make them stronger and more effective. The focus of a trauma informed team is one of relationship above all else. Ensuring all team members feel a sense of acceptance and belonging encourages positive team interactions and dynamics.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TEAMS ARE NOT TRAUMA INFORMED?

Teams who fail to consider histories of trauma in respect to team building have difficulty creating environments of trust and safety where mistakes can be made and support for growth happens. Trauma effects can be misunderstood by both those experiencing them and by those involved in their lives. An example of this is the tendency to label individuals (a bully, selfish, angry) rather than considering their behaviour a product of trauma. By simply labeling a person, a superficial view of the reasons behind the behaviour is taken and little is done to support change. Individuals labeled as such are often removed or quit teams creating re-traumatization due to the loss of opportunity for belonging and certainty. To prevent re-traumatization, a team must recognize the relationship between initial trauma with the impact of present day experiences. An example of this is the impact of watching race based violence play out in the news and one's own experience of being a victim of racism. Teams who are unaware are not prepared to adequately support individuals facing these issues risk alienating the traumatized person and miss the opportunity for team growth through acceptance, problem solving and understanding.

INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Build Trauma Awareness

After a difficult incident, think about why the team member is exhibiting confusing behaviours. With this approach, you may be able to identify triggers and consider them in the future. Often people who have experienced trauma have a tough time with unpredictable situations and can react or just shut down. Awareness of how trauma impacts behaviours, helps to be able to understand the why's behind actions and positions us to predict and prepare for challenging situations.

Strength Based to Build Skills

Using a strengths based approach allows us to consider a person's strengths (what they do well) as a means of tapping into resiliency. This approach has a focus on future outcomes and strengths that people bring to a problem or crisis. Problems are addressed by investigating a person's inner-resources and utilizing them to address challenges .

Create safety to Build Trust

Safety is the outcome your team should be striving for and is a key aspect of a trauma informed approach. Safety is created by allowing individuals to be themselves and accepted for who they are. Teams likely won't know the full story behind all of their member's histories and individuals who have been through trauma often don't even know themselves how they will react in certain circumstances and may be blindsided by their own reactions. Safety allows individuals the latitude to make mistakes, grow and be supported in working though problems.

FIVE STEPS FOR YOUR TEAM TO BE TRAUMA INFORMED

1

Build RAPPORT.

Get to know the athlete outside of the sport. What drives them? What challenges them? What have their experiences been that impact them today?

2

Role Model EMPATHY.

Empathy is the ability to relate to another person's feelings without having necessarily shared the experience. Having empathy builds trust on any team. When leaders approach struggles in this way, the whole team are able to see how it's done and normalize it as a team dynamic.

3

SILENCE is Golden.

Allow time, space and silence to give the person a chance to be ready to talk. Being trauma informed builds safety for an individual to talk when they are ready. Putting pressure to explain or share before they are ready can re-traumatize. Wait a moment, a day, a week and then check in again.

4

Ask open-ended QUESTIONS.

Open ended questions elicit the maximum opportunity for a strong narrative response. By asking these questions you are able to invite a conversation rather than an answer. Open ended questions can't be answered with "yes" or "no". EG. "I saw you leave practice early. What's happening for you?"

5

Consider CULTURAL SAFETY.

Cultural Safety and a Trauma Informed Approach are inter-connected. When a team considers spiritual, social and emotional safety, it creates a space where one's identity is not challenged or denied and has an outcome of inclusivity. In doing so a team is also supporting individuals with a possible history of trauma.

REFERENCE FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[HTTPS://WWW2.GOV.BC.CA/ASSETS/GOV/HEALTH/CHILD-TEEN-MENTAL-HEALTH/TRAUMA-INFORMED_PRACTICE_GUIDE.PDF](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/child-teen-mental-health/trauma-informed-practice-guide.pdf)

NADIA KYBA AND NOW WHAT FACILITATION

As a social worker and the founder of Now What Facilitation Inc., I've had the opportunity to support hundreds of individuals and teams perform to their full potential through conflict management coaching, training and facilitated planning meetings both in person and online.

Sometimes facilitated intervention is necessary for parties locked in conflict to move forward. Our team offer mediation services for workplace or sports disputes.

Conflict can be discouraging and distracting impacting retention and overall enjoyment. Our services and resources are designed to assist organizations simplify their work by developing their capacity to manage conflict.



NEED SUPPORT? WE CAN HELP!

"Our team struggled with communication. The Now What Team Building through Conflict Management Workshop gave players tools to help them effectively communicate with each other. Since the workshop and follow-up session, our players have prevented conflict by talking with their teammates when it matters most."

-Head Coach, Raven's Female Hockey

LET'S CHAT

I'd love to hear about your team's unique needs. Contact me to chat about your needs by [booking a free 30-minute Clarity Session here.](#)

Phone: 604-788-3547

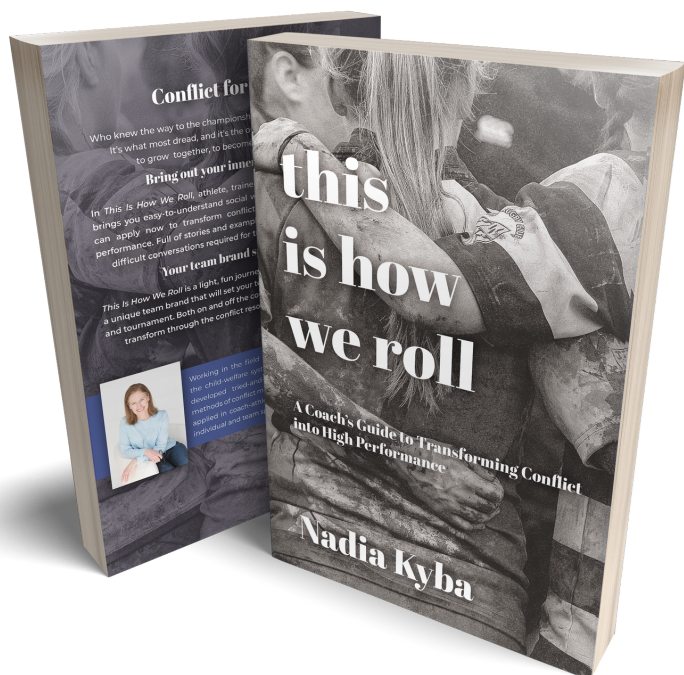
Email: info@nowwhatfacilitation.com

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THIS IS HOW WE ROLL

A COACH'S GUIDE TO TRANSFORMING CONFLICT INTO A HIGH PERFORMING TEAM



Who knew the way to the championship was moving through conflict? It's what most dread, and it's the only way for teams to make it, to grow together, to become stronger—and to win.

In *This Is How We Roll*, I bring you easy-to-understand social work concepts and tools that you can apply now to transform conflict on your team to growth and performance. Full of stories and examples, this is your guide to the often difficult conversations required for true, lasting conflict resolution.

"Every Coach and Trainer needs a copy of this book! Nadia does a great job of giving readers a step-by-step guide for conflict situations that can be used at the amateur or professional level in sports. This book is a must-read for all coaches and skills trainers."

-Harp Grewal, Professional Skills Trainer, Founder 3Seed Training

"As a Sports Volunteer, I found my experience reflected in story after story in *THIS IS HOW WE ROLL*. With the wisdom Nadia shares, it's like her standing with us as a guide through the difficult situations we face and I couldn't be more grateful!"

- RaeAnne Rose, President BC Artistic Swimming

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