Lunch & Learn

Spotlight on: Building a more trauma informed workplace

If you attended our Inclusivity Works webinar on 'Building a more trauma informed workplace' with Jo Tym from Train with Lime, you've hopefully already picked up some useful guidance. Here's our summary of key points and tips.

What is trauma?

- Environmental e.g. pandemic, war
- Injustice e.g. racism, homophobia
- Violence e.g. domestic, general, sexual
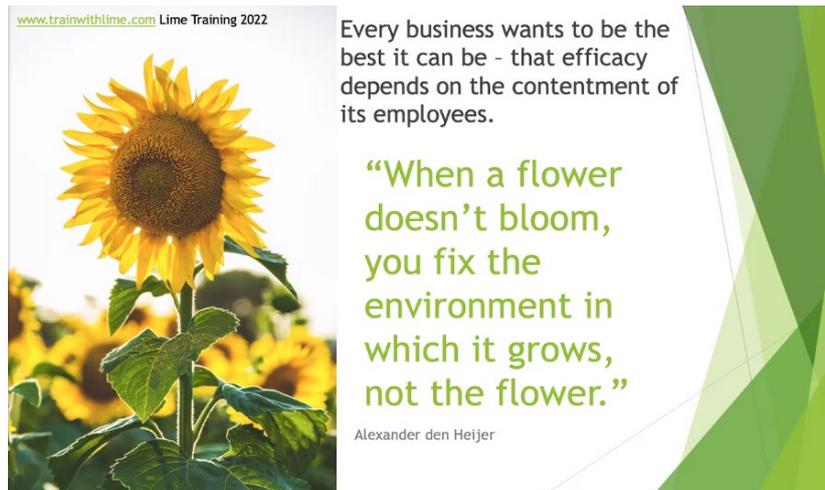- Other e.g. car accident, economic uncertainty

Trauma is personal, anything in life could be traumatic to someone, not just the categories above.

The same event could also traumatise one person but not another – trauma is response led, not situation led.

Whether someone becomes traumatised depends on factors such as support after the event, how safe they feel and whether the memory is processed 'properly'.

How can trauma impact the workplace?

1. **Individuals seek psychological safety -** employees will always be seeking physical and emotional safety at work, they need to know they are in a safe environment, within a culture of trust. E.g. if employees are made to feel vulnerable, old traumas can be triggered, such as not taking a complaint seriously, asking people to work in an environment they believe isn't safe.
2. **Productivity and efficiency –** employees need to be able to feel they can raise issues without worrying about the impact, need to feel safe enough to ask how to do something if they don't know. Pastoral care and organisational safety are really important within the workplace because they make people more productive and efficient. No-one is going to be maximally productive if they are worried about whether they are going to be berated for getting something wrong or if they can safely raise a concern they have.

Lunch & Learn

Spotlight on: Building a more trauma informed workplace

www.trainwithlime.com Lime Training 2022

Every business wants to be the best it can be – that efficacy depends on the contentment of its employees.

"When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."

Alexander den Heijer

How can employers become more trauma informed to improve working practices?

5 core principles for effective trauma informed practice:

1. Safety
   o Physical – are environments welcoming, clean and comfortable?
   o Psychological – are there clear communication practices so employees at all levels are kept in the loop and know what is expected of them and others?
2. Trust
   o Are there clear and consistent boundaries for all employees?
   o Are issues taken seriously and not brushed aside?
   o Is there a strong team morale where employees are seen as allies?
   o Are decision making processes transparent?
3. Choice
   o Does the individual have appropriate levels of choice over matters that affect them?
   o Links to cultural, historic and generic issues e.g. can clients / customers and employees access information in a different language? Do you encourage the inclusion of pronouns in email signatures etc?
4. Collaboration
   o Are decisions about teams made within teams wherever possible?
   o Everyone should have a role to play in ensuring the safety, support, choice and empowerment of others.
   o Are employee and client views listened to and acted on?

5. Empowerment
   o Are employees and clients empowered to make the decisions for themselves at the right time e.g. when to take time off, when to raise concerns etc?
   o Are managers and peers really listened to? It's not always about fixing a problem, just listening and validating.
   o Are community traumas (such as loss of a colleague) acknowledged or ignored – this sets the standard for safety and trust.
   o Are employees asked how they would like to be supported and is there an open channel of communication, especially during times of difficulty?

Top three tips for employers

1. In order to be trauma informed, this needs to start with you and your approach and – be kinder to yourself.
2. Make sure your environment feels safe physically and emotionally.
3. Allow your employees to feel employed, so everyone's voice is heard and everyone's voice matters.

Further support and resources

Subscribe to Inclusivity Works newsletter

Lime – Lived Experience Mental Health Training and Speaking (trainwithlime.com)

We Need Trauma Informed Workplaces, article by Katharine Manning, Harvard Business Review https://hbr.org/2022/03/we-need-trauma-informed-workplaces

What happened to you? – Book (fairly easy reading, not academic) on the trauma informed approach by Dr. Bruce D. Perry and Oprah Winfrey

www.inclusivityworks.org

in Inclusivity Works