



# ICTG RESOURCE GUIDE

Collective Trauma Preparedness and Response



**2019**

**General Ministry Leadership**

© 2019 *Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth (ICTG)*

*All rights reserved.*

Contact:

[office@ictg.org](mailto:office@ictg.org)

[www.ictg.org](http://www.ictg.org)



# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Traits of Trauma-Informed Congregations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Congregation Assessment Guide for Becoming Trauma-Informed</b>	<b>9</b>
Adverse Childhood Experience Assessment	13
Individual Resiliency Assessment	15
Collective Congregation Trauma (CCT) Assessment	17
Congregation Resiliency Assessment	19
Trauma Informed Youth Ministry Assessment	21
Youth Ministry Resiliency Assessment	23
Discussion	25
<b>Calm</b>	<b>27</b>
Stress Account	31
Self-Care Roster	33
<b>Community</b>	<b>35</b>
Personal Community	37
Personal Care Network Inventory	39
Professional Community	41
Minister's Professional Care Network Inventory	43
<b>Communication</b>	<b>45</b>
Positive Internal Body Communication	51
Internal Body Communication Overload	52

Panic Attacks	
Communicating with Family and Friends	55
Caring Relationships Characteristics Roster	57
Communicating with Staff	59
Crisis-Related Staff Communication Guidelines	60
Communicating with the Congregation	61
<b>Service of Lament Guidelines</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Service of Healing Guidelines</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Worship and Ministry Resources</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Additional Notes</b>	<b>69</b>





## INTRODUCTION

At any given time, congregations consist of individuals who have experienced significant adverse events. Sometimes, congregations also encounter collective trauma as a group or within their community. Whether with individuals, families, or groups, ordained and lay ministers regularly find themselves at the crossroads of tragedy and healing. The “Valley of the Shadow of Death” is a phrase for the emotional, spiritual and psychological depressions people often experience immediately following sudden death or other meaningful losses. Repeatedly, providing first and ongoing responses of care through the Valley of the Shadow of Death vies to be a primary focus of ministry. Yet too often, ministers like you and ones you know look back at crises they encountered and recall feeling isolated, unequipped, and their abilities to cope overwhelmed. Shocking events exceeded their capacities and demanded skills rarely, if ever, addressed in traditional seminary educations. What scant training and guides did exist was out of reach, hidden away in obscure academic journals or far from hand among training only available through remote and expensive conferences. Especially, for many solo ministers or volunteer leaders, these obstacles seemed insurmountable.

Merely the act of you opening this guide demonstrates you see enough in your setting to know things can not go on like this. As a minister, you need information and tools to be within reach to meet the demands you face every day. The impacts of trauma, indeed, are far reaching and affect every community throughout our country and our world today.



For instance, according to the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health, ***almost half of the children in the United States*** at that time would go on to suffer one, two, or more traumatic experiences before they turned 18 years old. Subsequent studies continue to demonstrate similar rates of adversity. That is a lot of children, youth and young adults in and around your congregation who, too often, are suffering silently. More often than not, when these children express their pain it is frequently misdiagnosed as "acting out" or as symptoms of an illness or disease unrelated to traumatic stress.

Unfortunately, youth are not a community's only concern today. According to the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Alliance, a multi-disciplinary group of professional and advocacy organizations, ***an estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States today*** have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives.

Add to these personal experiences collective trauma events which may include mudslide, tornado, fire, act of violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, or a pastor's suicide, and it becomes critical that both ordained and lay ministers hone their response abilities and long term care practices to meet the demands we are facing in this 21st century.

Far too many people lack trust in religious groups' abilities to meet their needs related to personal histories with adverse experiences related to experiencing adversity.

# BECOMING TRAUMA-INFORMED CONGREGATIONS

---

Our communities need to be able to trust that faith communities not only are safe establishments, but also are reliable catalysts for healing. This trust gets built when ordained and lay ministers respond and attend to the emotional and spiritual wounds caused by trauma. Congregational resiliency, and attending to stark emotional and spiritual wounds remaining after severe loss, requires *care* – a practice that is commonly being referred to these days as becoming “trauma informed.” Generally, being “trauma informed” refers to how a person or a group commonly operates with awareness that:

- Trauma occurs among individuals, families and groups and its affects can become wide spread
- Individual, family and group care practices can counter adverse impacts of trauma and initiate healing

Important to note, becoming a caring person who helps to counter the effects of trauma is not a process that necessarily is earned in the classroom or certified through a degree program. Rather, these skills are forged over time as everyday people dedicate themselves to growing reliably caring relationships in their midst, respecting and listening to survivors’ innate abilities to communicate injuries, and blessing or valuing the symbols of loss and survival they encounter.

In the aftermath of trauma, relational care makes a world of difference and is a hallmark of a trauma informed congregation.



**At ICTG, we understand that trauma-informed care is made up of three core actions: calm, connect, and communicate.**

These three critical actions of care determine the pace of healing. They reliably mitigate threat, decrease stress, and increase trust and safety. They are the fertile soil from which new life emerges and restoration flourishes. Within the caring relationships that exercise these core practices after trauma, *we learn how hope is not lost and trauma is never the end of the story.*

As a reader, you may be an ordained or lay leader who is seeking to prepare for trauma that may occur, or, you experienced a trauma and, in the aftermath, are discerning next steps. At ICTG we believe you are one of the greatest assets to your community. We believe in this place and time, here and now, you can be a caring servant leader among your faith community as you come alongside fellow survivors and walk the Valley of the Shadow of Death together. Your willingness to show up and be present along this undefined pathway makes a difference for you and your community of faith. The fact you have opened this book and read this far shows you already possess critical instincts for healing and thriving beyond trauma.

To help you expand your personal and professional skills for effectiveness in responding to trauma, we culled current research and scoured best practices to provide you with practical steps and tools you can implement immediately and use in varying circumstances to maximize responsiveness. The following pages include assessment tools for becoming a trauma-informed congregation, rosters for discerning personal stress and self-care, and guides for expanding professional and community care practices. As you learn more about how stressors impact you, how to build effective care networks for yourself and your congregation, and how to build or rebuild safe and meaningful ministry after trauma, you practice greater capacities for resiliency. Stone by stone, these practices form the wells of calming, community, and communication for you and your fellow congregants to draw on in times of future crisis. Whether you are head of staff, a solo clergyperson, a director of worship, a pastoral caregiver, or an elder or a deacon, the following information helps to ensure you have what is needed to withstand - or, better put, stand with - the pressures of trauma.

It is important to note that there is no short cut. There is no magic spell in these pages – or anywhere else, for that matter – to catapult you to feeling better. There is no way to fully make the loss disappear. Instead, in the following pages, you will find tools for developing personal and professional practices to increase your capacities for long-term personal, vocational and congregational health based on the three core components for healing. By caring for yourself and caring for the people around you, together you form true and reliable resiliency and discover pathways through the foggy of sorrow. This information and tools come from field experts like yourself who are willing to share what they have learned when they were in your shoes, preparing for or responding to traumas. May they be a source of encouragement and inspiration to you in the days ahead.