

From awareness to action

Co-creating a framework for
trauma-informed digital services

Speakers



**Dr Priscilla Chueng-Nainby
(Dr P)**

Design Research Consultant
Design Informatics Academic
Transformation Wellness Coach
The University of Edinburgh



Dr Angela Orviz

Senior Service Design
Consultant
OpenCast



**Bukola Jolugbo
(Kiki)**

Senior UX Researcher/
Transformation Coach /
Teenage Boy Coach /
Parenting Coach



Joan Herlinger

Lead User Experience &
Product Designer
Focus on Accessibility,
Illustrator & Speaker

Timeline

- Welcome and Introduction (Dr P, 10m)
- ***Sharing: Individual trauma experience (Dr P, 10m)***
- Framing TIPS: Trauma-informed Principles for Services (Dr P, 10m)
- ***Sharing: Organisation trauma experience (Dr P, 10m)***
- A Trauma-informed Organisational Transformation (Angela, 15-20m)
- **Workshop part 1 Healing / Prevention (15+5m)**
- **Workshop part 2 Building Framework into GDS (15+5m)**
- Team sharing: Applying TIPS to the scenarios (15m)
- Closing remarks (5m)

Introduction

What is Trauma-Informed Service Design



Dr P / Priscilla Chueng-Nainby

Service Design and Co-design consultant

Design Informatics Academic

Transformation Wellness Coach

Artist / Poet / Activist

The University of Edinburgh

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/priscillachueng/>

Drpcoach@gmail.com

What is Trauma

Trauma is an emotional and psychological response to **distressing or life-threatening** events that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope.

Such events can include accidents, natural disasters, violence, or abuse, leading to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and fear.

Symptoms after trauma including intrusive **memories**, **flashbacks**, emotional **numbness**, and heightened **reactivity**.

Trauma **affects individuals differently**, and not everyone exposed to a traumatic event will develop lasting symptoms.

What is Trauma-informed Service Design

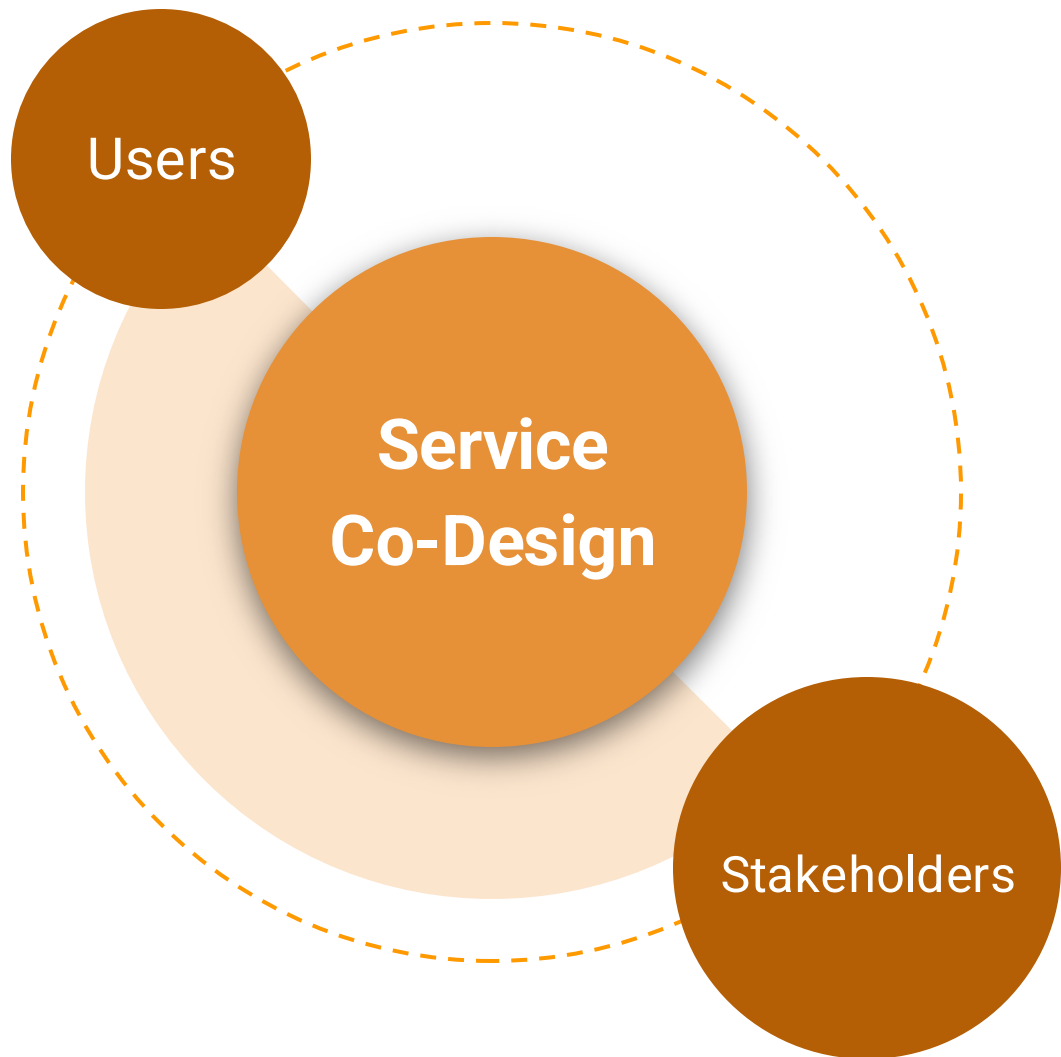
An approach to designing services that acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma and actively seeks to create safe, empowering, and inclusive experiences for users. It applies **trauma-informed care principles** to service design, ensuring that interactions, environments, and processes do not re-traumatize individuals and instead promote healing, trust, and accessibility.

How is it impactful?

Traditional service systems often **do not account for trauma**, leading to unintended harm or disengagement:

- A **housing service** requiring users to repeatedly recount distressing personal histories may re-traumatize them.
- A **government digital system** with complex, unclear processes can cause stress for vulnerable individuals.
- A **payment collection system** with reminder correspondence with wordings that may trigger trauma victims

Good Service should aims to **reduce barriers to access, increase trust, and enhance service effectiveness** by designing with **sensitivity to service experiences**.



Recap from last workshop at SDinGov

Empathetic Engagement- Discussion on Trauma-Informed Service Design, Co-Design, Diversity & Inclusion



Recap from March SDinGov

Trauma-Informed Services for Users (Dr P)

- Trauma framed as common, not rare.
- Service design as an ethical practice
→ safety, humanity, care.
- SAMHSA trauma-informed care principles introduced: safety, trust, empowerment, peer support, collaboration, cultural/gender/historical awareness.

→ awareness in service design community in why trauma-informed design matters.



Recap from March SDinGov

Trauma aware User Research (Kiki)

- Research itself can retraumatise if not handled carefully.
- Trauma-informed research helps to:
 - Minimise harm in gathering stories and data.
 - Create emotional safety for participants and researchers.
 - Mitigate emotional toll of the discipline.
 - Promote ethical practice by prioritising wellbeing.

→ Set expectation that research practices to be as safe as service delivery.



Recap from March SDinGov

Neurodiversity & Trauma (Joan)

- Personal story of late ADHD & dyspraxia diagnosis
→ grief, depression, shame.
- Her strengths: creativity, hyperfocus, empathy, detail, 3D.
- Challenges: rejection on sensitivity, constant 'no's', masking, burnout, exhaustion.
- Recognition that trauma is not just life events
— also exclusion and misunderstanding in systems.

→ Trauma-informed = designing with, not for.

Sharing A: Traumatic Experience (Dr P, 10m)

Work in pair to a peer on your right

Empathetically as yourself or someone you know:

- a. Have you encountered a traumatic service experience
- b. In a few words, describe the experience?
- c. How did you deal with this experience?

Using the template, share your story to your peer, and vice versa

1. Framing TIPS

Trauma-Informed Principles for Services



Dr P / Priscilla Chueng-Nainby

Service Design and Co-design consultant

Design Informatics Academic

Transformation Wellness Coach

Artist / Poet / Activist

The University of Edinburgh

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/priscillachueng/>

Drpcoach@gmail.com

Framing TIPS

Trauma Informed Principles for Services Adapting Principles to inspire

Let's design services that heal, not harm.

We need principles that support both users and organisations.”

- Safety
- Trust
- Empowerment
- Peer Support
- Collaboration
- Cultural Sensitivity

Trauma
informed Care



- Intuition & Reflexivity
- Empathy & Care
- Systemic Awareness & intersectionality
- Co-creation & Shared Power
- Transparency & Accountability

Feminine
Leadership



- Holistic
- Evidence Based
- Participatory
- Iterative
- Human Centred

Co-Design



Principles to inspire TIPS

- Safety
- Trust
- Empowerment
- Peer Support
- Collaboration
- Cultural Sensitivity

Trauma
informed Care



- Intuition & Reflexivity
- Empathy & Care
- Systemic Awareness & intersectionality
- Co-creation & Shared Power
- Transparency & Accountability

Feminine
Leadership



- Holistic
- Evidence Based
- Participatory
- Iterative
- Human Centred

Co-Design



please add



please add



please add



Principles from trauma-informed care

Adapted from SAMHSA (2014):

1. **Safety** – physically, emotionally, and psychologically *safe with welcoming spaces* with clear communication, and minimizing distressing interactions.
2. **Trust & Transparency** – clear, predictable, and *honest communication* about service processes, policies.
3. **Peer Support & Collaboration** – Engaging users as *active co-designers* of the service from their lived experiences.
4. **Empowerment & Choice** – Allowing service users to make *informed choices* about their engagement, ensuring they have agency and control over their experience.
5. **Cultural, Historical & Gender Sensitivity** – Recognizing the impact of cultural and systemic factors on trauma experiences and ensuring services are *inclusive and equitable* for all users.
6. **Minimization of Re-Traumatization** – Identifying and mitigating *triggers* within the service journey to avoid reactivating traumatic stress responses.

5D Feminine Leadership

“5D” refers to a shift in *leadership consciousness* — moving beyond transactional or hierarchical modes of working (3D/4D) into a fifth-dimension orientation that emphasises empathy, intuition, systemic awareness, and shared power.

- 1. Intuition & Reflexivity:** Leaders integrate intuition with self-awareness, actively questioning their own biases and positions of power. *Batliwala, S. (2010)*
- 2. Empathy & Care:** Leadership is rooted in compassion, emotional intelligence, and care for both self and others. *ActionAid (2012)*
- 3. Systemic Awareness & Intersectionality**
Leaders recognise how trauma, privilege, identity, and power intersect within systems, policies, and histories. *Batliwala (2010)*
- 4. Co-creation & Shared Power**
Leadership is collaborative and participatory, valuing lived experience and distributing decision-making. *Young Feminist Fund (2023).*
- 5. Transparency & Accountability**
Leaders practice integrity, openness, and responsibility for their decisions, inviting feedback and ensuring trust. *ActionAid (2012); ISHR (2024).*

Design principles (include Co-Design)

Adapted from Angela's thesis:

1. **Holistic** – looking at the system as a whole rather than isolated parts. Consider interdependencies between people, processes, technology and culture to ensure sustainable solutions that align to the broader vision.
2. **Evidence Based** – ground decisions in data, research, and real-world insights rather than assumptions. Combine quantitative and qualitative evidence to ensure that transformation efforts are credible, measurable, and aligned with proven outcomes
3. **Participatory** – ensure that those affected by change are actively involved in shaping it. By engaging diverse voices and perspectives, it builds ownership reduces resistance, and produces outcomes that better reflect real needs.
4. **Iterative** – embrace learning through cycles of exploration, testing, feedback, and refinement. Instead of seeking to roll out a perfect solution, valuing experimentation and adaptation will lead to more resilient and effective outcomes
5. **Human Centred** – place people at the heart of transformation. It seeks to understand their needs, motivations and experiences ensuring that change creates value for individuals as well as the organisation

Sharing: Organisation Trauma Experience (Angela, 10m)

Work in pair to a peer on your right

Empathetically as yourself or someone you know:

- a. Have you encountered a traumatic organisational experience
- b. In a few words , describe the experience?
- c. How did you deal with this experience?

Using the template, share your story to your peer, and vice versa

2. A Trauma Informed Approach to Organisation Transformation



Dr Angela Orviz

Senior Service Design Consultant

Opencast

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/aforviz/>

Trauma-informed organisational change:

- *Why?*
- *Examples of organisational trauma*
- *What can we do?*

***“Public sector organisations
- and by extension its employees -
are resistant to change”***

Says every design article and book

As catalysts of change,
design authors and practitioners often categorise
the public sector as resistant to change.

**But we rarely question why.
Why are people resistant to change?**

We tend to overlook the traumatic experiences of change endured by government employees

Change is disruptive and distressing.

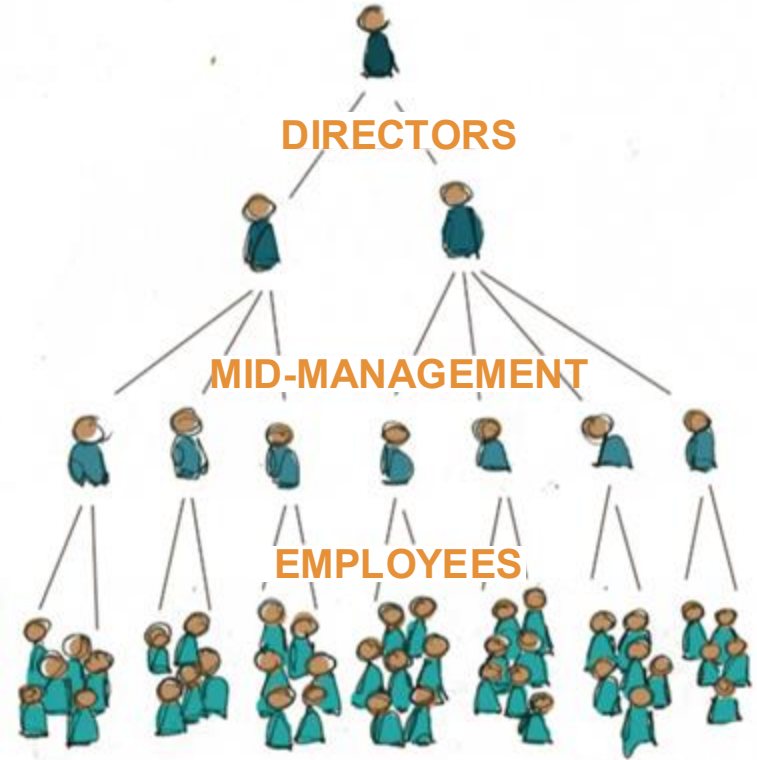
It creates uncertainty, loss of control, fear ... - hallmarks of trauma

But we disregard the emotional experience of change.

SOME REAL EXAMPLES

How organisational change can inflict trauma on employees

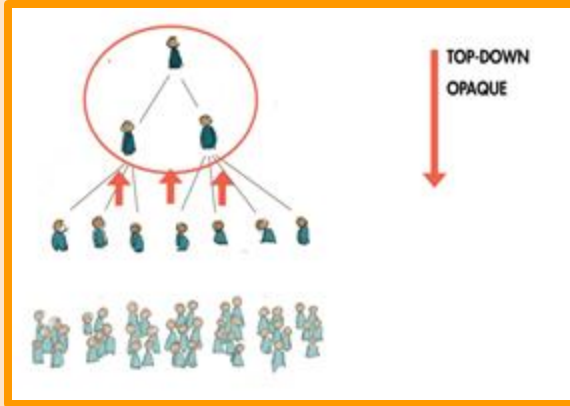
- Top-down restructuring
- Digital transformation



1

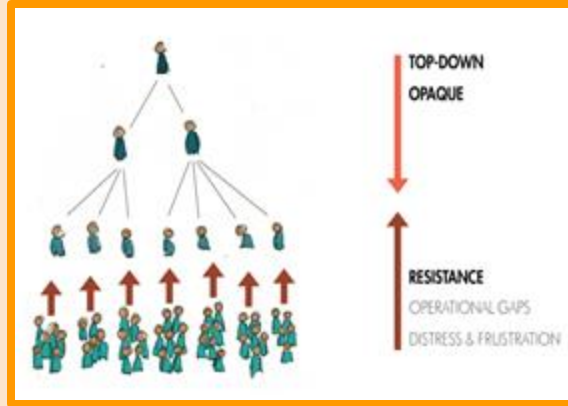
Top-Down Restructuration

Phase 1: Decision Making



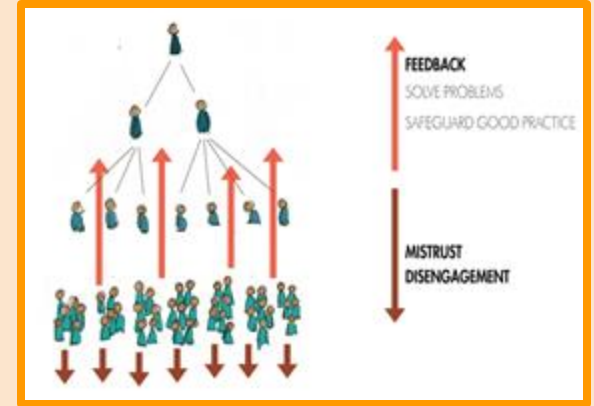
Opacity

Phase 2: Roll Out



Chaos, Distress, Resistance

Phase 3: Involvement



Mistrust & Disengagement

Scenario A: Dismantling teams



*I had been working in the same team for 20 years.
My team was like my family.*

*I have suddenly been moved to a new team in a
different building where I don't know anyone.*

*I feel alone, sad, and out of place. I don't even
know what I am supposed to do in this new team.
I lack motivation to continue working here.*

Identity

Belonging

Emotional bonds

Support network

Grief

Broken trust

Isolation

Scenario B: Merging teams



We are very confused about our new team's remit and everyone's roles.

We have very different values and working cultures, and there is a strange power battle going on. But we are not being supported to bridge the gaps between us.

We are all very frustrated and feel we are being shuffled around with no reason. Why were we not consulted before making this change?

Value conflicts

Identity loss

Confusion

Leadership

Resistance

Power

Support

Broken trust

Organisational Trauma

A historical lack of transparency, communication, and involvement in transformation can build a collective trauma response of mistrust, fear, frustration, resistance, and disengagement.

2

Digital Transformation

Government digital transformation has often been slow and disjointed, and can also translate into traumatic experiences for employees.

Failed attempts and
repetition



Lack of value
in change



Job insecurity



Failed Attempts & Repetition

- Transformation initiatives are constantly being started and cancelled without any tangible outputs for operational teams.
- Documentation gets lost between initiatives, and new teams start from scratch.
- Digital teams often work in silos without addressing overlaps in scope and duplication research.

“I am exhausted of continuously being asked the same questions about our processes and pain-points, again and again, by different people, without receiving any value in exchange.”

Scenario C: Failed attempts and repetition



"I am exhausted of continuously being asked the same questions about our processes and pain-points, again and again, by different people, without receiving any value in exchange."

Repetition

Ignored

Confusion

No impact

No value

Frustration

Boredom

Broken trust

Lack of value in change

The push to deliver quickly often means improving micro-services bit by bit.

We produce MVPs - minimum viable products - but are they valuable enough?

Incomplete systems often force operational teams to develop their own tactical, clerical solutions to overcome the gaps left by digital teams.

“We have been asking for the same things for ever, but the improvements we need never come.

We are being forced to create workarounds to fill-in for the new system’s gaps. It is time consuming, inefficient, and exhausting”

Scenario D: Lack of value in change



“We have been asking for the same things for ever, but the improvements we need never come. We are being forced to create workarounds to fill-in for the new system’s gaps. It is time consuming, inefficient, and exhausting”

Slow

Disjointed

Ignored

Confusion

No impact

No value

Frustration

Broken trust

Job Insecurity

The increasing push to automate and use artificial intelligence brings with it the threat of job losses, which damages employees' sense of safety.

“There is a lot of clerical work that we would like to see automated, so that we can better use our time on the things that are really important. But we fear that they’ll just want to automate everything and remove the humanity in our services”

Scenario E: Job Insecurity



“There is a lot of clerical work that we would like to see automated, so that we can better use our time on the things that are really important.

But we fear that they’ll just want to automate everything and remove the humanity in our services”

Uncertainty

Safety

Confusion

Belonging

Anger

Fear

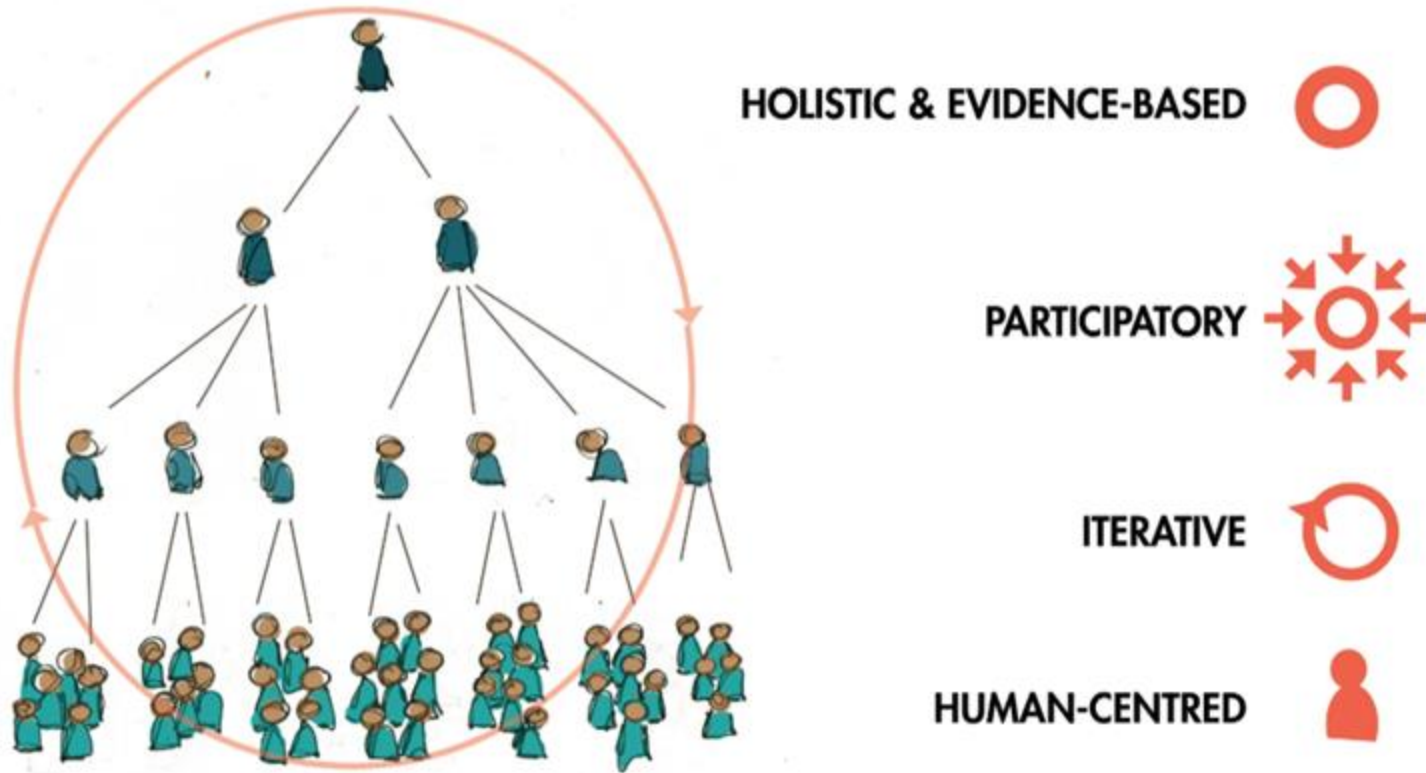
Broken trust

**Taking a human centred approach
to organisational transformation**



**Considering employee trauma
and emotional journeys
in change initiatives**

Design-led Transformation



Design has the tools to reduce harm and promote healing

What can we do as service designers?

While we rarely make decisions in how organisational change is approached, we can acknowledge these invisible emotional experiences, co-design with empathy, and influence some design decisions.

Empathy

We need to extend to employees the same level of empathy that we grant citizens; and not dismiss organisational trauma as unjustified resistance.

History of Transformation

When coming into a new change project, it is important for us to understand the history of change and acknowledge how it has impacted the people working in that space.

Transformation Alignment

We need to go out of our way to understand overlaps with other teams and collaborate so that we don't overwhelm operational teams with research queries.

Minimum Valuable Products

If the pains created by gaps and workarounds are bigger than the value gained by operational teams, maybe it is not worth changing to the new solution yet.

HELP US THINK

**How could we use
trauma-informed principles,
together with participatory &
co-design methodologies,
to mitigate trauma in
organisational change?**



Workshop: Preventing or Healing Transformation Trauma with TIPS (15+5m)

Team up with another pair (group of 4).

- Choose a scenario or more from the table or create your own.
- Use the template to visualise service experience with TIPS enabled.

Teams sharing (15m)

Closing Discussion on Trauma-informed Service Design

Thank you!

Join this community of practice at

drpcoach@gmail.com

Instagram: [@drpcoach](https://www.instagram.com/drpcoach)