

EMPOWERMENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE COMMITTEE AT LANCASTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH HOSPITAL

What Does It Take? ...And isn't it risky?

When it comes to empowering others, especially in uncertain settings, there's sometimes an unspoken question: isn't this risky? After all, empowerment is basically about giving someone else the reins, right?

It can be. But **empowerment might better be thought of as helping someone meet their own needs**, like filling a cup.

According to a Harvard Business Review meta-analysis* of studies on empowerment, several commonalities over 30,000 participants support the image of *empowerment as filling a cup*:



Being empowered is only effective if it's done on our terms. When life is too overwhelming, empowerment might look like having the

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

These are the *Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care*, identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As a part of LBHH's commitment to trauma-informed care, our hospital pays special attention to one principle each month.

*Lee, Willis, Wei Tian; 2018

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opportunity to do something for yourself, or being reminded that you can say “no.” In this case, the unmet need is respite. But the opposite can be true, too.

For some people, boredom or over-qualification makes the day-to-day grind especially difficult. If this is true for you, then empowerment might look like added responsibilities or expectations in your day. Different needs. Different cups.

What may be the most important takeaway from the meta-analysis is that, if we try to “empower” the first example with the second solution, or vice versa, it has the exact opposite effect. It matters that we **know something about who we’re empowering**, or else we won’t really be empowering them. We will be burdening them.

EMPOWERMENT Looks Like...

- Delegating responsibilities to share ownership
- Specific encouragement or constructive criticism
- Recognizing strengths and developing plans around those strengths
- Accommodating for, and normalizing, mistakes in the learning process
- Giving someone the chance to meet their needs

Word of the Month

in·ter·de·pen·dence *noun*
the mutual dependence of two or more parties--distinct from the isolation of independence

Next
Month's
Theme

HISTORICAL ISSUES