


- **Recovery Dharma Global: Trauma-Informed Policy (RDG:TIP)**

## 1. Introduction

Recovery Dharma Global (RDG) is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all individuals seeking recovery from addiction through Buddhist-inspired practices. We recognize that many people in recovery have experienced trauma, which can significantly impact their healing journey. This policy outlines our commitment to implementing trauma-informed approaches throughout our organization and as Board of Directors and volunteers who are in service to RDG. Since trauma-informed research is constantly progressing, we are committed to reviewing and updating this policy annually as the scientific understanding of trauma develops.

This policy was written with the Recovery Dharma Global (RDG) organization in mind. RDG is a nonprofit organization with an elected Board, paid staff, committees, and appointed volunteers. Other entities of the Worldwide Recovery Dharma Community may find these ideas helpful, but will want to ensure that adjustments are made to serve their specific sangha group, inter-sangha, or other form of community.

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## 2. Understanding Trauma

For the purposes of this policy, we define trauma as experiences or events that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope, leading to lasting adverse effects on functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (NIH, 2022). Trauma can result from various experiences, including but not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse
- Neglect
- Violence
- Natural disasters
- Accidents
- Sudden loss
- Systemic oppression and discrimination

We also acknowledge that the evolving definition of trauma is “experiences and events as the person who articulates they have trauma chooses to define it.” (Friedman, 2024)

[Recent evolving views further understand trauma as the experiences and events that individuals consider traumatic. Moreover, it is those who have experienced the trauma that choose to define what constitutes trauma (Friedman, 2024). The RDG board of directors integrated this evolving understanding of trauma into our policies. We are committed to respecting individuals' experiences and what they may consider traumatic.

### 3. Guiding Principles

Recovery Dharma Global adopts the following trauma-informed principles. Please note that the principles are not exhaustive, but primary principles that benefit individuals and groups.

- **Safety:** Ensuring physical and emotional safety for all contributors.
- **Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Maintaining clear communication and building trust.
- **Peer support:** Fostering mutual support among participants.
- Evaluating power dynamics, sharing power, and decision-making where appropriate.
- **Empowerment, voice, and choice:** Advocating for individual strengths, expressions, and autonomy.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender issues:** Recognizing traumatic or harmful experiences and/or events, addressing stereotypes and biases, and advocating for rights and dignity.

### 4. Implementation Strategies

#### 4.1 Training and Education

All board members, staff, volunteers, and committee meeting facilitators must complete, at a minimum, trauma-informed approach informational training. Suggested information and materials are available below, at no cost to contributors to support the volunteer community. At a minimum, the collective content will include:

- Understanding the prevalence and impact of trauma
- Understanding how systems of society contribute to personal and intergenerational trauma
- Recognizing signs and symptoms of trauma
- Learning trauma-sensitive language and communication
- Practicing de-escalation techniques
- Understanding the intersection of trauma and addiction
- Learning how Buddhist principles and practices can be a trauma-informed path

Being familiar with national and/or local resources, such as crisis numbers, national organizations, community centers, women's centers, or other support

Trauma Informed Care Training Institute

<https://traumainformedcaretraining.com/free-trauma-informed-care-courses/>

Live Beyond (English and Spanish)

<https://livebeyondca.org/>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

Trauma Informed Community

<https://www.traumainformedcommunity.org/>

The intersection between modern trauma theory, addiction & mindfulness

<https://mindworks.org/blog/psychology-addiction/>

[IU Trauma Informed care certificate](#)

## 4.2 Meeting and Event Guidelines

### a) Physical Environment:

- Ensure well-lit, clean, and accessible spaces
- Provide comfortable seating arrangements with flexibility to accommodate individual needs
- Offer quiet spaces for grounding or meditation
- Offer locations with easily accessible exits
- Offer location to be in an area of a city that is safe, affordable, accessible, inclusive, and diverse
- Wheelchair Accessible

### b) Committee Meeting Facilitation:

- Begin meetings with a brief grounding exercise or checking in
- Implement, monitor, and enforce community agreements
- Use inclusive language (e.g., "folx" instead of "guys")
- Avoid graphic descriptions of traumatic experiences (unless necessary to complete a project assigned by RDG)
- Encourage discussions of power dynamics and ways to shift the power when applicable and appropriate
- Use strength-based approaches in discussion and avoid shaming or blaming
- Practice equanimity in not fully understanding someone's trigger, culture, and/or experiences, but respecting and accepting it
- Practice wise speech, wise action, and cultivate the four heart practices
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### c) Content Warnings:

- Provide content warnings before discussing potentially triggering topics  
"This content addresses topics of [SITUATION ] that may be triggering for individuals who have experienced trauma. We approach these subjects with sensitivity and awareness, recognizing that discussions about certain events or emotions may evoke strong and distressing reactions for some. Please prioritize your well-being and exercise

self-care. You are empowered to practice your self-care plan. X is our resource person if you need additional support during this meeting.”

- Offer alternative volunteer opportunities for those who may be triggered

#### **4.3 Communication Practices**

##### **a) Use trauma-sensitive language:**

- Replace "What's wrong with you?" with "What happened to you?"
- Use person-first and person-centered languages (e.g., [provide examples])
- Avoid judgmental, biased, or stigmatizing terms (e.g., "person with addiction" instead of "addict")
- Exercise Buddhist wise speech
- Encourage setting and asserting boundaries

##### **b) Active Listening:**

- Practice reflective listening techniques (e.g., [provide example])
- Validate emotions and experiences without minimizing or dismissing them (e.g., [provide example])
- Refrain from giving advice when not asked for
- Cultivate compassion and curiosity

##### **c) Written Communications:**

- Review all materials for potentially triggering content
- Provide clear information about available support resources, as appropriate
- Use strength-based and person-centered language
- Use inclusive language

#### **4.4 Crisis Response**

Develop and implement a crisis response plan for internal use that includes:

- De-escalation strategies
- Referral protocols for mental health services
- Emergency contact information

“If you or someone you know is struggling or having thoughts of suicide, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. In life-threatening situations, call 911.”

- Follow-up procedures

#### **4.5 Confidentiality and Privacy**

- Maintain strict confidentiality policies
- Provide private spaces for one-on-one conversations
- Obtain written consent before sharing any personal information

## **5. Specific Applications**

### **5.1 Meditation Practices**

- Offer alternatives to eyes-closed meditation (e.g., open-eyed meditation, walking meditation)
- Provide guidance on grounding techniques during meditation
- Support participants to leave or move during meditation without judgment

### **5.2 Inquiry Process**

- Implement a "pass" option for those not comfortable participating
- Encourage use of "I" statements when sharing
- Avoid unsolicited advice on personal matters that may be shared.
- Discuss if using a "popcorn" style would be appropriate for the group or if it would feel safer to allow individuals to speak when they are ready

### **5.3 Service Opportunities**

- Offer a variety of service roles to accommodate different comfort levels and skills
- Provide clear descriptions and expectations
- Allow members to step back from roles without shame or pressure

### **5.4 Online Meetings for the Recovery Dharma Community**

- Implement tools, such as waiting rooms, to prevent "Zoom bombing."
- Allow members to use aliases or turn off video for privacy
- Provide community agreements that include wise and thoughtful online communication (e.g., not cross-talking by commenting in the chat).

## **6. Continuous Improvement**

Recovery Dharma Global is committed to ongoing evaluation and improvement of our trauma-informed approach:

- Conduct regular surveys to assess the experiences of all board members, staff, volunteers, and participants.
- Review and update this policy annually
- Encourage feedback and suggestions from all those participating in RDG events
- Stay informed about best practices in trauma-informed care

## **7. Resources and Support**

Recovery Dharma Global will maintain an up-to-date list of trauma-informed resources, including:

- Mental health services
- Crisis hotlines
- Online support communities
- Educational materials on trauma and recovery

## **8. Conclusion**

By implementing this trauma-informed approach, Recovery Dharma Global aims to create a more inclusive, supportive, and safer recovery community. We recognize that healing from addiction and trauma is a journey, and we are committed to providing a compassionate and understanding environment for all who seek recovery through Buddhist-inspired practices.

This policy serves as a living document and will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving needs of our community and the latest research in trauma-informed approaches.