



# TRAUMA INFORMED PRODUCING

STREAMING THEATER TV FILM

“Trauma is stored in our senses.”

– Jessica Asch, MA, LCAT, RDT



The entertainment industry is a well-oiled machine.  
We develop. We pitch. We budget. We cast. We shoot.  
We wrap. We edit. We deliver.

And then we **move on** to the next project.

RINSE..REPEAT

But what if the last project hasn't moved on from us?

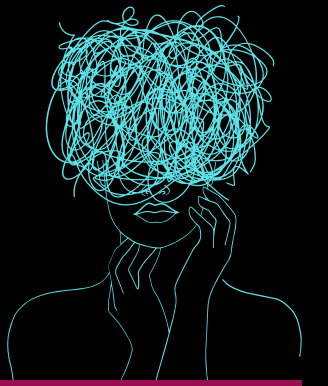
What happens when our crews are left with lingering effects from the heavy subject matter they've just poured their lives into? And what if the talent we work with, having to relive their darkest memories in front of our cameras, revive their old traumas as a result?

These are some of the most critical (but rarely-discussed) hazards that come with working in film and television production.

What if there was an effective, responsible way to get *ahead* of all that?



# THE TRAUMA-INFORMED PRODUCING INITIATIVE



At a time when it's not uncommon for a producer to interview a survivor of a mass shooting, airlift a crew out of a wartorn country, or sift endlessly through hours of crime scene photos and footage, it's crucial our industry recognize that the emotional scars of production are very real.

Industry research shows the toll on those behind the scenes is profound and that trauma pervades all genres and stages of television production from development to distribution... and it's having a significant impact on producer wellbeing.

The good news is, our industry is in a constant state of evolution. We've seen progress through initiatives like DEI training, combating harassment, and prioritizing environmental sustainability through green production.

Now, as the spotlight gets brighter on addressing safety and wellness concerns, we're leaning in.

The Trauma-Informed Producing Initiative seeks to understand how producing trauma-sensitive content affects our community so that we can co-create toolkits, ethical frameworks and other easily accessible interventions that bolster both producer support and storytelling excellence. **The key is using evidence-based trauma-informed approaches based in psychology and neuroscience as seen in other industries.**

As storytellers, we are accustomed to telling others' tales.

Now's the time to turn our attention inward, to truly listen to our own community, pinpointing and prioritizing our wellness challenges, in an effort to co-create actionable resources.

Through this, we not only enhance producer well-being, but also elevate the quality of our storytelling, leaving our crews, story subjects, and viewers better than we found them.

*A first step....*

# THE COMMITTEE

Drawing inspiration from the invaluable Sexual Harassment and Diversity Training courses that have become industry standard, our initiative offers a similar structure of harm assessments, workshops, panels, and training from a trauma-informed and emotional well-being approach. Our approach also gives tools producers can use to enhance their craft, drawing on evidence-based interviewing models and ground-breaking work in trauma-related neuroscience.

As an integral step towards nurturing workplace wellness, we propose the establishment of a dedicated PGA committee focused on trauma-informed producing, starting with unscripted programming. This committee's mission involves comprehensively assessing producers' challenges across all production phases. Subsequently, collaborating with licensed professionals, the committee aims to create easily accessible

- toolkits
- interactive assessments
- actionable practices

By crafting resources that champion a strength-based, trauma-informed approach to producing, we not only safeguard our community but also fortify our craft.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This approach offers significant benefits for talent and crew:

- 1. Prevention of Re-traumatization:** creating a safer environment that acknowledges past traumas, reduces the risk of triggering distressing experiences and what to do in the event of triggers
- 2. Enhanced Sensitivity:** this approach helps producers become more attuned to talent's needs while offering effective techniques and safeguarding practices for support
- 3. Improved Experiences for Talent:** by prioritizing talent's emotional well-being, the program ensures talent feels more comfortable, empowered, and respected on set
- 4. Coping Skills:** crew members from pre-production to post-production learn essential tactics for effectively navigating the challenges and stresses of their trauma-infused work to avoid vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, safe-guarding their well-being during and after production
- 5. Ethical Frameworks:** implementing universal, company-wide and project specific frameworks and assessments that promote group cohesion and collaborative practice, thereby creating support systems similar to other industries



*The Approach*

# DEFINITION

## TRAUMA-INFORMED:

Trauma-informed practice is an approach to health and care interventions grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological, and social development.

It seeks to avoid re-traumatization which is the re-experiencing of thoughts, feelings, or sensations of the original traumatic event or circumstance in a person's past. Re-traumatization is generally triggered by reminders of previous trauma which may or may not be potentially traumatic in themselves.

There are 6 principles of trauma-informed practice:

- SAFETY
- TRUST
- PEER SUPPORT
- COLLABORATION
- EMPOWERMENT
- CULTURAL CONSIDERATION



# OUR COMMUNITY HAS SPOKEN

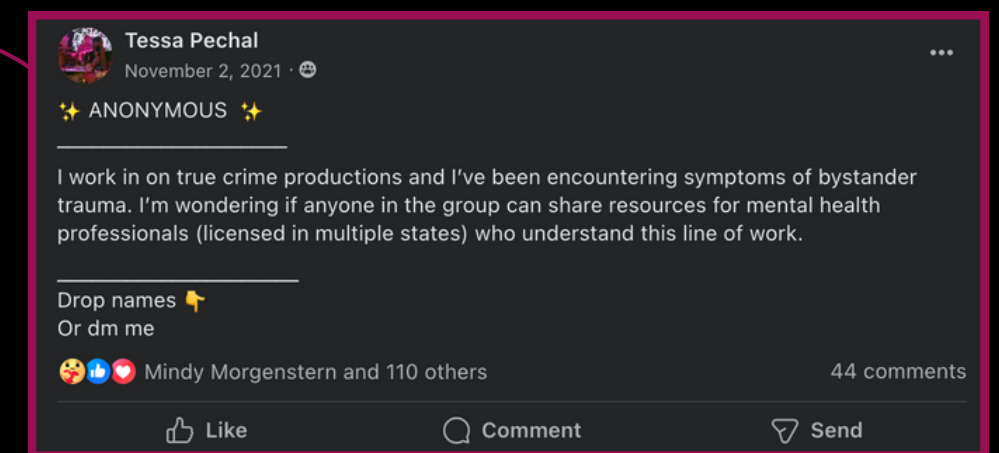
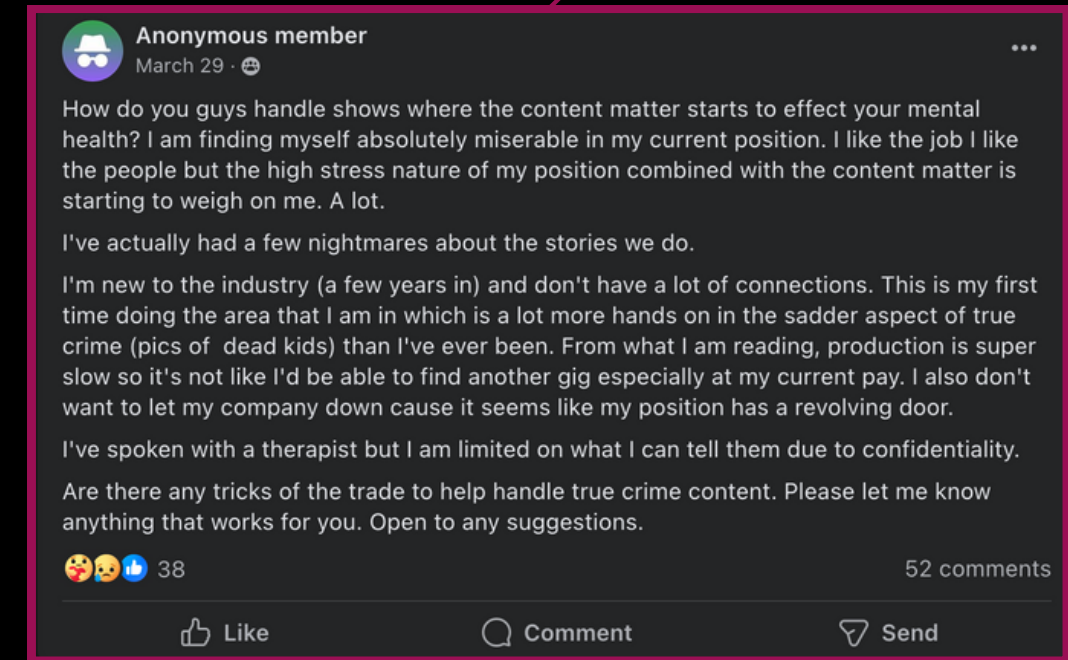
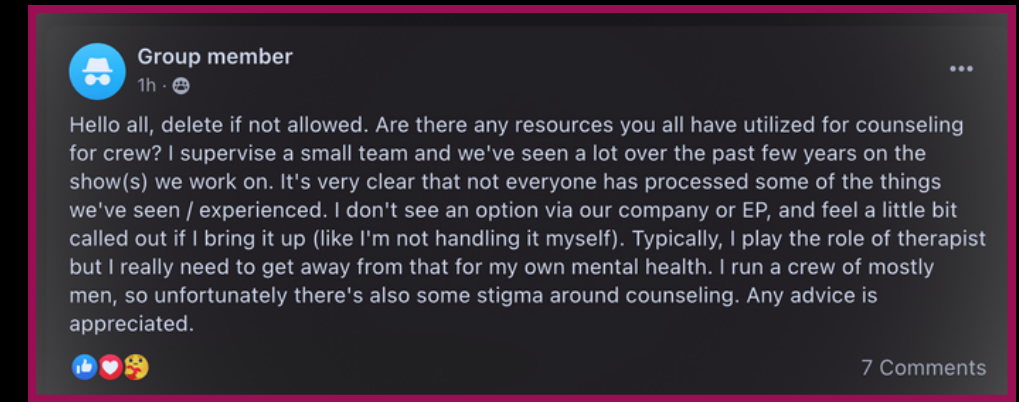
How often do these issues arise? Far more often than you'd might think. Scour any industry social media board where production staffs ask for advice and you'll see these issues arising over and over.

Our hard-working crews who spend months or years of their lives filming these stories and cutting them in edit bays often find themselves dealing with vicarious trauma – a phenomenon resulting from “prolonged empathetic engagement with trauma survivors”. Crew members find themselves dealing with residual feelings of guilt, anger, shame, cynicism and sadness long after their shows have ended.

# THE RESEARCH IS THERE

The Dart Center report from Columbia University sheds light on the overlooked risks of traumatic stress and moral injury faced by professionals in documentary and factual TV. Across various program formats from medical documentaries to reality TV programs, production staff routinely encounter contributors' trauma and mental health issues, highlighting the urgent need for informed policies and greater awareness.

[HTTPS://DARTCENTER.ORG/RESOURCES/OCCUPATIONAL-DISTRESS-FACTUAL-TV](https://dartcenter.org/resources/occupational-distress-factual-tv)



# WHY US?

In 2018, TV-industry vet (and eventual Oz Effect co-founder) Jane Bloom co-founded and directed Camp Shine, a trauma recovery program for the survivors of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting in Parkland, FL her life was forever changed.

Fast forward to present day. Through analysis and study, Jane and her Oz Effect co-founder Alexandra Bennett Cannady, recognize how incorporating trauma-informed practices in other industries like medical fields, educational environments, and even the legal fields have transformed industries for the better. This has effected our mission and our desire to bring these practices to our own industry.

For this initiative, we've targeted Jessica Asch, co-founder of Camp Shine and a nationally-recognized, licensed creative arts therapist and registered drama therapist to be part of the conversation. She has worked with veterans suffering from PTSD, adults struggling with substance abuse, Holocaust survivors, individuals suffering from mental illness, and incarcerated youth among others.

Our Oz Effect litmus test comes into play with this (and every) endeavor:

*Brains* for sound strategy and analysis;

*Heart* to lead with empathy and compassion;

*Courage* to be change makers, disrupters, and leaders.





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