

# Trauma- and Violence-Informed Physical Activity for Women

A Tool for Fitness and Physical Activity Organizations and Providers

## What is Trauma- and Violence-Informed Physical Activity (TVIPA)?

**TVIPA** is built upon the principles of trauma- and violence-informed healthcare practices (TVIC). **TVIC** is an approach to service provision that recognizes that previous or ongoing experiences of systemic or interpersonal trauma and/or violence can shape the way a woman identifies with and interacts with the world. TVIC consists of respectful empowerment practices with an understanding that trauma, violence, and marginalizing circumstances can create barriers to physical activity for women.



### **Marginalizing circumstances can include, but are not limited to:**

*Income instability*

*Racial or cultural discrimination*

*Job insecurity*

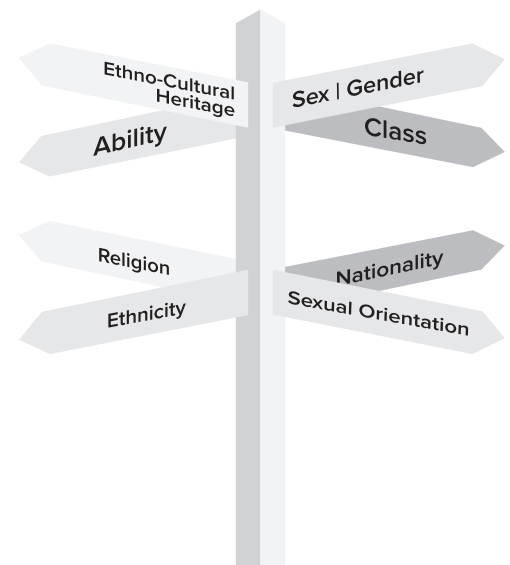
*Sex or gender discrimination*

*Unsafe or unstable housing*

*Domestic and/or sexual violence*

*Underaddressed health issues*

*Disabilities*



**TVIPA** seeks to build awareness of the effects of marginalization, trauma, and violence, and to support building positive relationships with physical and social engagement. Recognizing the impacts of boundary violations and abuses of power points to a need to adapt physical activity spaces to establish safe, supportive environments

## Barriers to Participation

**Accessibility** can involve many different elements. The emotional, physical, and social environment has a strong impact on one's experience of a program or facility. When an environment does not address these factors appropriately, it can prevent women from participating or feeling comfortable with an activity.

Integrating TVIPA principles can contribute to improved access and appropriateness of programs and resources for women.

**Integrating TVIPA principles can help to remove barriers to participation and contribute to equal opportunities to achieve positive health outcomes and healthy lives.**

## Why Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care?

People who experience living in marginalized circumstances often have experienced boundary violations and abuses of power. Such experiences can impact one's interactions and engagement with individuals and systems.

It is important to remember that individuals with experiences of trauma and violence:

- Need to feel physically and emotionally safe
- May currently be in unsafe relationships (ongoing violence)
- May live in unsafe conditions (e.g., racism, poverty)

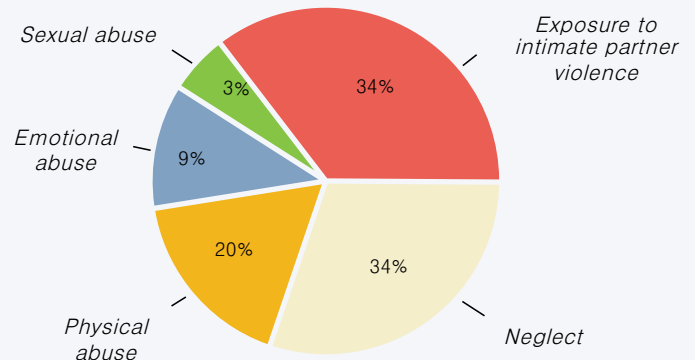
TVIC seeks to **create safe environments** for clients based on understanding the effects of trauma and links to health and behaviour.

TVIC seeks to account for intersecting effects of **systemic and interpersonal violence**.<sup>[1]</sup>

Professionals who are aware of trauma and violence in the populations they serve can help clients feel safe in physical activity environments.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 32% of adults in Canada

report having experienced some form of maltreatment as a child



### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is:

a pattern of physical and/or sexual violence, coercion and control, linked to greater risk of injuries, poor health and death.

4%

of adults experienced physical or sexual assault from a partner at least once in the previous 5 years<sup>[3]</sup>

4/5

victims of IPV (reported to police) are women<sup>[3]</sup>

2x

as likely for women to experience the most severe forms of violence compared to men<sup>[3]</sup>

3x

as likely for Aboriginal women to have experienced IPV than non-Aboriginal women<sup>[3]</sup>

### Other links to experiences of violence<sup>[4]</sup>

Homelessness and unstable housing

Economic vulnerability

Living with disabilities

Substance use

## Why Trauma- and Violence-Informed Physical Activity?

Individuals with experiences of trauma and/or violence need to feel **physically, socially, and emotionally safe** when engaging with service providers. Physical activity can support physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual health, and when developed appropriately, an organization can help to promote community engagement, health equity, and personal growth.

**Physical activity** is a part of a healthy lifestyle that can benefit many different areas of a person's life. While physical health is important, there are also psychological, emotional, and spiritual benefits of engaging in physical activities within a community. Promoting equitable opportunities for physical health begins to address the multiple barriers leading to health outcome inequities for women experiencing marginalizing circumstances.

## Why reduce barriers to physical activity?

### REDUCE SYSTEMIC HEALTH INEQUITY

Persistent and growing health inequities continue to affect marginalized populations.

Poverty and systemic discrimination are examples of health and social inequities that must be considered when creating programming.

### IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH

Environmental and social accessibility leads to increased comfort and confidence in care.

Quality of life increases and physical health improves.

A sense of community and solidarity with other women can be fostered.

### PROMOTE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY

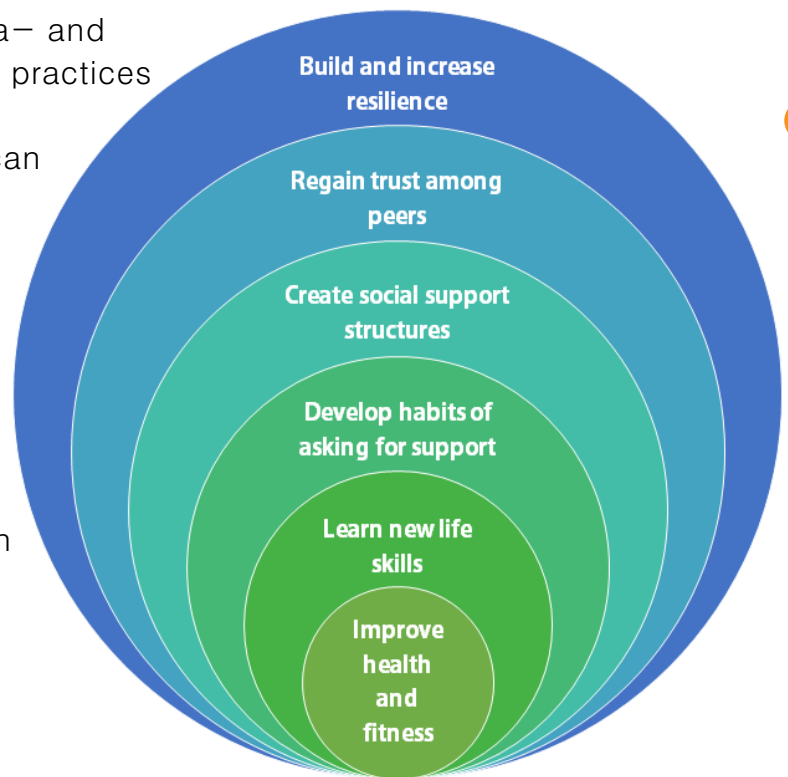
Financial barriers often contribute to poor health.

Improving physical activity experiences for women may result in improved health outcomes.

By removing barriers to physical activity participation, women experiencing barriers can gain more opportunities to achieve positive health outcomes and lead healthy lives.



The main goal in developing trauma- and violence-informed physical activity practices is to create **safe, non-violent environments** in which individuals can be empowered to make **choices, collaborate, and learn**. Individuals with experiences of trauma and violence are at an increased risk of negative health outcomes<sup>[7]</sup>. Creating supportive approaches to physical activity can help to **address health inequities**. TVIPA recognizes that physical activity can be very effective in supporting the **well-being, psychological, and physical health** of people living in marginalizing circumstances<sup>[5]</sup>.



## References

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