

The Seven Sanctuary Commitments

Sanctuary defines trauma in very broad terms, including exposure to experiences like abuse as well as exposure to more intangible forms of adversity, like poverty, racism and neglect. The Seven Sanctuary Commitments are a set of values that Sanctuary outlines as a way to lead individuals and organizations away from trauma-reactive behaviors.

Commitment	Why Do We Do This?
Nonviolence	Traumatized people/groups have often experienced violence as part of their trauma, either: physical, psychological, social and moral. This commitment attempts to give the opposite experience within the community.
Emotional Intelligence	Traumatized people/groups have often experienced insensitivity and disrespect regarding their behaviors or feelings. This commitment creates an environment in which community members understand the relationship between past experiences, emotions and behaviors and are able to respond and react to clients and each other with those relationships in mind.
Social Learning	Traumatized people/groups are often isolated as a way to self-protect and can become engaged in repetitive patterns of thinking and behavior. This commitment promotes collaborative thinking and problem solving to break dysfunctional and repetitive patterns through exposure to other's perspectives and ideas. It also mitigates the isolating effects of shame by viewing mistakes as positive learning opportunities.
Democracy	Many definitions of trauma include an overwhelming sense of helplessness during the event which can lead to learned helplessness in the future. Democracy requires active participation and empowerment in the service of replacing helplessness.
Open Communication	Secrecy is often a component of prolonged exposure to traumatic experiences (ie: sexual abuse, parental alcoholism). This commitment creates a community that tolerates expression of emotions and openly explores interpersonal and organizational issues.
Social Responsibility	Traumatized people/groups have often experienced injustice either during or in response to reporting a traumatic event. This commitment focuses on building a community in which people feel a sense of responsibility and care for each other and the group as a whole and in which people are held accountable for their actions.
Growth and Change	Traumatized people/groups can become paralyzed by their experiences so that they continue to relive or repeat the past in ways that prevent healing or growth. This commitment presents a framework to evaluate current behaviors while focusing on the future by setting achievable goals and breaking dysfunctional patterns.