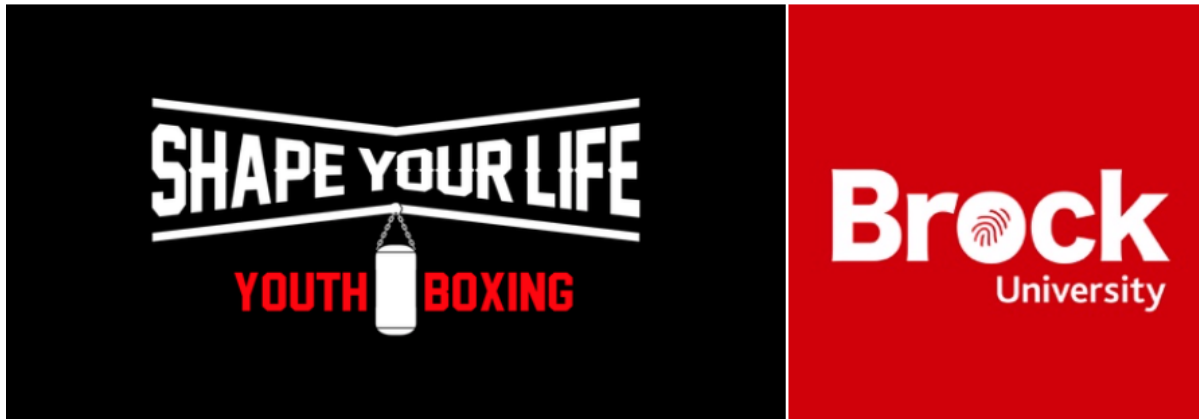


**Shape Your Life (SYL) Youth Boxing:
Trauma and Violence-Informed Coach Manual**



Shape Your Life (SYL) Youth Boxing: Trauma and Violence-Informed Coaches Manual

Cathy van Ingen, Melinda Watpool & Amanda De Lisio
<http://www.shapeyourlifeboxing.com>

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Email: cathy.vaningen@brocku.ca

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Shape Your Life (SYL) Youth Boxing: Trauma and Violence-Informed Coaches Manual

<http://www.shapeyourlifeboxing.com>

This manual is intended to support Shape Your Life (SYL) boxing coaches who work with youth who have experienced violence and trauma. It outlines how essential it is for coaches to understand the impact of violence in order to effectively coach SYL participants.

In this manual, we share our approach to trauma and violence-informed coaching. This is an emergent process, meaning we are always evolving, refining and adapting our approach to be responsive to the experiences of the youth we serve.

What is Shape Your Life (SYL)

Shape Your Life (SYL) is a trauma and violence-informed, non-contact boxing program that was created by Dr. Cathy van Ingen, Brock University and Joanne Green, Opportunity for Advancement, a social service agency. Since 2007, SYL has worked to support over 2700 participants in Toronto (van Ingen 2020; 2018; 2011a; 2011b).

SYL is effective because it takes into account the lasting effects of trauma. Trauma and violence-informed approaches recognize the impact of trauma in everyday life—particularly as related to the body.

The body is where we live. It's where we fear, hope, and react. It's where we constrict and relax. And what the body most cares about are safety and survival. When something happens to the body that is too much, too fast, or too soon, it overwhelms the body and can create trauma. Contrary to what many people believe, trauma is not primarily an emotional response. Trauma always happens in the body. It is a spontaneous protective mechanism used by the body to stop or thwart further (or future) potential damage. (Menakem 2017: 7)

SYL is premised on the belief that sport can be a powerful form of bodywork—a body-based approach to heal trauma. And we harness the potential of boxing, in particular, because it is easily adaptable (i.e., easily modified for a range of non/expertise, fitness levels, and mobilities), visceral (i.e., able to emphasize raw bodily sensation), and individual or inwardly focused (i.e., provides opportunities to focus on one's own body, and to develop competence at one's own pace).

SYL is participant-centred, which means it is designed to meet each participant at their level of need in order to reduce barriers to their participation. This includes free programming, transit tokens for those who need it, healthy food is available at each session, as well as access to other social supports. SYL works to foster a renewed sense of safety, respect, and empowerment.

In 2016-2019, Dr. Cathy van Ingen (Brock University) received funding from the *Public Health Agency of Canada* to measure the impact of SYL on (cis/trans) women who had experienced violence. Throughout participation in a weekly boxing program—led by trauma and violence-informed coaches— data was collected to evaluate the impact of SYL on their mental and physical health. Quantitative data documented an improved sense of agency, perceived

physical ability, self-esteem, resilience, and overall quality of life. Qualitative data detailed the manner in which participation allowed women to transform past trauma—and, importantly, experience a renewed sense of mastery. The success of SYL inspired Dr. Cathy van Ingen to design a similar program for youth.

What is Shape Your Life Youth (SYL-Y)?

Shape Your Life Youth (SYL-Y) is a free, non-contact, trauma and violence-informed boxing program for youth aged 13-18 years old who have experienced violence.

SYL Youth has been generously supported through funding from the *Public Health Agency of Canada* (2019-2021). This funding has allowed Brock University to partner with youth agencies in Edmonton, Alberta and in the Niagara-region in Ontario to work with 200 youth participants and 20 youth boxing coaches.

- In particular, we are interested in training coaches to adopt a trauma and violence-informed approach that will encourage young people to be more physically active, develop a new skillset, to feel strong and connected to their body, and ultimately to heal.
- Shape Your Life is *not* a self-defense program nor is it a space to engage in talk therapy. SYL participants are never asked to disclose or discuss any experience with violence.

SYL Coaches are there to provide high-quality, trauma and violence-informed (TVI) programming. We teach non-contact boxing, good technique, and provide a space for each participant to have a positive experience with/in their body. To facilitate this experience, coaches need to understand the impact of trauma in order to provide the most effective care and instruction—this manual is intended to assist coaches in their TVI process.

Two trauma experts have greatly affected our thinking on trauma and violence-informed approaches. First, the groundbreaking work of Judith Herman ([1997] 2015, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*) brought new understandings to trauma; shifting it from an individual experience and placing it in a broader political frame, arguing that trauma must be understood in its social context. Second, the work of Bessel van der Kolk (2014, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*) further outlined “the extreme disconnection from the body that so many people with histories of trauma and neglect experience” (91) and thus reoriented our attention to the everyday lived-embodied consequence of trauma. These two texts both stress how important it is for recovery from trauma to be integrated with bodywork.

What is trauma?

As Judith Herman ([1997] 2015: 33) explains, **trauma is an experience of powerlessness**. At the moment of trauma, an individual is rendered helpless by something that they cannot control. Trauma may result from witnessing or experiencing abuse, neglect, rape, abandonment, or from a negative event like a natural disaster or a car accident. Ultimately,

trauma will overwhelm an ordinary sense of control, connection, meaning, and the capacity to cope. Traumatic events experienced early in life can be devastating –and the impact multiplied/worsened with each event. “These events can undermine or damage people’s sense of safety, self and self-efficacy, as well as the ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. People who experience trauma often feel terror, shame, helplessness, and powerlessness” (Poole & Greaves 2012: xi). When a young person has endured a certain level of trauma, their brain is essentially rewired—specifically their stress response is made over- or under-active (Anda 2006; Bell 1991; Colliard 2005; D’Andrea 2013).

Trauma can be a defining experience that shapes and distorts the core of a person’s identity (Dorhn 1994; Dube et al. 2003). There are many forms of trauma (simple, complex, developmental, intergenerational) and many variations in how trauma is experienced (Nadew 2012; Parson 1985). While it is beyond the scope of this manual to detail the mechanisms underlying all trauma responses, we briefly outline several types of trauma in the table below.

Table 1. *Types of trauma*

Type	Description	Examples
Single incident trauma	Trauma related to an unexpected and overwhelming event	Car accident, natural disasters, sudden loss, community violence (e.g., school shooting), single episode of abuse or assault, witnessing violence
Complex or repetitive trauma	Trauma related to ongoing traumatic experiences	War, immigrant/refugee experiences (e.g., forced displacement), ongoing sexual or physical abuse, intimate partner violence
Developmental/ childhood trauma	Trauma related to early ongoing or repetitive trauma, often within a child’s caregiving system and interfering with healthy attachment and development	Neglect, abandonment, physical abuse or assault, sexual abuse or assault, emotional abuse, sudden loss, witnessing violence or death, coercion or betrayal
Intergenerational trauma	Psychological or emotional effects that can be experienced from people who live with trauma survivors	Children living with a parent or caregiver who experienced abuse, children of survivors of residential schools
Historical/racialized trauma	Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma, inflicted by a subjugating, dominant population; intergenerational trauma is an aspect of historical trauma	Genocide, colonialism, slavery, war
Adapted from BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council (2013)		

How does trauma and violence impact health and well-being?

The impact of trauma is unpredictable. Exposure to trauma in childhood is associated with a wide range of psychosocial, developmental, and medical impairments (Dvir et al. 2014). The negative impacts will vary from person to person; dependent upon their physical, mental, emotional and social makeup and supports. Research has shown that traumatic childhood experiences are not only extremely common but also have a profound impact on many different areas of functioning (van der Kolk, 2005: 402).

Some people may develop a perceived sense of an ongoing threat, even when there is none (Holinger et al. 1994; Tolleson 1996; Van Ameringen et al. 2008). Physiologically, this can result in hyperarousal and hypervigilance (e.g., overreaction, anxiety, hypervigilance, sleeplessness) or disengagement (e.g., numbness, disconnection, dissociation, depression, flat affect, chronic fatigue) (Gutierrez & Puymbroeck 2006; Shaikh et al. 2018). Research has shown us that this is a result of the prolonged activation of the hypothalamus—the region of the brain that is responsible for stimulating a fight-or-flight response through (i) activation of sympathetic nervous system or (ii) activation of adrenal-cortical system (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention 2010; Felitti et al. 1998; Irish et al. 2010).

Young people who have experienced complex, developmental trauma live with chronic stress that can profoundly impact how they experience their own bodies, and their relationships with others. They live with physiological and emotional responses characteristic of PTSD which, as van der Kolk (2005: 11) outlines, includes developing a:

view of the world that incorporates their betrayal and hurt. They anticipate and expect the trauma to recur and respond with hyperactivity, aggression, defeat or freeze responses to minor stresses.

Their cognition is affected by reminders: they tend to become *confused, dissociated and disoriented* when faced with stressful stimuli. They easily *misinterpret events* in the direction of a return of trauma and helplessness which causes them to be constantly *on guard, frightened and over-reactive*. Finally, expectations of a return of the trauma permeate their relationships. This is expressed as *negative self-attributions, loss of trust in caretakers* and loss of the belief that somebody will look after them and make them feel safe. They tend to lose the expectation that they will be protected and act accordingly. As a result, *they organize their relationships around the expectation or prevention of abandonment or victimization*. This is expressed as excessive clinging, compliance, oppositional defiance and distrustful behavior, and they may be preoccupied with retribution and revenge.

People with childhood histories of trauma—namely abuse and neglect—account for nearly the entire criminal justice population (Epstein & González 2017). Whereas young people who have been physically and/or sexually assaulted often suffer from a range of psychiatric diagnoses in adolescence and adulthood: e.g., substance abuse, borderline and antisocial personality, as well as eating, dissociative, affective, somatoform, cardiovascular, metabolic, immunological, and sexual disorders (Goedert 2016). All of these problems are expressed in dysfunction in multiple areas of functioning: educational, familial, peer relationships, problems with the legal system, and problems in maintaining jobs.

Table 2. *Potential consequences of trauma*

Physical	Psychological/Emotional	Behavioural	Interpersonal
Physical injuries (e.g., cuts, bruises, sprains, broken or fractured bones)	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Eating disorders	Frequent relationship conflict
Traumatic brain injury (concussion, etc.)	Anger management	Substance abuse	Experiences of re-victimization
Cardiovascular disease	Anxiety	High medication use	Perpetuation of violence
Hypertension	Depressive symptoms	Self-harm	Challenges in developing and maintaining relationships and social support systems;
Arthritis	Major depressive disorder	High-risk behaviour	Complications related to job stability and career progress.
Irritable bowel syndrome	Suicidality		
Chronic pain	Obsessive-compulsive disorder		
Reproductive and gynecological health problems	Poor self-related mental wellness		
Somatoform symptoms	Poor emotional regulation		
Poor self-reported physical health and quality of life			
Sleep problems			
Digestive problems			
Disability			
Death			
Adapted from Forneris 2018; Lum & Subramaniam 2016; Wong & Mellor 2014; WHO 2013			

The impact of trauma is cumulative and deeply tied to already existing inequalities, including the continuing effects of colonialism, racism, and poverty. Racism is an undeniable contribution to the prevalence of violence and intergenerational/historical trauma. In Canada, all Indigenous communities have suffered the loss of land, language, social-cultural life, and income. Racial and social exclusion limit opportunities for adequate employment and income equality. Poverty is a form of trauma and is associated with increased substance use, which can lead to a stressful family environment and diminished social support—not to

mention associated stigma—and ultimately impact upon the physical and mental health of all people involved (Reading & Wien 2009).

In this section, we reviewed some of the consequences of trauma and how it impacts everyday life—at home, school, extracurricular activities, social, legal, and employment realms. Within sport and physical activity, trauma can make it difficult for participants to focus, abide by rules and regulations, build positive relationships, manage aggression, demonstrate self-awareness, or deal with the pressures of competition (see also, Bergholz et al., 2016). In the next section, we start to describe some of the possibilities for a trauma and violence-informed, non-contact boxing program.

The research used to inform this manual—summarized above—has documented the ways in which traumatized people often have a complicated relationship with their bodies. It has also illustrated the way in which bodies of people who have experienced trauma are often ignored, misused, medicated, and/or abused. This is because, as Bessel van der Kolk (2002; 2005; 2015) explains, the body keeps the score. Their body is quick to transition to the “fight, flight or freeze” mode when their stress response is activated. In other words, the trauma body is a site of panic and pain.

Despite the harmful effects of trauma on/in the body—if it is adequately addressed—healing and positive change are possible. The popularity and effectiveness of sport (and/or dance, recreation, physical activity, etc.) has made it an important catalyst for change. It has enormous potential to be practiced—and enjoyed—by a large percentage of the population; most of whom will unfortunately experience some form of trauma or violence over the course of their lifespan.

As outlined earlier in this manual, trauma involves the loss of control over oneself. One effective way to regain a sense of control is through movement/somatic therapies—such as sport. This regained sense of control is also referred to as a sense of mastery or the feeling of being in charge of oneself.

To maximize the positive potential of trauma and violence-informed sport, the program must:

- Place an emphasis on creating a physically and emotionally safe environment;
- Create opportunities for the development of meaningful relationships with others;
- Opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connectedness;
- Focus on strength and skill development while having a supportive structure (e.g., rules of play, planned predictable activities/schedule, reasonable ratio between coaches and athletes);
- Integrate local cultural practices (e.g. local practices for healing from trauma); and
- Be designed for long-term engagement, rather than short, one-off programs.

Later in the manual we will further detail each principle, but want to emphasize now that—ultimately, coaches serve as a recognized and celebrated element of the healing process (Harris 2018). That said, it is incredibly important for coaches to be aware of, educated on, and readily able to adapt trauma and violence-informed approaches in their instruction. In the next section, we offer a general overview of the characteristics of a trauma and violence-informed coach.

Trauma and violence-informed (TVI) coaches

SYL coaches understand that trauma and violence-informed, non-contact boxing holds incredible potential to make a difference in the lives of youth. Coaches do not need to know about participants specific trauma experiences—the key is to offer a boxing program that is sensitive to everyone, regardless of their specific trauma. Coaches do need to understand that the brain is impacted by trauma, and have a range of different instructional techniques to work with participants who may, at times, present challenging behaviours. Below we summarize some of characteristics vital to a successful TVI coach:

Table 3. *DNA of a trauma and violence-informed coach*

Thinks	Believes	Does
<ul style="list-style-type: none">—Considers each participant as an individual with unique strengths and a different tolerance for stress;—Understands the science of the brain and how it can impact behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">—In the power of sports to heal—that the presence of caring coaches, supportive environment and physical activity can be protective;—All participants are doing the best they can, given their current context;—Progress is not linear and requires time, patience and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">—Creates a safe space where youth feel protected enough to take risks;—Helps participants recognize and own their progress/strengths as they build skills;—Provides opportunities for kids to have choice over their experience.
Sport & Trauma Playbook		

SYL coaches should focus on supporting youth so they can benefit from the sport experience. Coaches should also know their limitations and not act as a mental health therapist or social worker. SYL coaches can be assured that a social worker will be made available if a participant requires additional support or care. In the next section, we will further detail the skillset of a trauma and violence-informed coach.

Key principles and practices of trauma and violence-informed (TVI) coaches

The use of TVI approaches and strategies will help each participant improve their ability to regulate emotion and behaviour, enhance their mental and physical health, and improve their resilience in (and outside) of the gym. Based on the available research and with over a decade of working with SYL, we have developed a core set of principles that work to create a trauma and violence-informed boxing program.

1. Commit to creating a safe space
2. Cultivate effective communication techniques and meaningful relationships
3. Maximize opportunities for choice and collaboration
4. Emphasize free play, strength development, and skill acquisition
5. Mindfully integrate local practices, cultures, and youth agencies
6. Seek opportunities that lead to long-term, sustainable engagement

Key principles of trauma and violence-informed (TVI) coaches



Adapted from BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council (2013)

1. Commit to creating a safe space

Within this manual, safety is defined as the absence of perceived or actual harm. People affected by trauma seldom feel safe; particularly in a new or unfamiliar environment. Indeed, their home, neighborhood, and/or school may be a source of stress and danger. The space of the program will most likely be new and unfamiliar and so too will the activities and people. Creating a safe space in consultation with each participant is imperative.

Physical Safety

TVI coaches need to carefully attend to the space and location in which their program is housed. We suggest coaches:

- Be mindful that the program is offered in a location that is safe for each participant to travel to/from—and possible strategies that a participant could resource if unsure or concerned about travel
- Prior to the first session, use a (three-dimensional) camera to capture the space and share with each participant
- Before each session, make sure the physical environment is clean and organized; regulate inadequate lighting, noise, air quality, deficient heating, etc.
- Regularly conduct a safety audit of the space and equipment—and be sure to keep a record of each audit
- Make sure no outsider has access to the space during each session—if necessary, ask or hire someone to watch for potential intrusion
- Wear SYL shirt so that coaches are easily distinguished and recognizable

Psychological & Emotional Safety

Beyond the physical space of the program, coaches need to be mindful of any potential psychological or emotional threat that might arise. To do so, we suggest coaches:

- Establish a consistent routine—something that is predictable and well-communicated (e.g., including consistency in the coaching staff)
- Create a code for participation and revisit the code as often as required
- Greet each participant upon arrival and be attentive to their emotional state
- Make sure healthy snacks and water is provided and allow each participant to eat/drink as desired
- Limit background noise whenever instruction is offered and familiarize each participant with any unconventional sound (i.e., the timer can be startling if you are not familiar with it, etc.)

Creating a safe space is not about getting it right all the time. It is about building a repertoire of strategies to consistently handle a situation of compromised safety with honest and compassionate communication: the exact focus of our next principle.

For more information, see also:

- Safe Spaces: <https://yourexperiencesmatter.com/learning/safe-spaces/>

2. Cultivate effective communication techniques and meaningful relationships

TVI coaches will need to shift their perception and language. Most of the time people that have experienced trauma and violence can be misunderstood and labelled in a stigmatizing and deficit-based fashion (e.g., something is missing or wrong with the individual). If coaches are mindful of the impact of trauma on behaviour, it will allow them to better respond to a participant or situation. Specifically, we suggest TVI coaches:

1. Coach Out Loud: i.e., clearly and calmly articulate thought and action so that the participant is able to follow their process—instead of dictating action—and ask for feedback
2. Use Invitational and Non-judgmental Language: e.g., invite a participant to demonstrate a drill or newly acquired skill; reiterate the option for choice; use culturally appropriate and sensitive language, etc.
3. Listen: i.e., pay attention to the speaker, repeat the message, acknowledge through a verbal or nonverbal cue (e.g., nod, smile, etc.) and ask for clarification

We recognize that effective communication is the foundation of any relationship and we want to further emphasize—as noted earlier—that positive relationships are crucial to healing. Traumatized youth may experience significant ambivalence, if not outright distrust, of new coaches. Alternatively, a young person might attach very quickly, but this attachment may remain insecure and/or based primarily on deprivation or neediness. In either instance, TVI coaches should maintain safe and professional boundaries that are:

1. Non-intrusive: i.e., establish and maintain appropriate boundaries that are consistent across the participant group
2. Reliable: i.e., on-time, emotionally stable, psychologically secure, and dependable
3. Transparent: i.e., honest and open, particularly with any limit to confidentiality, discussed later

For more information, see also:

- Section entitled “Obligations and Mandatory Reporting” (p. 21-23)
- Trauma-Aware Tattooing and Informed Consent:
<http://www.disciplinepress.com/#!/trauma-aware-tattooing>
- Boparai, S. K. P., Au, V., Koita, K., Oh, D. L., Briner, S., Harris, N. B., & Bucci, M. (2018). Ameliorating the biological impacts of childhood adversity: a review of intervention programs. *Child abuse & neglect*, 81, 82-105. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.04.014>

3. Maximize opportunities for choice and collaboration

Experiences of trauma often leave individuals feeling powerless, with little choice or control over what has happened to them. It is imperative in trauma-informed practice that every effort is made to empower individuals. (BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council, 2013: 7)

Traditionally, most boxing gyms and sport programs have a “my way or the highway” mentality. A TVI approach makes it acceptable and encourages participants to choose what feels right for their body for that day. Giving options and modifications enhances the likelihood and quality of participation. Some traditional or more competitive coaching techniques are not appropriate—e.g., using physical activities as a form of punishment. Participants should have more flexibility and freedom to decide their own terms of involvement. In so doing, coaches are more likely to encourage participants to safely reconnect with their bodies and (re)develop the ability to choose what type of movement feels right for them.

Offer opportunities for participants to opt out/back into activities and training:

- One of the most important skills we encourage participants to develop is the ability to choose. In order to do this effectively, “opt out” and “opt in” opportunities must be built into the program so that participants know that they have the power to take control of their own experience
- “Choice” or “invitational language” is particularly helpful in setting the stage. As referenced in the section above, this type of language is phrased so that the participant has a choice in their level of participation. It is focused on effort, not outcome, so it does not continuously push for more. E.g., “If this is uncomfortable, you can take a break and then try again.”

For many people affected by trauma, the level of disconnection between the body and brain is extensive enough that they are quite literally disconnected and uncomfortable in their own body. Encouraging them to choose a level of movement based on how they feel in a specific situation helps reactivate this body-mind connection (i.e. listen and respond to their own needs and develop their own strengths). By doing this, they move towards the powerful step of being able to say: “No, I will not be in pain. My opinion about what is happening to me matters, and I can take control.”

For more information, see also:

- Physical Activity for Marginalized Women in British Columbia:
http://bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2011_DiscussionPaper-PhysicalActivityforMarginalizedWomen.pdf
- SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach:
<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

4. Emphasize free play, strength development, and skill acquisition

Play—The focus of SYL is not to produce boxers—rather the focus is to use boxing to connect with and support survivors of violence as they regain control over their bodies. It is important to facilitate fun, freely chosen, and pleasurable activities that are not overwhelming (Alexander et al. 2018). SYL is about creating an environment for youth to experience their body as strong and powerful.

Focus on Playful Progress not Performance

Celebrate pleasure and enjoyment—a participant may not be interested in boxing at a competitive level but that does not mean their involvement in a TVI boxing program would not lend to their development and healing. Coaches should meet the individual at their current level of interest and work to make the boxing experience, and time together, enjoyable.

Strength Development—Be attentive to the uniqueness of each individual. Rather than committed to a linear model of progress, maximize the already-existent capabilities of each individual. This will emphasize the self-esteem of the participant and create opportunities for the participant to recognize and cultivate their own strength and enjoyment. It is the obligation of the coach to celebrate this type of progression and work to ensure that the participant group does not start to compare the skill level of one another.

Invite Their Input on How to Make the Experience Better

View each participant as your partner in the program and prioritize their feedback. Coaches should encourage input on a regular basis in order to allow the participant to take control of their experience—a central component to the program and integral part of the healing process.

Skill Acquisition—Once an area of strength is identified for a particular participant, work to create an individualized plan for development. Even if there is a general skill progression for the program, on an individual level, SYL coaches should be attentive to the type of skillset that each individual would like to acquire and work with their current abilities to develop an appropriate plan of action. Furthermore, it is important to involve each participant in the process in order to build a sense of ownership and pride in their own development. This can be done through an interest in, and attention to, individual context and circumstance.

The next principle will explore the need for coaches to integrate local practice, cultures, and youth agencies into program design so that it is context-specific and relevant, rather than generic.

5. Mindfully integrate local practices, cultures, and youth agencies

TVI coaches should work with local youth agencies to ensure that their program is relevant to the culture in which it will take place. We emphasize this action, due to the fact that:

- I. Different cultures have various ways of dealing with trauma and grief; and
- II. Adding local elements to your program can help increase a sense of familiarity and normalcy.

The mindful integration of local practices, cultures, and youth agencies can also contribute to a vital sense of normalcy and familiarity. Participation in cultural activities can “rebuild a sense of solidarity and community, while also enabling pro-social behaviors such as cooperation, communication, and skills in settling conflict nonviolently” (Duncan & Arntson 2004: 24). As we work to work to better understand (intergenerational and historical) trauma, trauma and violence-informed coaches and support staff can enhance their capacity to be compassionate and collaborative, view behaviour within a larger context, challenge their own belief systems and attitudes that can have adverse effects in terms of establishing positive and healthy relationships, and create safer nurturing environments.

For more information, see also:

- Comas-Díaz, L. (2016). Racial trauma recovery: A race-informed therapeutic approach to racial wounds. In A. N. Alvarez, C. T. H. Liang, & H. A. Neville (Eds.), *Cultural, racial, and ethnic psychology book series. The cost of racism for people of color: Contextualizing experiences of discrimination* (pp. 249-272). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14852-012>

6. Seek opportunities that lead to long-term, sustainable engagement

Healing from trauma is a long process. Programs that seek to aid in this process must be aware of the need for long-term, continuous investment, but also the limits of the healing that they can hope to facilitate. Even with good design and strong activities, short-term programs can actually have a negative effect; re-activating the trauma when the intervention ends. It is unlikely for a program, staff member, or participant to stay indefinitely, raising the question: How much is enough? For trauma healing, the only answer that can be given with some level of certainty is: It is enough when the young person is observed to be doing better, not just in the program, but in their day-to-day life; and that their improved state is not temporary but remains intact for a long period of time. Given that the SYL Youth Boxing Program is 6-8 weeks in duration, participants that are eager to continue in the program should be accommodated as long as space allows. The goal of the SYL Youth Boxing program is to train TVI coaches in the community that can continue to work with the youth agency and offer TVI programming. In the next and final section of the manual, we offer more information related to the development of future-similar programming.

For more information, see also:

- MacIntosh, E., Arellano, A., & Forneris, T. (2016). Exploring the community and external-agency partnership in sport-for-development programming. *European sport management quarterly*, 16 (1), 38-57. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2015.1092564>

Obligations and Mandatory Reporting

This manual was developed to assist coaches in their effort to work with, and support, youth who have experienced violence and trauma. Though the focus has been on TVI strategies and approaches, it is also important to overview (useful and legally-enforceable) policies that guide professional practice—whether trauma-informed or not. If coaches are aware of these policies, we can better leverage the positive potential of sport—rather than the negative, potentially harmful role sport can play in the healing process.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy is the legal right of an individual to protect and control access to their own personal information. Confidentiality is the legal obligation not to disclose information obtained in confidence. Privacy and confidentiality are applicable to coaches—especially those that work in a trauma and violence-informed environment. The best way to avoid a potential breach is to be open about policies. If an individual is subpoenaed by court, suspicious of child abuse (i.e., “duty to report”), or aware that there is an intent to harm – the individual is required by law to disclose information that might otherwise be private and confidential. Otherwise, a coach is legally responsible to protect information shared—especially if it can be used to identify or potentially harm a participant.

For more information,

- Canadian Mental Health Association, “Understanding Common Legal Issues in Child and Youth Mental Health” via <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/understanding-common-legal-issues-in-child-and-youth-mental-health/>
- Coaches Association of Ontario: <http://www.coachesontario.ca/privacy/>
- Justice for Children and Youth: <http://jfcy.org/en/you-have-rights/>

Legal Obligation to Report

The *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (2017), recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. This includes situations in which a child is abused or neglected in their own home. As outlined in the Act, any member of public, including those who work with children, must promptly report any suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection to local authorities. An individual is also obligated to report any potential risk to harm.

For more information,

- “Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: It’s Your Duty” via <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/abuseandneglect.aspx> and/or
- “Child, Youth and Family Services Act” (2017) available via https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14?_ga=2.143744821.1675913511.1568916347-1401747717.1568916347
- “Disclosing Information to Prevent Harm” via <https://www.crpo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Guidline-on-Disclosing-Information-to-Prevent-Harm-June-282018.pdf>

Consent

Consent is defined as the voluntary agreement to participate. In the context of SYL Youth programming and any related research or program evaluation, we would like to acknowledge that it is important that consent follow the FRIES protocol:

Freely Given	Choice made voluntarily; i.e., without pressure, manipulation, etc.
Reversible	Able to be changed, and therefore, active and ongoing
Informed	Full information and context are known in advance
Enthusiastic	Pursuit that is desired by the participant
Specific	Based on understanding of dynamic environment, context, etc.

For more information,

- “Responsible Coaching Movement” via Coaching Association of Canada
<https://www.coach.ca/for-coaches-who-work-with-children-in-sport-p160718>

Social Media

Information shared through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) does become part of the public domain and can be accessed by those with Internet access. It is the responsibility of coaches to ensure that participant information is kept private and confidential. Coaches are also encouraged to:

1. Be mindful that the information shared online does not pertain to, or disclose, personal identities.
2. Establish firm personal boundaries—post SYL program related information not personal information on social media platforms accessed by SYL participants. Ask the partnering youth agency how they recommend responding to a friend request or private message and ensure this is enforced across each participant group.
3. Be familiar with the operational policies of the social media platform used—especially with respect to privacy. If there are discrepancies between your personal and professional life that are evident online, reconsider the content.

For more information,

- “Social Media 101 for Coaches” via <https://www.viasport.ca/social-media-toolkit/Social-media-101-for-coaches>
- “Social Smarts: Privacy, the Internet and You” available online via <https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/about-the-opc/what-we-do/awareness-campaigns-and-events/privacy-education-for-kids/social-smarts-privacy-the-internet-and-you/>

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Appendices

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Appendix 1. Vicarious trauma

It is incredibly common for people continuously exposed to traumatic stories to develop vicarious or secondary trauma. This is also known as compassion fatigue. Similar to primary trauma—or trauma we have personally encountered—vicarious trauma can manifest physically (e.g., exhaustion, insomnia, increased susceptibility to illness), behaviorally (e.g., compromised care, anger and irritability, avoidance, indecisiveness, forgetfulness), and emotionally (e.g., cynicism, resentment, depression, intrusive imagery, heightened anxiety). It is important for coaches that work with, and desire to adapt, trauma and violence-informed approaches to be mindful that their (repeated) exposure to difficult stories, memories, etc. can have personal consequences—and to monitor this effect. Coaches can monitor the effect of difficult stories, read and learn about secondary trauma (i.e., compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, burnout), develop a commitment to self-care, and establish boundaries and strategies to manage this occupational hazard (e.g., regularly debrief with a paid professional or support staff). It is also useful to keep in mind that coaches are not therapists, social workers, psychologists, etc. and to work in the realm of their expertise. Importantly, incorporated into this program is this expertise that is available for youth but also SYL coaches to debrief and reflect with a certified professional, as needed.

For more information, see also:

- *Resilience Balance and Meaning Workbook* by Dr. Patricia Fisher—designed as an interactive tool to provide you with practical help in addressing workplace stress, burnout, and trauma.
- *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook* by Françoise Mathieu—intended to help manage the physical and emotional exhaustion known to shadow the experience of coaches—especially those that train and support people who have experienced violence.
- The Lifeline Foundation (Canada) via <https://thelifelinecanada.ca/help/crisis-centres/canadian-crisis-centres/>

Appendix 2. Financial assistance

Shape Your Life (SYL) was generously funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada (2016-2021). Financial assistance covered the cost of needed (i) equipment, (ii) facilities, (iii) food, and (iv) transportation. Should a youth agency and/or coach be interested to replicate this program, please feel free to use this manual and other resources available on the Shape Your Life webpage (www.shapeyourlifeboxing.com). Agencies can also contact Dr. Cathy van Ingen at Brock University (cathy.vaningen@brocku.ca) to inquire about additional opportunities to learn about, develop, and/or fund trauma and violence-informed approaches to sport and physical activity. Furthermore, there are several other agencies that could be approached for aid, such as:

Government of Canada—Funding Opportunities

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities.html>

Especially relevant,

- Initiation Initiative: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/call-concepts-innovation-initiative.html>
- Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>

Province of Ontario—Grants Ontario

<http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/index.htm>

Especially relevant,

- Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund: <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/PRDR006918>
- Ontario Amateur Sport Fund: <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/OSAPQA005145>

Alberta Sport—Coaches and Official Initiative Program

<https://albertasport.ca/funding/coaches-officials/>

Alberta Recreation and Parks Association

<https://arpaonline.ca/resources/grant-programs/>

Appendix 3. Other trauma-informed sport initiatives

Fight for Peace

<http://fightforpeace.net/luiz-cerdeira-educational-coordinator-at-fight-for-peace-in-rio-de-janeiro-talks-about-the-project-pathways/>

- Boxing and martial arts program designed to support young people in communities affected by crime and violence in Rio de Janeiro, London, Jamaica, and South Africa

Indigenous Healing and Seeking Safety

<http://traumahealingguru.com/indigenous-healing-seeking-safety/>

- Aboriginal traditional healing practices blended with mainstream model to reduce intergenerational trauma; designed specifically for Indigenous peoples

Kicking Crime into Touch

<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/mcys/current-research--activities/kicking-crime-into-touch/>

- Program created in collaboration with Rugby England, funded through Comic Relief and Sport Relief to support young men in the criminal justice system

Getting Out for Good

<https://twitter.com/GGo4G>

<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/mcys/current-research--activities/getting-out-for-good/>

- Multi-sport/arts program developed for young women and girls—activities include boxing, football, drama and filmmaking with each activity leading to nationally recognized AQA accreditation

Appendix 4. Further reading & education

Childhood Disrupted: How your Biography Becomes your Biology. By Nakazawa, D.J. (2015).

Vital Connections: Harnessing the Power of Relationship to Impact the Lives of Young People.
By Bergholtz, L. (2018).

Re-designing Youth Sport: Change the Game. By McCarthy, J., Bergholz, L., & Bartlett, M. (2016).

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook—What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing. By Perry, B. D., & Szalavitz, M. (2017).

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and the Body in the Healing of Trauma. By van der Kolk, B. (2014).

The Body Bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation and Disease. By Scaer, R. (2014).

The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity. By Harris, N. B. (2018).

Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.
By Herman, J. L. (2015).

When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress/Disease Connection. By Maté, G. (2003).

Appendix 5. Additional online resources

1. Selected Videos

Children's Rights in a Foster Home (NCSA, 2012)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQClBtydgaM>

Home Fire (NCA 2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLMG2laX_R_oAiSEoVWIIIDQEzq7nZfF3V&time_continue=24&v=lmstyXc6FnI

Raising the Spirit: Cultural Connections Plans for Aboriginal Children (NCSA, 2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUCBMjjG0b8>

2. Selected Websites

Resmaa Menakem, Healer, Author, Trauma Specialist <https://www.resmaa.com/courses>

Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute <https://traumahealing.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html>

Inviting Resilience <http://invitingresilience.ca/trauma-informed-practice-2/>

3. Selected Podcasts

The Trauma Therapist / <https://www.thetraumatheapistproject.com/podcasts/>

The Grass Gets Greener / <https://thegrassgetsgreener.com>

Trauma to Triumph / <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/kim-bao/trauma-to-triumph>

Trauma Informed Education / <https://player.fm/series/trauma-informed-education>

Survivor Radio Café / <https://www.spreaker.com/show/survivor-radio-cafe>

4. Selected Manuals

Sport & Trauma Playbook—Up2Us Sports
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58bddd12e58c6278e8a670e2/t/5c5c73a971c10bf022c5313f/1549562804760/Sport+%26+Trauma+Playbook.pdf>

Why Trauma-Informed Sport is Vital (White Paper)—WeCoach
<https://positivecoach.org/media/832952/whyplustraua-infomedplussportplisplusvital.pdf>

Playing to Heal: Designing a Trauma-Sensitive Sport Program—Edgework
https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/playingtoheal_edgework_jan2013_1.pdf