



Trauma-informed Conversations

PLANNING

When preparing for an interaction where trauma may be present (for yourself or others) it can be helpful to prepare beforehand to ensure that you are maximising trauma-informed principles in your communication.

Trustworthiness:

- What is the main message you want to communicate?
- What is the main goal you want to achieve?
- How can you clearly communicate your role and the limits of what you can offer?
- How can you communicate hope about this situation?

Choice and collaboration:

- What choices can you offer and what are boundaries that need to stay firm?
- What can you say or do to help this person feel that they are working with you rather than that you are holding power over them?
- What do you know about this person's culture, identity, and background that can inform your approach so that you can better meet their needs?
- What questions do you need to ask before you offer a service?

Empowerment:

- What are some genuine strengths for this person that you can identify?
- How can you show you are trying to listen and understand this person?
- How can you communicate hope?
- How can you build this person's skills and resources?
- In what ways is this person just like you?

Safety:

- How can you use your choice of words, voice, and responses to help create psychological safety?



- What are your own triggers and how will you regulate yourself during this interaction?
- What are some of your fears about interacting with this person?
- Where is the best environment for this interaction?
- What needs to be in the environment so that everyone feels safe?
- Have you asked the person if there is anything that you could do to help them feel more comfortable?
- In what ways does this person feel trapped?

SELF-REFLECTION

It is important that we reflect on interactions that did not go well. Trauma challenges us because it encourages defensiveness and disconnection. These reflection questions can help you explore how trauma, culture, and assumptions might have influenced an interaction that was challenging.

Empowerment

- What is important to this person? How did that influence their response?
- How can you reframe this person's challenging or complex behaviours as a strength?
- What does this person want? Why do you believe that is what was intended? Have you asked them?
- Have you asked this person what they think might improve the situation?
- Do you really believe that there is no possibility that this situation (or person) will improve? What leads you to believe that?
- Can you imagine any circumstances under which this person might behave differently? What could lead to improvements?

Trustworthiness

- How do you feel about how you handled that interaction?
- What was it about this situation that made it difficult to handle?
- How were you feeling before the interaction?
- How did you feel afterwards?
- What might have helped build trust?
- How might this person perceive you after the challenging conversation? What could you do to rebuild trust?
- What about this person's internal working model might make trusting you difficult?

Choice and Collaboration

- How might you have supported the person to make choices and learn from their experience?
- How might your own fears play into your decision to take control/reduce their choice?
- Have you asked this person how the environment/service might better meet their needs and expectations?
- Have you asked this person whether they would like to include a support person to be with them?
- Have you asked this person what the barriers are to participation and how you could support them?
- How balanced was the power during the interaction?

Safety

- How might this person's behaviour or symptom have developed as a consequence of trauma?
- How does this behaviour make this person feel safer?
- Did you ask this person whether they felt safe and comfortable?
- What might you have done to acknowledge their discomfort?
- What boundaries and strategies might be used in a similar situation to minimise safety concerns?
- How were you feeling when you spoke to this person?
- What was it about the situation that was so challenging for you?
- Is this the kind of situation that usually 'pushes your buttons'?
- Is this something that is happening more often to you at the moment?
- What do you think would have happened if you had been able to use a grounding/calming strategy in this situation? Do you have some strategies to help you if a similar situation arises?
- How might you collaborate with colleagues to create a safer environment?

Acknowledging culture

- What in your background might have influenced how you interacted with this person?
- Do you think there are people who may see this situation differently?
- Can you imagine a reason why this person might see this situation differently than you do?
- What in this person's cultural background might be important to consider?
- In what ways are you and this person similar and different?

