



# Trauma-Informed Facilitation

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Strategies for enhancing safety and responding to disclosures



How are you  
feeling about  
running the  
pilot workshop?

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# Learning Outcomes

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By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by trauma-informed facilitation.
- Describe steps you can take to prepare for any disclosures of violence that participants may share during or following the pilot session.
- Identify strategies you can use to ensure confidentiality, create emotionally safe spaces, and avoid victim-blaming language.





# Understanding Trauma

“A traumatic event involves a single experience, or enduring repeated or multiple experiences, that completely overwhelm the individual’s ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved in that experience” ([Toolkit 2013](#)).

- Not determined by the event, but by an individual’s experience of the event.
- Often causes feelings of shame, due to sense of powerlessness that it creates.
- Services that are *not* trauma-informed can mirror dynamics of power and control experienced.

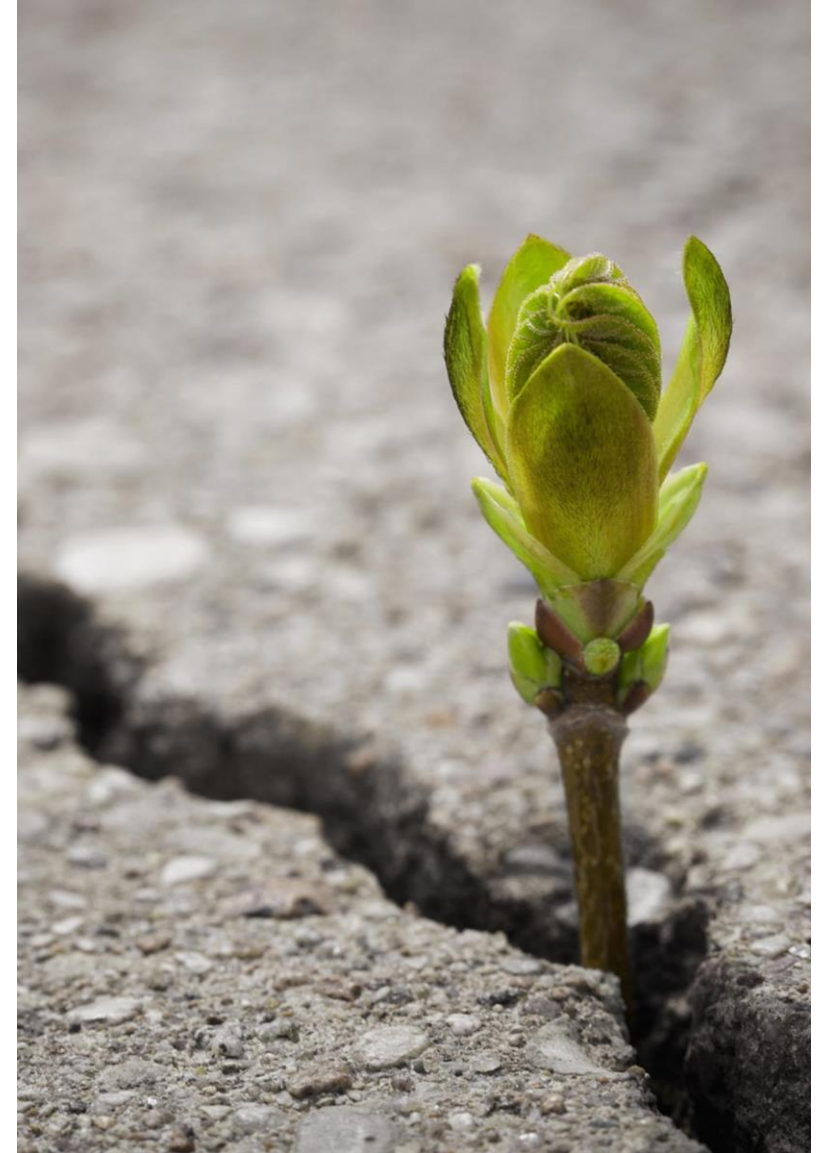




# Being Trauma-Informed

- Goal is to minimize harm, *not* to treat trauma.
- Work to enhance safety, control, and resilience as a universal practice for all programs and services.

“These approaches benefit everyone, whether or not they’ve experienced trauma in their lives or their personal history is known to service providers” ([PHAC 2018](#)).



# Trauma & Learning

- Trauma can have lasting effects on learning.
- “In order to learn, we need spaces that feel safe and welcoming. We need to be able to take risks and take in new information. We need to be able to both focus and relax” ([Bow Valley](#) 2017).





# Trauma-Informed Facilitation

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What steps can we take to prepare?

1. Self-awareness
2. Acknowledge the pervasiveness of trauma in society
3. Making the training universally accessible
4. Take steps to avoid re-traumatizing participants



# Responding to Disclosures

A disclosure may look like:

- Sharing a story of violence
- Asking if a specific event in their life would be considered GBV



# 1. Setting the Scene

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- Include a trigger warning
- Plan for what to do if triggered
  - Encouraging participants to step away for a moment
  - Encouraging participants to engage in their self-care techniques
  - Providing opportunities for ongoing support



## 2. Creating an Emotionally Safe Space

Avoid Reinforcing Myths and Stereotypes



What are some harmful myths and stereotypes about gender-based violence?

How can we avoid reinforcing them?



# Types of Questions to Avoid

Avoid 'Why' type questions can reinforce harmful myths and may cause further harm to a survivor.

“Why didn’t you just leave?”

“Why were you out at night by yourself?”

“Why didn’t you fight back?”

“Why was he angry at you?”



In what ways are these questions harmful?



# Use of Language

Be mindful of the language you use. Certain terms can unintentionally reinforce harmful myths and stereotypes.

- Consider the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level of participants
- Keep language simple and straightforward
- Match the language the client uses to refer to themselves and the perpetrator.
  - They are unlikely to use terms such as 'victim', 'survivor', 'abuser', 'attacker'
  - They are likely to use words such as 'my ex', 'my spouse'
  - When in doubt, use neutral, person-centered language such as 'partner', 'person who caused you harm', 'person who experienced violence', 'spouse', 'they', etc.



Let's say a client talks about the perpetrator this way: 'This friend I was kind of seeing'.  
How could you refer to the perpetrator when speaking with the client in this situation?



## If a Disclosure is Made...

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Reminder that a disclosure may look like:

- Sharing a story of violence
- Asking if a specific event in their life would be considered GBV

Validate the participant's experience and demonstrate empathy:

*"Thank you for sharing your experience. It sounds like that may have been an experience of GBV and I would like to extend an invitation to talk about this further in private. I will reach out to you to see if that is something you are comfortable with."*



## 3. Ensuring Confidentiality

Reach out to the participant to encourage a private discussion. Ideally there are two facilitators to allow follow up facilitation. You can:

- Offer to call them after the workshop
- Use a breakout room to speak with the individual privately

Discuss the limits of confidentiality as you begin to address the disclosure. Inform the participant that if there is a threat of harm to a child, you may have a duty to report.



# 4. Responding in a Trauma- and Violence- Informed Manner

1. Listen without judgement
2. Believe the survivor and validate them
3. Stay calm, avoid strong emotional reactions
4. Tell them it is not their fault
5. Provide choices
  - Resist the urge to 'rescue' them, avoid replicating controlling behaviors
  - Empower the client to make their own choices by providing options
6. Reduce the number of times a client has to tell their story



## 4. Responding in a Trauma- and Violence-Informed Manner

### 7. Be patient and respect the client's rhythm

- they may not want to call the police
- they may not want to leave the relationship
- recognize the complexity of relationship dynamics, power and control
- average number of times someone goes back to an abusive relationship: 5-7 times
- gaslighting (they may not see the situation clearly, blame themselves)
- stigma and shame



What might happen if we do not follow the client's rhythm?

How do you feel when someone has a ready-made solution to all your problems?

## 5. Planning for Safety



Who feels comfortable  
doing safety planning?

Give us a 'thumbs' up if so!





# Safety Planning

## Key components

- Exploring the client's current situation
- Safe place to go
- Safety tips in case of a violent incident in the home
- Preparing to leave safely
- Cyber safety
- Safety for children
- Safety in public/at work
- Knowing who to call



# Safety Planning in the Workshop Context

In the context of a disclosure during/after a workshop, you may not have time to go in depth into safety planning. You can:

1. Reassure them that there is help available
  2. Make a follow up appointment with them, or a referral
  3. Ask if their number is safe to call - if not, is there another way to communicate?
  4. Ask if they feel safe where they are staying, and if not, whether they would like to access a shelter.
  5. Provide a 24hr helpline number
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# Duty to Report

If a child is in danger, you may have to make a formal report to child welfare services.

1. Have informed the client of the limits of confidentiality from the start
2. When a situation arises, inform the client that you may have to report
3. Keep the client informed and remind them that you will support them through this experience
4. Double check with a supervisor and/or call child welfare services anonymously to confirm if a report is warranted
5. Take time to explain to the client why this is necessary and what to expect
6. Safety plan around leaving safely (child protection services may ask a client to leave within the hour)
7. Call child welfare with the client if they are willing
8. When making the report, clearly identify that this is a situation of abuse, and ask child welfare services to prioritize the client's safety when contacting the perpetrator
9. Check in with the client about their feeling and emotions regarding the report and subsequent steps
10. Offer ongoing support services
11. Keep in mind historical and current systemic racism linked to child welfare services and be prepared to advocate





# Connecting to Resources

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- Get to know your local resources
- Make warm referrals when possible
  - Have pamphlets ready
  - Offer to call with the client or connect directly with a service provider you have connections to
- Use helplines



# Resources

1. Safety Plan app: <https://www.myplanapp.org/>
2. Finding a Shelter: <https://sheltersafe.ca/>
3. Sexual Violence Resources: <https://endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help/>
4. Power and Control Wheel for Immigrant Women:  
<https://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/ImmigrantWomenPCwheel.pdf>



**Any Questions?**