

BEST PRACTICES FOR HOSTING TRAUMA INFORMED MEETINGS

An essential part of becoming more trauma informed, is bringing best practices to life in all spaces, including when we host meetings and presentations. Including some or all of these practices is recommended for fostering a space of safety, empowerment, and value.



Setting up the meeting:

Provide the agenda as well as any copies of meeting materials in advance so attendees know what to expect.

Have water and healthy snacks available: we cannot think clearly and provide our best input when we are dehydrated or hungry! If snacks cannot be provided by meeting organizer or the meeting is virtual, normalize having people prioritize their wellbeing by communicating beforehand and at the start of the meeting that folks are welcome to eat/drink during the meeting.

If in person, consider placing a selection of tactile objects on each table. Items can include: fidget toys, coloring book pages, color pencils or crayons, playdoh, kinetic sand, pipe cleaners.



Be transparent: when things cannot be controlled about the environment, let the group know what may come up. Example: if the building is below a parking lot, let folks know that sometimes the building might shake.

Cover any housekeeping details before or at the beginning of the meeting: identify roles and functions, explain where bathrooms, exits, and water fountains are located.

Consider setting up expectations by establishing group agreements, providing self-care reminders, and detailing the time of scheduled breaks (we suggest breaks occur at the minimum every 60 minutes).

Assume trauma is present in the space: Provide a content warning if the subject matter of the meeting/presentation is related to any kind of violence or trauma.

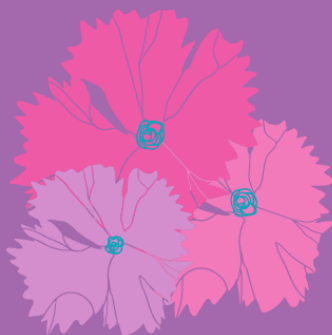
Promote a sense of safety by starting the meeting with a check-in question so folks can share their name and pronouns. If providing pronouns is new to the group, explain why you are establishing this practice. Starting with a basic icebreaker question is encouraged, if time allows. Checking in with folks and allowing them an opportunity to share how they are feeling at that moment can be a good check in and can alert you to the general mood of the group. Remind folks that they can “pass” on any question, without judgement.

Consider introducing a land acknowledgement.

For example: “it is important to acknowledge that we reside on what was historically the homeland of indigenous peoples who were dispossessed of their land. Let us acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), ‘Ahihirom (Elders) and ‘Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging”.

Provide opportunities for participants to have a voice: use interactive tools like polls and whiteboards, and include an anonymous post-event evaluation form.

Consider ending the meeting with a fun check out question or grounding activity to bring people back into the present, positive, and more regulated state.





VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Set up a secure link, password, and/or wait room.

Communicate before or at the start of the meeting that it will be recorded. Provide options if people prefer not to be recorded such as turning their camera off, utilizing the chat, or watching the recording at a later time.

Allow for choice regarding cameras being off or on.

Consider how to make the meeting as accessible as possible: provide captioning, a transcript, or translation for the meeting.

Establish options for how voices can participate: using the chat, breakout rooms, raising their hand, unmuting, popcorn style. Explain that comments in chat will be read aloud so that regardless of a person's comfort level, their voice will be heard.

Consider using shared tools like google docs or jamboards to create a platform of shared power.

Use polling, chat boxes, breakout rooms to encourage voice.

TRAUMA INFORMED FACILITATION



Share your pronouns and provide a land acknowledgement.

Model healthy facilitation or co-facilitation: share space, allow for participation, share power with your co-facilitator.

If you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay! Be honest and say you don't know but will look into it. Offer to follow up with the person after the meeting if they are interested.

Use language that is people-first, gender-neutral, and invitational. Avoid the use of harmful terms. If you use a term that someone takes offence to, listen and apologize! We are all learning. Explain any acronyms that you use.

When possible, offer breakout rooms for group or peer-to-peer connection.

When you provide breaks, encourage people to rest over multitasking.

Silence is okay! Allow pauses and spaces for thinking by normalizing silence and not rushing to fill in the gaps.