

# Basic's of Trauma & Trauma Informed Care

A focus on working with young survivors & self-care.



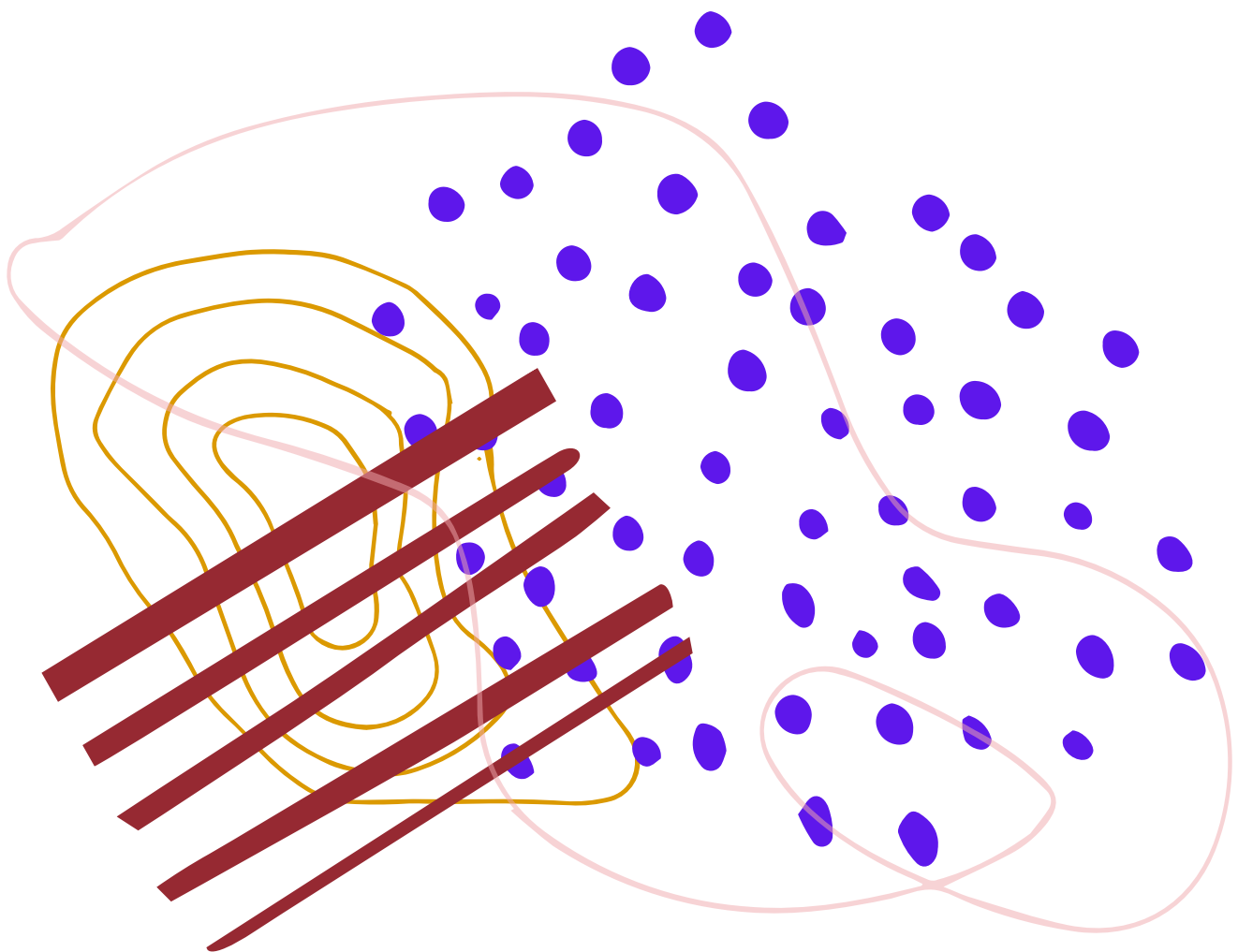
Created by Anderson, E., Banks, E. T., & Hayes, L.

Edited by Banks, E. T.



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# Introduction

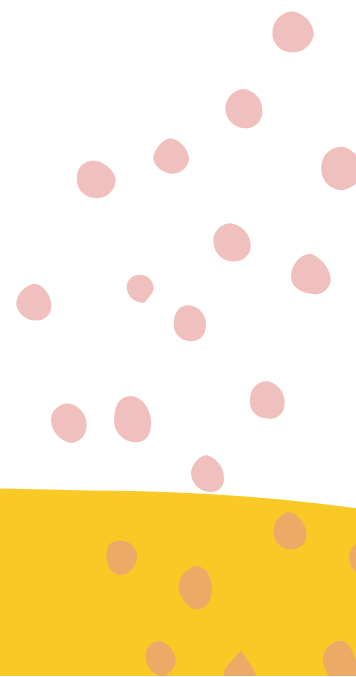
This booklet was created to help readers to maintain a healthy well-being enabling them to continue to do the best job they can. Within this document are the most important bits of evidence-based information that are needed for you to do the best you can. Understanding some aspects of what counsellors do can be useful for everyone.

Working closely with families and children that have been affected by trauma can be incredibly impactful, both positively and negatively. It is crucial that you begin this booklet with the understanding that it is completely normal and natural to feel deflated, overwhelmed, anxious, exhausted, frustrated, scared, alone, numb, or unsure from time to time.

In fact, we want you to know that these are indicators. They show that you truly care about the important work you do. Furthermore, they let you know when some self-care and rest may be needed. This booklet can help you to not only look out for the well-being of the children but for yourself and your teammates.

Sometimes it can be tricky to notice and face things by ourselves. The information provided inside can help you to look out for not only your well-being but that of others.

Finally, please consult your doctor if you feel any persistent signs of burnout or depression. Keeping a list of symptoms can help you to tailor self-care approaches or your doctor to tailor a treatment strategy. Never forget that you can always talk to your supervisor. If you're not quite sure how to approach it, try booking a meeting via email and writing down some notes beforehand.



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# What is Trauma?

Trauma is experienced during a distressing event that poses a life-threatening or significant threat to a person's physical or psychological wellbeing. The trauma can result in trouble coping or functioning normally. Every person's response to a traumatic event is different. Some individuals, with the support of friends and family, recover quicker than others.

Situations that can induce a psychological trauma include:

- War, terrorism, or exposure to violence.
- Natural disasters such as bush fires, flooding, or earthquakes.
- Interpersonal violence such as domestic abuse, rape, suicide, or accidents.
- Other stressful events such as a breakdown in a relationship (platonic or romantic), divorce, loss of a job, financial stress, homelessness, and poverty.

Following a traumatic event, most people will have a strong physical or emotional response. These responses can include the following:

Physical symptoms to be aware of include a heightened state of alert, always looking for signs of danger. These individuals can be easily startled, fatigued, have trouble sleeping, or have general aches and pains. Individuals who have experienced some form of violence may also be alert to physical contact or having someone too close in their personal space.

Cognitive (thinking) symptoms include distorted patterns of thought, intrusive thoughts (replaying the memories of the event over and over), nightmares, inability to concentrate, and may appear confused or disorientated. It is common for survivors of trauma to lose track of what they were saying, or to stop listening.

Behavioural symptoms include avoidance of people or places that remind them of the trauma, social withdrawal, isolation, and a loss of interest in activities they normally enjoy.



# What is Trauma?

Emotional symptoms can include trouble regulating emotions and self-soothing, being fearful, detached, irritable, angry, anxious, or depressed.

Most symptoms will resolve over time, and it is important to note that they are an important part of the healing process. A strong support network of family, friends, community, and workplace can be a huge help in diminishing symptom severity. How an individual reacts to trauma will be dependent on several factors:

- Perception of stressor
- Prior traumatic experiences
- Current mental health
- Access to family and social support

For children, it is important that they have their parents, or safe primary attachment figures, nearby to help them feel safe. Children don't have the life experience or resources that an adult may have, therefore extra support is needed.

Children are generally ego-centric (focussed on themselves) and may believe that they somehow caused the trauma to happen. It is common for children to blame themselves for those negative experiences. They may not understand that domestic violence, unemployment, or financial worries are not their fault.

Children also express their stress or worry in different ways. Some may not be able to verbalise what has happened to them, or about their inner pain. They may withdraw from people, or they may play up as the energy needs to be expressed. This is their way of trying to make sense of what has happened.

For individuals who work with those who have experienced trauma, it is important to understand the five principles of trauma.



# Principles of Trauma-informed Practice

## 5 Principles of Trauma-informed Practice

Safety- Ensuring physical and emotional safety is paramount. Individuals who have experienced poverty, hunger, financial hardship, and abuse have had their physical or emotional safety compromised. Sometimes this has been done by close family members. It is imperative to understand that victims of trauma need to feel safe, respected, and accepted.

Look for signs of emotional dysregulation or distress. This involves observing body language, breathing, mood, emotional state, and nonverbal communication. When the individual is distressed, take a break until they are regulated again. To help them self-regulate breathing exercises, distracting questions or change of subject can be useful.

Trustworthiness- Building trust with families and children who have experienced trauma is an important step for them to feel protected. Trust is built by respecting confidentiality and creating a safe space for individuals to voice and process the trauma they have been exposed to. Being empathetic, inclusive, and sensitive towards these individuals can help establish a relationship built on trust.

Collaboration- It is important for social workers to collaborate with the clients they are working with. This means engaging families in decision making, creating a partnership between the social worker and the family or individual.

Choice- Families, and children who have experienced trauma have often been betrayed by people in positions of power. It is important to offer clients a choice, no matter how small.

Empowerment- When clients feel empowered, they feel strong and can start the healing process. By emphasizing strengths and resilience and helping families find coping strategies, they can focus on their skills and abilities to start taking control of their lives.



# Two Types of Trauma

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): is defined as exposure to an event where a person has experienced a life-threatening situation and the individual's response to the event included feeling distress, helplessness, and fear. Following this event, the individual can experience the following symptoms:

- Intrusive, distressing memories, images, thoughts, and perceptions.
- Reoccurring nightmares of the event.
- Psychological distress when exposed to reminders of the event, such as visual cues, smells, or places.
- Avoidance of thoughts or inability to access memories of the trauma.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Hypervigilance or startled response.

Common related issues include anxiety, depression, anger, sadness, guilt, shame, and a reduced self-image.

## Intergenerational Trauma:

In working with children and families that have experienced trauma it is important to understand intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma presents the idea that trauma experienced by a member of the family, such as a parent or a grandparent can be passed onto future generations, in part, to the way trauma epigenetically changes the genes. Epigenetics is the way behaviours and environments can influence the way genes are expressed, which can be either turned on or off.

Kids who grow up with parents that are chronically stressed due to poverty, homelessness, and hunger are likely to grow up with parents that are anxious, depressed, emotionally distant, or unstable. This can contribute to trauma being passed down a generation.





# Two Types of Trauma

The long-term effects include:

- Emotional Dysregulation.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Numbing from painful emotions.
- Flashbacks.
- Intrusive thought.
- Physical health issues.

## Summary

In working with families that have experienced trauma, it is important for social workers and providers to be aware of the physical, emotional, and mental issues that can develop in the families they support. By being aware of how the clients might be affected, it can help support workers to have more empathy and a deeper understanding of how they can offer support.



# Working with Child Survivors

## Do's/Do Not's of Working with Children Who Have Been Traumatized

Do: Establish Routines - maintaining routines helps create a sense of order, and stability. If possible, when changes are going to happen inform the child about the changes sooner than later. This gives them the chance to prepare themselves for a change in the routine. Which can help reduce any potential anxiety, stress, or fear they may be feeling about the change.

Do: Provide time, space, and encouragement for the child to speak at their level of comfort. Rather than pushing them to talk about experiences before they are ready. Allowing them to choose when they share helps to avoid ruining any chance of establishing a strong foundation and connection.

Additionally, answering questions honestly, or helping them to find the answers can foster trust. If you have been instructed that you can not tell them something, check if you can be honest to the kid about that. This is a chance to strengthen their trust in you. You need to follow the organisations' guidelines so if you are unsure please consult your supervisor.

Do Not: Physically comfort survivors as this can cause them to be retraumatized and to feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Touching them may create additional trauma and potentially foster flashbacks, or negative behaviours like tantrums.

Consider different methods of comforting, such as verbal or item-based things like teddies, blankets, breathing techniques. Be creative with traditions you establish together as a team, like singing a specific song. This can grow to become comforting traditions.



# Working with Child Survivors

Do: Maintaining boundaries and expectations with the child is crucial. Despite how tempting it may be to let them disobey rules and act out. Being clear when it comes to expectations that are had in regards to their behavior, consequences of non-compliance, and discipline practices. For example: “If you keep hitting the other children you will be sent to the quiet corner.”

I saw that you stopped yourself, and that's really, really great. I know it might be hard, but please apologise so we can continue with the game and have fun.” Providing a fair, and consistent environment helps children to gradually feel safe, and stable enough to begin to trust and heal.

Recognising and providing positive feedback toward their efforts can help motivate them to continue to do good, or to do better. Furthermore, children can be hypersensitive to the tones and level of volume of voices, so make sure to keep yours calm and even.

Do Not: Personalise their behaviour. Children who have survived trauma may express frustration, anger, and act out. Instead, provide space for them to express their feelings free of judgment or shame.

Do Not: Leave notes around. Spending time with children provides chances for one to identify any triggers they may have. Such as words, tones, events, locations, activities, phrases, and smells, etc. Taking notes of these triggers and any changes in the child can be useful. However, make sure these notes are safe and secure. Try to use codes for names. This way if someone does find it, they will not be able to tell who is being written about.

Do Not: Let them physically touch you for extended or prolonged periods of time. Or if they touch you inappropriately stop them immediately but do not get aggressive. Instead, explain to them clearly and calmly that they can not and should not do that. Then tell your supervisor as soon as possible regarding their behaviour.



# Working with Child Survivors

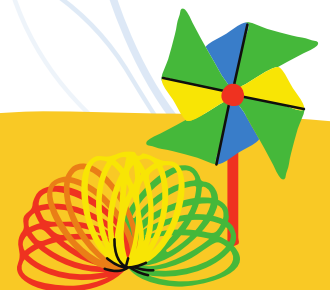
If you are reading this wondering “why would a survivor possibly do that?” it is because it is common for survivors of various types of abuse, especially sexual trauma, to be sexual far beyond their years. Additionally, they may have grown attached to you if you have been a source of safety and trust for them. It is crucial to be open with your supervisor about any inappropriate instances. This is so clear strategies and safety plans can be put in place to protect all involved and most of all the child.

Do Not: Do it all on your own. Talking to loved ones, supervisors, doctors, therapists, or whomever you choose is crucial for maintaining your personal well-being. It can also boost your ability to be an effective helper, teacher, social worker, or volunteer. Developing a range of coping strategies is crucial for not only you but those you care for.

Consider yoga, meditation, art, exercise, sport, reading, cooking, and whatever else comes to mind. These have all been proven to be effective in helping reduce stress and promote wellness. Sometimes strategies that worked in the past, might not work when you need them, so it is important to have backups that you can turn to. However, it is important to not give up on a strategy that previously worked, it may help you again in the future. If your own well-being and mental health are neglected you may begin to experience burnout, anxiety, stress, and depression.

Do: Learn how trauma impacts children in the long and short-term, it will help you to develop the skills and capacity to be the very best you can be. Staying committed to learning more is incredibly important, but do not flood yourself. Consider watching one TedTalk a week, or reading one article a fortnight. Moreover, it can guide you to being able to provide the best care you can for these children.

Try searching these key terms: childhood trauma, trauma, and the brain, working with kids, trauma-informed care, trauma-informed interventions, signs of trauma in kids, what is transgenerational trauma, effects of war on kids, self-care, burnout, treat burnout, the importance of sleeping and how to switch off after work.



# Signs/Symptoms of Surviving Trauma

## Signs/Symptoms of Surviving Trauma:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Denial/Shock
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Ongoing and intense emotional difficulties, such as feelings of terror, being under pressure, and fear.
- Lack of appetite and or changes in eating habits.
- Difficulty forming and maintaining relationships.
- Struggles with trusting others.
- Problems with maintaining concentration.
- Regressing. Losing skills or abilities they had already gained.
- Physical pains and aches. Often felt in the neck, stomach, and heart. Or, if in the case of physical trauma, wherever they were hurt.
- Vomiting.
- Mood swings.
- Guilt, shame, and self-blame.
- Substance abuse/use (including but not limited to alcohol).
- Loss of bladder/bowel control, including bed-wetting.
- Risky and unsafe sexual promiscuity. Though it is natural for children to begin to notice and explore their bodies, and their peers. Children who have survived trauma may take greater risks to do so. Additionally, they may undertake other types of risky and or dangerous behavior.

## Common Signs of Trauma Based Stress Across All Ages

3-5 Years: Scream/cry to an excessive level, more than the average. Showing signs of being timid or expressing they feel under pressure. Asking questions about dying. Displaying signs of stunted developmental growth. Having new fears, such as separation anxiety. Bedwetting. Recreating the experience that traumatised them during playtime. Start using “baby talk” again. Develop negative eating habits.



# Signs/Symptoms of Surviving Trauma

5-11 Years: Feeling anxiety, fear, shame, and or guilt. Showing signs of being clingy to those they trust, such as a social worker or teacher. Struggles with sleeping. Lacking the ability to concentrate. Being startled easily. Excessively worrying about the safety of others/themselves.

Expressing fear that the traumatic event will recur. Repeatedly retelling the experience. Being upset by injuries, no matter how minor. Declining to participate in activities or socialising.

11-18 Years (Adults included): Sense of feeling isolated and alone from peers. Depression. Risk-taking behaviour. Difficulty sleeping/nightmares. Eating disorders and or self-harming behaviors.

Talking about the experience in excessive detail. Drug and or alcohol abuse. Excessively risky sexual activity. Being in denial about having feelings regarding the traumatic experience(s). Drop-in school performance. Flashbacks.



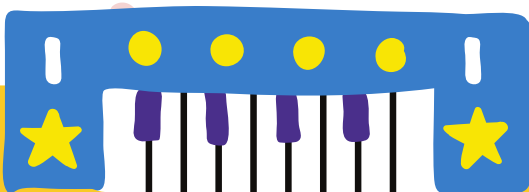
# Indicators of Abuse or Neglect in Children

There are many forms of abuse and neglect that children may be exposed to, for instance: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, emotional and financial. Being able to identify them can help one to adjust and tailor how one engages with the child. Do not treat them differently to the others however, be mindful of things that you can do to suit their unique situation and needs. It is important to note that whilst you may not be able to intervene in these abuses, you can consistently adjust your approach and guide the child to develop their own personal resilience.

This can also help them to develop hope that with a good education and support network, they will be able to stop the cycle of abuse in the homes they establish as grown-ups. The overall goal should be to guide them to build a better future for not only themselves but even their siblings and future children. Additionally, it is important to note that it is normal and natural for a healthy and well-loved child to present with one or two of these indicators. However, if you notice that the child consistently presents with several or more of these indicators they may be exposed to neglect and abuse.

## Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Displaying inappropriate sexual behaviour. For instance, if a young child demonstrates excessive knowledge in sexual acts with toys, in art or with other children.
- Injuries to certain regions on their bodies. Including sexually transmitted diseases.
- Regularly soiling themselves.
- Constant difficulties in sleeping.
- Prevalent masturbation that does not respond to discipline or boundaries. For instance, touching one's self in front of others or in public.
- A fixation on maintaining cleanliness or compulsive washing.
- Sexually motivated attention-seeking behaviours. For instance: trying to kiss or grope others.
- Reluctance to touching or being touched by others.
- Displaying fear, stress, or anxiety around having their nappy or clothes changed.



# Indicators of Abuse or Neglect in Children

## Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Bruising on their backs, ears, hands, buttocks, face, upper thighs, and various soft areas of the body. Additionally, these areas are usually deliberately chosen because they are hidden by clothing.
- Absent or conflicting explanations for said bruises.
- Burns or scarring.
- Bite marks or ligatures.
- Fractures.

## Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Stealing or lying regularly.
- Not trusting adults.
- Demanding and disruptive behaviour.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Not wanting to go to sleep or bed. Fear of the dark or having nightmares.
- Regularly staying at friends' houses, running away, and avoiding home (or location of the abuser) in general.
- Minimal self-esteem, few friendships, low self-image, and or dropping academic performance.

## Signs of Neglect:

- Vulnerable to illness.
- Developmental delay.
- Lack of thriving.
- If their medical conditions are untreated or unacknowledged.
- Hoarding and stealing of food or constantly high appetite.
- Excessively dirty, smelly, or sickly appearance.

Keeping a record of any observations you or others make, along with notable things the child says, can help you and future carers to provide the most accurately informed service possible. Please keep the file confidential and or use a code for all names involved.





# Retraumatisation

Whilst there are a few clear indicators as to what can cause retraumatisation, it is important to remember that types of triggers are as diverse as the trauma itself. Moreover, if one does cause retraumatisation it's important that you acknowledge it. Apologise to them, and make efforts to restore trust and rapport, to enable them to continue their journey toward healing.

Additionally, it is important to respect their choice if they feel that they do not wish to continue to work with you and to not take it to heart. Or, if this isn't possible, explain and be upfront about this whilst respecting their feelings.

If this is the case, it is important to do your best to give them as much space and time as possible. In time they may be ready to engage more once you've respected their boundaries to the best of your abilities. In the helping fields, it is only human to make errors. In fact, they are an opportunity for growth and for you to hone those important skills.

With that in mind, here are some potential triggers that can cause retraumatisation: being treated as just a number, having to retell their story, lack of collaboration or option to provide input, being seen as a label eg (a victim/survivor), being touched without consent, violation of trust or boundaries, not being heard/listened to, and a lack of opportunity for to provide feedback.



# Basics of Counselling

Counselling is a way of helping people to feel better, discover new ways of thinking, and promote change within their life. There is a range of skills needed to counsel effectively. To work as a qualified counsellor requires studying courses and gaining specific work experience. This document will provide some counselling skills which you can learn, practice, and reflect on. Reading this content may help you communicate with others, work in a team, and speak to Reach clients. People helping in a volunteer scenario may be using these skills in their daily interactions with clients and others. You may find as you read this document that you have natural counselling skills without even realizing it.

## Counselling Skills:

Verbal – speaking, tone, voice volume, paraphrasing, clarifying, and using "mmm" and "uhuh" sound to let the client keep telling their story without interruption.

Non-verbal – not speaking, silences, listening, appropriate eye contact, body language, nodding, and soft, understanding facial expression.

Specific relationship skills – certain skills used to engage in the relationship with the client. These are Congruence, Empathy, Non-judgmental, Unconditional Positive Regard, Attentive, Understanding, and Supportive.

Think of counselling as peeling an onion. As the onion has many layers, imagine a person peeling off one layer at a time and exposing a new layer of vulnerability:

- On the outer layer, we all have the information we share freely with others.
- The second we share in social and work settings.
- The third is the information we share with someone we trust.
- The fourth is information that may be a risk to share with another person.
- Finally, the fifth is private information reserved only for the individual and is generally not disclosed to another.



# Basics of Counselling

People may come into Reach in a very heightened state of emotion. For example, they could be crying, being overwhelmed, and being very upset. At Reach, the role of a helper is not to perform a counselling session; however, you can guide people to understand there is support here. You can also learn to adopt some counsellor like qualities that may help you navigate highly emotional situations.

## Creating an Alliance with a Client:

Firstly, make the person as comfortable as possible, offer some water and a chair to sit on.

Next, provide space to settle the distressed person, speak kindly and take it slow. Right now, this person is in a heightened state, and it is best to offer a calm space and presence so the person feels safe and can start to talk.

Let the client know your name and your role at Reach.

Introduce yourself.

Try to remember their name. When people remember our name, it makes us feel included and understood.

Helping clients to feel supported and safe in our organization is what we aim to achieve. Counselling is not advice-giving; this means you do not tell someone what you think they should do.

In these circumstances here in Cambodia, it is safest to listen to the concerns and demonstrate the counsellor qualities explained in this booklet. Then, if you can practically meet their needs, you may do that.

## Needs You Could Meet Could be in the Form of:

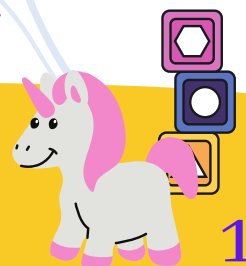
Providing a non-judgmental space for the client to voice their emotions and concerns.

Assisting with external services.

Advising to go to the pharmacy.

Chat to somebody in the management team at Reach if you are unsure.

Important: Most of our clients will come to the service with heartbreaking stories. It might feel in your best interest to provide advice; however, this is not safe and not an ideal way to help a person in a vulnerable position.



# Basics of Counselling

Helping someone through conversation in Cambodia might look like this:

- Reassuring the client that they should come and chat with one of our staff when they are distressed.
- Helping the client to recognize their existing support network.
- Engaging with the client using the counselling skills described in this document.

Reassurance might feel like a small change; however, this is building that client's support network.

Sometimes when we are going through a tough time, it can feel like we have no one to go to for a chat and support; it can start to make us feel incredibly overwhelmed with emotion. When you support a vulnerable client in a vulnerable situation, ensure you are creating safety for them.

## Create Safety Through:

- Presence.
- Gentle voice.
- Natural kindness.

When we encourage people to utilize their resources, we are encouraging them to become self-reliant and independent. When we offer advice to clients, they may become dependent on us, which impacts their ability to work things out for themselves. To make this relevant to a situation at Reach, someone might ask us what they should do about a violent situation.

You cannot tell somebody to leave their partner when they are experiencing domestic violence. However, you can:

Reassure that you understand what they are experiencing is very difficult and scary. Be mindful that you are not rescuing them; however, you are offering emotional support.



- Do not speak badly about the abusive person.
- Ask them who are their close friends/support network.
- Ask who do they usually go to when they need to talk.
- Ask where they go when they need to feel safe.
- Help them build on their understanding of the support network they may already have.
- Let them know they are not to blame for the abusive actions of other people.
- Ask them if they recognize any warning signs before the abuse begins.
- Do not ask them too many probing questions and details. Asking too many details could become very overwhelming for the victim.

When having a conversation that is of a counselling nature, do not:

- Intrude with too many questions.
- Create an imbalanced relationship.
- Control what is discussed.
- Constantly ask, "Why?".
- Ask questions to satisfy your curiosity.

Sometimes domestic violence support involves creating safety within the environment the victim is already living in, as it could be much more dangerous for them to leave. Offer support, and have a kind, gentle, and supportive conversation using the recommended counselling skills.

Reach out to someone in the management if you are dealing with this type of interaction. It is a very challenging life here, and it would be hard to compare these situations to the Western world as Cambodia is a third-world country. It is not the same. However, we can utilize these counselling tips and skills to create extra safety, support, and comfort.

Sometimes people just need to feel that someone cares, and a supportive conversation can do a world of good when they feel like they have no one else. To behave in a Counsellor-like manner, which will ultimately help create that sense of safety we are aiming to provide, these are some of the characteristics you could learn that are suitable in the circumstances in Cambodia.



# Basics of Counselling

You probably already have a lot of these qualities. As you read on, think about when you have naturally displayed these types of behaviour to a stranger in stress, a work colleague, a family member, or a friend.

## Counsellor Qualities and Skills:

- Congruence.
- Empathy.
- Non-judgmental Attitude.
- Unconditional Positive Regard.
- Attentive.
- Understanding.
- Supportive.

## How to be Congruent?

Congruence simply means to be yourself (yay). So, for example, if you are working or volunteering for us, it is clear that you are a kind person with a natural pull toward helping others in need.

When we are congruent, we are genuinely ourselves and interact with others in a non-defensive manner. When we do not understand something and need clarification from the client, we are not afraid to ask. You show up to the situation authentically, you are human, and this is a genuine human relationship.

## How to Display Empathy?

Empathy is imagining what it is like to be the other person and in their situation, yet still stepping out of the other person's inner world.

It is meeting the client where they are at and metaphorically walking alongside them.

For example, if someone comes to you and has had a tough day, imagining how that person must feel and what they must have experienced is an excellent example of Empathy. When the person feels like you genuinely care, they start to feel like they can trust you and you understand them.



# Basics of Counselling

## How to cultivate a Non-Judgmental attitude and Unconditional Positive Regard?

Having a non-judgmental attitude toward another person means trying to see that person's view from their perspectives and understanding that most people are simply doing the best that they can. Understand that when a person is vulnerable and in trouble, they need help from you, not judgment.

Unconditional positive regard does not mean agreeing with everything a person does; however, it involves accepting them as they are and withholding judgment and assumption. When you value the client for being a human being in their unique way, it can help them feel supported when making changes in their lives.

By showing them, you value them and are trying to understand their point of view; you create trust and a feeling of Acceptance. When we learn to embody these types of behaviour, we are getting closer to building rapport and trust with the client.

## How to be Attentive, Understanding, and Supportive?

To be attentive means listening to the person's story. Aim to understand where they are coming from, try to understand their perspective.

Throughout the conversation, repeat back to the person what you have heard them say and what you have understood by their explanations. This type of communication allows the client to feel heard, understood, and supported by the person listening to them.



## How to Embody Warmth Toward a Client?

- Your posture.
- Sit facing the client, so they can see that you are giving them your direct attention.
- Open up your posture, which means arms by your side or on your lap. If you cross your arms, you could appear anxious or guarded.
- Lean in toward the person when they speak, not too far in, enough to show you are engaged.
- Make eye contact with the client, be careful of staring.
- Relax your body language; this demonstrates you have time for the client.

## How to Communicate Acceptance to the Client?

When we show someone, we accept them; we avoid pressuring them to act like anyone else but themselves.

We are not acting controlling; we are not judging them and criticizing them. Sensitivity concerning cultural differences is essential.

## Why are These Person-centered Counselling Skills Listed Helpful from a Multicultural Perspective?

Because feeling valued, heard, and understood are appreciated and felt universally.





# What is Transference/Countertransference?

## What is Transference?

Transference occurs when the feelings a client once had toward someone in their life previously are then transferred onto the person helping them. For example, the client may view the helper as a parent figure or mistrust the helper. The range of feelings is extensive, including admiration, adoration, respect, anger, blaming, or rejection.

## What is Countertransference?

Countertransference can occur if the helper has an emotional reaction to the client's story. It can cause the worker to act in a certain way and meet their own needs rather than the clients. For example, perhaps they start acting like a parent to the client. Or maybe the client has a similar story to the worker. The worker may intuitively want to share their experience or give advice. This could be unethical behaviour.

Another example could be that the worker is triggered emotionally by how the client acts or something the client says. The worker may suddenly feel deep pain and sorrow, or perhaps anger and blame. The range of Countertransference for helpers can include feeling disinterested in the story, feelings of anger, feeling lethargic, zoning out, feeling an urge to argue, or feeling sorrow and sympathy. It is essential to be mindful of Countertransference as it could contribute to Compassion Fatigue.

## How can I Manage Countertransference?

- What happened?
- What triggered the Countertransference?
- What emotions did you feel rising?
- How did you act?
- Are there other ways of thinking and behaviour you can adopt to manage the Countertransference?
- What did you do to manage the Countertransference and remain professional?
- How did you catch yourself in the experience?
- Do you need to readdress some of your own previous experiences to understand this situation further?
- What did you do to gather your thoughts after the interaction occurred?
- Debrief with a trusted colleague or supervisor.



# About Burnout

## What is Burnout?

Burnout is emotional exhaustion. Burnout may present as negativity toward the job and thoughts that your contribution to the work is ineffective. In addition, a lack of enthusiasm, extreme fatigue, a recognizable reduction in your capacity for patience with others in the work and social environment, and a sense of overwhelm in life altogether may suggest you are experiencing burnout.

Burnout can happen to anyone in the helping field; it does not matter how well you do your job; burnout can happen to anyone throughout their helping role. Therefore, it is essential to adopt self-care strategies and understand and recognize the symptoms of burnout to enable treatment before it gets worse.

A study conducted in 2006 found that at the time of the survey 39% of social workers reported experiencing burnout. Whilst 75% reported experiencing burnout previously in their life. Burnout occurs when an individual is overwhelmed emotionally, physically, and or mentally by prolonged or excessive stress. It can leave one feeling helpless, cynical, resentful, and hopeless.

Additionally, it can generate changes to the body in both the long and short term. For example, it can increase one's vulnerability to catching the flu or cold. Negative side effects can negatively impact one's home, social, and work life. It is for all these reasons that it is crucial that one manage their burnout retroactively. It takes more than once to beat burnout. Instead, try to incorporate self-care and anti-burnout strategies into your day-to-day life.

## What are the Common Symptoms Associated with Burnout?

The emotional symptoms could include:

- Feeling tired.
- Feeling exhausted.
- Developing a fear of coming to work and facing another day of helping others.
- Feeling Isolated.
- Withdrawing from social situations.
- Digestion issues.



# About Burnout

- Trouble sleeping.
- Feeling detached from yourself.
- Feeling like a failure and developing low self-esteem.
- Feel as though your contribution is not adequate.

The physical symptoms could include:

- Becoming more susceptible to getting sick.
- Feeling sore and achy all over your body, a stiff neck and a sore back which isn't seeming to get any better.
- Experiencing migraines or headaches.
- An upset stomach.

A shift in your attitude might include:

- Feeling frustrated with people you work with, yourself and others around you.
- Feel unsatisfied or as if there is no purpose for what you are doing.
- A change in a once positive and optimistic attitude.
- Not caring as much as you used to.
- Turning to other coping mechanisms which are harmful to your health and well-being.
- Avoiding those who need your help.

Burnout can then manifest into your day-to-day life. For example, you may notice you have limited capacity for your relationships outside of your work.

How Burnout can manifest into relationships outside of work?

- You might find that you are becoming easily frustrated with others.
- Feeling more emotional.
- Less rational.
- Less patient.



# About Burnout

## Why does Burnout Happen to Those who are Helping Others?

One reason burnout is relatively common in the helping field is that helping others can be unbalanced. You are doing all the giving, and the opponent is the receiver. On top of a large and critical workload, after a while, without appropriate self-care, self-awareness, self-monitoring, and professional supervision, this could take its toll on you. For example, when there is no progress or setbacks with a project, this can build up and make the helping professional feel weak.

As Empathy is crucial in the helping relationship, it is also essential to have a way to protect yourself from the emotions of others. Therefore, if you feel yourself getting drawn into the feelings of the client's story, it is advisable to recognize this and have some type of method in place for self-protection.

## How can I Remain Empathetic Yet Protect Myself at the Same Time?

- This could be as simple as quickly grounding yourself in the present moment
- Remember, you are there to support, not save.
- Remind yourself you are doing the best that you can.
- Recognize your emotions are your own emotions, and the client's emotions are separate from you.

This is just a suggestion; it is advised you find what works best for you as each person will have a different way to lessen the emotional burden of another. Another form of self-protection is to only think about the client or project during work hours. If they come into your mind after hours, write a note to remind yourself to delegate some thinking time to that situation during your working hours. It is necessary to create boundaries to have relaxation, downtime, and time to recharge, so you can live and give more fully.

## Ways to Manage Emotions that are Caused by the Work Environment:

- Speaking to a supervisor about your feelings.
- Reaching out to another staff member.
- Writing in a journal; is a healthy way to release the emotions that may sometimes accompany your role in the helping field.



# About Burnout

To check in with yourself, you could ask some questions, ensure you are self-monitoring, and hopefully capture the burnout symptoms before they become any worse.

## Self-check Suggestions:

- Ask yourself how you are feeling about your role?
- The clients?
- How do you think about the people you work with?
- Are you bringing your workload home and not switching off at a particular hour?
- Are you constantly stressed?
- Are you overwhelmed?
- Have you been negative more often than positive lately?
- When was the last time you scheduled some "me" time into your diary to do absolutely nothing but self-care?
- Is your routine balanced?
- How are you eating?
- Are you dedicating time to your physical well-being?
- How are you sleeping?

Burnout can feel challenging. Some people in the helping field may feel like they have failed. However, this is not the truth and accepting that burnout is normal is crucial so you can learn to monitor yourself and address any issues if you observe any changes.



# About Burnout

## Noticed some Changes Mentally, Physically, and Emotionally

The following is how you can help yourself:

- Write down the symptoms and acknowledge them.
- Set clear boundaries with yourself between work, home life, and your relationships.
- Chat with a trusted supervisor, work colleague or write in a diary about the emotions you are experiencing.
- Observe the amount of work you are doing and ensure you are delegating enough hours to work, debrief, have time for personal recreation, and most importantly, rest.
- Would it be possible to spend your weekend recuperating?
- Ask yourself, what do you need?
- What is the healthiest thing you can do for yourself?
- Use positive self-talk methods and ensure you are being kind to yourself with the way you are thinking.
- Try yoga, relaxation techniques, and meditation.
- Ensure you are eating nutritious meals, exercising regularly, and maintaining a regular sleep routine.
- If you observe you are taking the mental stress of your role home, stop your thoughts in their track and remind yourself you will address this task during your working hours as this time is now for rest and rejuvenation.
- Practice being gentle with yourself, cultivate self-love and self-appreciation.
- Acknowledge the fantastic work that you do and the cause that it is for.



# About Burnout

Facing Burnout: One approach to managing and overcoming burnout that has been found to be effective is known as the Three R's; recognise, reverse, and resilience.

Successfully applying this approach can help you to develop coping strategies. Being mindful of the symptoms of burnout and can help you to regain your motivation, focus, and wellbeing.

Recognise: Remain vigilant of warning signs within yourself and others. Be open to feedback from others. Consider keeping note of indicators of burnout.

Reverse: Manage its impacts by turning to support networks such as coworkers, supervisors, partners, friends, and family. Additionally, turn to any healthy strategies you have previously enjoyed to manage the stress. Or develop and try new strategies. It's good to have more than one strategy as sometimes one that previously worked may not work for a time. So having back-ups can be a smart way to stay on top of the stress.

Resilience: Strengthen your inner resilience against stressors by maintaining your emotional and physical wellbeing and health. Consider regular exercise and meditation for example.

Additional ways you can manage your burnout include: developing friendships with co-workers, limiting your contact with people who are negatively minded or make you feel small, setting boundaries, taking time off, minimising your sugar and caffeine intake, reaching out to services, and connecting to those close to you.



# Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

## What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion Fatigue is an outcome of long-term caring for those traumatized, suffering or experiencing great misfortunes. When it occurs, it can feel like a loss of your sense of self. For example, when working with others experiencing fear, pain, and emotional distress, the outcome for the helper can result in depression, anxiety, anger, fatigue, loss of interest, and detachment. The boundaries between the helper and the client become unclear, and without realizing it, the helper can absorb the other person's emotions.

People who work with those who are trauma victims are at risk of developing Compassion Fatigue. Compassion occurs when somebody holds a deep sympathy and concern for the victim of a harmful event and has a deep urge to remove that pain for the person. It can be described as the helper holding the misfortune of their client in one hand and holding on to hope in the other.

Compassion is the basis of why the helper does this role and wants to help others. When working with children, the helper may often develop Compassion Fatigue as they yearn to change the circumstances for the child who has experienced primary stress. The helper can absorb pain from the child. Compassion Fatigue is an outcome of compassionate work that involves caring for others through difficult periods of their life. It is predicted that those who work with traumatized individuals will experience Compassion Fatigue throughout their careers.

Empathy is crucial behaviour when supporting those who have experienced trauma. When empathizing, the helper is at risk of being traumatized. Some people who work with those experiencing trauma have experienced trauma themselves. Over time they may come across somebody with a story like their own. In a case like this, the helper may not listen to the client as carefully as they should and skim over the details as they already feel like they understand the inner world of that individual. If a helper has unresolved trauma and is working on a case similar to what they have personally experienced, they are at risk of activating the unresolved trauma. Creating self-awareness is essential. Monitor yourself, your experiences and your symptoms.





# Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

## Compassion Fatigue Symptoms:

- Irritability.
- Anger.
- Isolation from others.
- Withdrawing from work, clients and social interactions.
- A sense of detachment may occur.
- Heightened anxiety symptoms.
- Increased symptoms of depression.
- Headaches.
- Loss of self.
- Lack of caring.



## Prevention and Treatment ideas for Compassion Fatigue:

The benefits of practicing self-compassion are positive for short-term and long-term psychological health. When we are kind to ourselves and practice self-compassion and work to meet our own needs, it can result in better moods, depressive symptoms can lessen, and self-esteem can increase. If we practice self-compassion and face a stressful period in life, it can help us navigate the situation a little easier. When we find ourselves in a time where things are changing, self-compassion can lessen the difficulty of that period.

Self-explore ways to manage your symptoms in a way that is beneficial to your personal growth. If you have spiritual or religious practices, ensure you give yourself enough time to engage with them. Study further Countertransference and recognize when it is happening in work and everyday life situations. Understanding Countertransference can help you realize when your emotions are becoming affected by another person. It can also help you recognize when you are withdrawing from a situation. Put boundaries in place. Learn your limitations.

Accept wholeheartedly that it is okay to reach out for support. Start becoming more self-aware of your emotions, bodily sensations, moods, and behaviour. If you notice something isn't quite right, intervene and take action. Try to find what is best suited to your needs and keep trying until you find something that alleviates the difficult emotions. Be kind to yourself and practice self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

# Mindfulness

Mindfulness can help people to manage their depression, suicidal ideation, chronic pain, eating disorders, anxiety, addiction recovery, and relapse prevention. Mindfulness has been found to be hugely helpful in reducing stress, boosting creativity, strengthening relationships, strengthening working memory/concentration, and improving attention. It is a series of techniques that anyone can learn. They help people to be completely present and engaged with the present moment, absent of judging things. It can help people manage their feelings, thoughts, and mental health.

Additional benefits are self-control, enhanced flexibility, equanimity, objectivity, affect tolerance, improved concentration and mental clarity, emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the ability to relate to others and one's self with kindness, acceptance, and compassion can also be improved upon when one practices mindfulness exercises.

## Simple Seated Breath:

- Take a comfortable seat. You can sit on a chair or the floor.
- Soften the gaze or close the eyes, whatever is comfortable for you.
- Take a deep breath in the nose, and exhale. Repeat three times.
- Begin to breathe in through the nose. As you do this, imagine the breath traveling from the top of the head to the stomach.
- Hold for one second.
- Exhale through the nose and imagine the breath traveling back up the spine to the head.
- Hold for one second.
- Inhale, imagine the breath traveling back down to the stomach.
- Hold for one second.
- Exhale, imagine the breath traveling up to the top of the head.
- Hold for one second.
- Keep repeating these simple steps for 5 to 15 minutes.

To make this easier for your first time trying this out, you can set the timer on your phone for five minutes. This activity can be practiced in the morning, during your day or before you go to bed.



## Compassion Exercise:

- Take a seat or lay down.
- Place your hands over your heart.
- Feel your heartbeat on your hands and notice the pace of the heartbeat.
- Inhale through the nose, let the breath travel to the stomach.
- Exhale and allow the breath to travel up to the heart space.
- Inhale and allow it to travel down to the stomach.
- Exhale and allow the breath to travel up to the heart space.
- Continue several times, then begin to cultivate something kind to say to yourself.
- "Thank you", "I love you", "You are doing so well" are some examples you can think silently to yourself.
- Keep breathing slowly and thinking your kind thoughts.
- Continue for 10 to 15 minutes.

Enjoy these mindful meditations and take the time to reflect on if they have been helpful for you. Did you notice any differences in your mood, emotional state, or stress levels? We hope you enjoy it!



It might feel like you are all alone and carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. Just remember, you can turn to co-workers, friends, family, supervisors, and service options.

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