



SURVIVOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP *Tool kit*



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Provider Instruction Guide

How to Use the Survivor Entrepreneurship Readiness & Support Assessment

Purpose:

- To balance trauma-informed care with business coaching perspective.
- To identify emotional readiness and practical strengths in survivors.

Instructions for Providers:

1. Build safety first: Explain the purpose of the assessment and allow survivors to skip questions.
2. Normalize hesitation: Acknowledge feelings of fear or uncertainty as normal.
3. Listen between the lines: Notice signs of excitement, avoidance, or overwhelm.
4. Apply both lenses:
 - Therapist lens: Assess safety, confidence, trauma triggers.
 - Coach lens: Identify practical skills and entrepreneurial potential.
5. Close with empowerment: Affirm strengths and set one realistic next step.

What to Look For:

- Emotional safety: survivor's comfort level with new challenges.
- Resilience: examples of problem-solving, resourcefulness.
- Practical skills: cooking, organizing, caregiving, selling, digital engagement.
- Barriers: financial, logistical, emotional, or safety-related obstacles.
- Motivation: survivor's vision for how entrepreneurship fits into their life.

Provider Reflection Prompts:

- Did the survivor show signs of readiness or need for more healing first?
- What everyday skills can be reframed as business skills?
- What support or referrals can be offered immediately?

Reminder:

Always end the session by affirming the survivor's value and agency.

Encourage small, safe, and achievable next steps.

Trauma-Informed Coaching Guide

Practical guidance for providers coaching survivors in entrepreneurship.

Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Coaching:

1. Safety: Ensure both emotional and physical safety in all coaching interactions.
 - Start sessions by explaining the process and allowing survivors to set boundaries.
 - Offer choices on meeting format (in-person, phone, online).
2. Trustworthiness & Transparency:
 - Be clear about what to expect in each session.
 - Follow through on commitments consistently.
 - Share limitations honestly if you don't have an answer.
3. Empowerment, Voice & Choice:
 - Encourage survivors to lead in decision-making.
 - Frame options instead of directives (e.g., 'Here are 2 approaches, which feels right to you?').
 - Celebrate small wins regularly to reinforce agency.
4. Collaboration & Mutuality:
 - Position yourself as a guide, not an authority.
 - Invite survivors to co-create solutions rather than prescribing steps.
 - Acknowledge survivors as experts in their own lives.
5. Cultural Awareness & Responsiveness:
 - Adapt coaching methods to respect cultural, racial, and gender identities.
 - Recognize systemic barriers survivors may face in accessing business resources.
 - Provide culturally relevant referrals where possible.

Practical Coaching Strategies:

- Break tasks into small, achievable steps to reduce overwhelm.
- Use plain language; avoid jargon or technical terms without explanation.
- Ask open-ended questions that invite reflection, such as:
 - 'What part of this feels doable right now?'
 - 'How do you want to move forward with this idea?'
- Recognize signs of distress (silence, withdrawal, agitation) and pause coaching if needed.
- Integrate affirmation practices (written or verbal) into each session.

Sample Coaching Phrases (What TO Say):

- 'You're in control of the pace—we can slow down or pause.'
- 'Let's take this one step at a time.'
- 'Your ideas matter, and you have the final say.'
- 'It's normal to feel nervous—what support would help you feel safer?'

Phrases to Avoid (What NOT to Say):

- 'You should just...'
- 'This is what you need to do.'
- 'It's just business, don't take it personally.'
- 'Everyone feels nervous about this—just push through.'

Coaching Reflection for Providers:

- Did I honor the survivor's pace and choices?
- Did I use empowering language instead of directive language?
- Did I create a safe and supportive environment for decision-making?
- What strengths did I highlight during this session?

Closing Reminder:

Trauma-informed coaching is not about fixing survivors—it's about creating space for healing, growth, and entrepreneurship to happen together. Always end with encouragement and a next step that feels achievable and survivor-led.

Trauma-Informed Coaching Quick Reference Sheet

A one-page guide for providers to keep survivor-centered coaching trauma-informed.

Core Principles (6):

1. Safety – Create emotionally and physically safe spaces.
2. Trust & Transparency – Be clear and consistent.
3. Empowerment, Voice & Choice – Survivors lead decisions.
4. Collaboration – Work together, not top-down.
5. Peer Support – Encourage community and shared stories.
6. Cultural Awareness – Respect identities and systemic barriers.

What TO Do:

- Break tasks into small, manageable steps.
- Use plain language, no jargon.
- Offer options, not directives.
- Affirm survivor strengths and small wins.
- Pause if signs of distress appear.

What TO Say:

- 'You're in control of the pace—we can slow down.'
- 'Let's take this one step at a time.'
- 'Your ideas matter—you have the final say.'
- 'It's normal to feel nervous—what would help you feel safer?'

What NOT to Say:

- 'You should just...'
- 'This is what you need to do.'
- 'It's just business—don't take it personally.'
- 'Everyone feels nervous—just push through.'

Provider Reflection (Ask Yourself):

- Did I honor survivor pace and choice?
- Did I use empowering, non-directive language?
- Did I highlight strengths over deficits?
- Did I maintain a safe, supportive environment?

Reminder:

Trauma-informed coaching is about creating safety and empowerment—
not rushing results. Always end with encouragement and an achievable, survivor-led next step.

Survivor Entrepreneurship Readiness & Support Assessment

This form is designed to help you think about your strengths, interests, and needs as you explore entrepreneurship. There are no right or wrong answers. Please share what feels comfortable.

Section 1: Personal & Emotional Readiness

1. On a scale of 1–5, how safe do you feel exploring a new idea or opportunity right now? _____
2. What emotions come up when you think about starting a business? _____
3. How do you usually respond when you face something new or challenging? _____
4. What kind of environment helps you feel calm and confident when making decisions? _____
5. Do you have a support system who encourages you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Section 2: Skills & Strengths

1. What activities do people usually ask you for help with? _____
2. Have you ever earned money—even casually—for a product or service? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, what? _____
3. Which tasks do you enjoy doing that make you feel confident or proud? _____
4. When you solve problems in daily life, what strategies do you use? _____

Section 3: Barriers & Needs

1. What challenges could make starting a business hard for you right now? _____
2. How do you feel about financial matters like banks, credit, or contracts? _____
3. Do you have identification, bank access, or safe storage for money? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. What resources would make starting a business easier? _____

Section 4: Business Interest & Motivation

1. Do you have a business idea in mind? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, describe: _____
2. How do you picture your business supporting your life? _____
3. Do you see entrepreneurship as: ☐ Full-time ☐ Side income ☐ Creative outlet ☐ Other _____
4. What inspires you to want to work for yourself? _____
5. What fears or doubts come up when you think about launching a business? _____

Section 5: Next Steps

Which of these feels right for you now?

☐ Learn business basics ☐ Talk through my idea ☐ Explore funding ☐ Work on personal goals ☐ Other: _____

Staff notes/referrals: _____

Affirmation & Mindset-Building Resources for Survivor Entrepreneurs

These affirmations and practices are designed to support confidence, healing, and resilience.

Providers may use these in coaching sessions or survivors may use them individually.

Daily Affirmations:

- 'I am capable of building a future that reflects my strength and resilience.'
- 'My past does not define me; my choices today create my tomorrow.'
- 'I have valuable skills and talents that can become the foundation of my business.'
- 'It's okay to take small steps; each step is progress.'
- 'I deserve financial independence and personal fulfillment.'
- 'I can trust myself to make wise decisions, one choice at a time.'
- 'My voice matters in my business and in my life.'

Mindset-Building Prompts:

1. Reflect on one challenge you've overcome—what strength did you use? How can that strength help in business?
2. Write down three skills you already use in your daily life that could support a business idea.
3. Think of a time you solved a problem creatively. How could that same creativity show up in entrepreneurship?
4. Identify one fear you have about starting a business. Reframe it into a positive possibility.

Example: 'I'm afraid I'll fail' → 'I'm open to learning and growing through each step.'

Grounding Practices for Coaching Sessions:

- Start sessions with a deep breath and an affirmation (e.g., 'This space is safe, and I am in control of my pace.').
- Encourage survivors to set a small intention at the start of each session ('Today, I want to focus on one idea.').
- Use journaling or reflection exercises to help survivors externalize fears and shift toward possibilities.
- Celebrate small wins by naming them out loud ('You completed a step today—that's progress worth celebrating!').

Visualization Exercise:

Close your eyes and imagine your business as if it already exists.

- What does your day look like?
- Who are you helping or serving?
- How do you feel running this business?

Write down 3 words that describe that vision. Use these words as motivation when challenges come up.

Provider Tips:

- Offer affirmations and prompts in a supportive, non-directive way.
- Encourage survivors to adapt or rewrite affirmations in their own words.
- Remind survivors that mindset shifts take time—progress is more important than perfection.

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