

Pre-session Support Tool – Harnessing the Wisdom of Concerns for the Development of Advanced Care Protocols

Step 1.

We believe that pre-sit concerns are oftentimes untapped sources of wisdom. Begin by inviting a sense of curiosity toward yourself. Take some time - either alone or with your guide - to list all concerns and anxieties you can connect with about participating in the upcoming session, no matter how small or irrational they may seem. Write these concerns in the **first column** (labeled Step 1 – List of Concerns), allowing yourself space to express everything that arises until the list is exhaustive. Print as many copies of the table as necessary to do so. Once you feel your list is complete, move on to Step 2.

Step 2.

On your own or with the support of your guide, explore each of your listed concerns, one at a time, approaching them as you would very wise parts of yourself. Treat every concern with respect, giving them your full attention and honoring the wisdom they carry within. Check in to see what each part needs to feel safe and understood in one or two words. If unsure, consider the following suggestions: safety/comfort/information/a plan. Write these needs in the **second column** (labeled Step 2 – Associated Need). Listen patiently to what arises, even if it is not possible to meet the need.

Step 3.

Finally, connect with your creativity to generate concrete actions, strategies and/or accommodations that could be considered to respect these concerns, even if indirectly, recording potential ideas in the **third column** (labeled Step 1 – List of Concerns). They may not be as irrational as we think / they seem. In fact, in this work, no worry is too small or irrational - they all carry meaning, and everyone can benefit by tuning in to their wisdom. By thoughtfully addressing these needs with possible upgrades to the care protocol, you're also shaping a more personalized approach for your upcoming session. Sometimes, simply tuning in to these anxieties and responding to them with respect is enough; other times, making practical adjustments can ease the path forward.

Step 4.

As you move closer to your session, keep returning to this process - making space for any additional concerns / anxieties to arise, no matter how small, and responding to them with curiosity, care and respect. Continue to consider practical adjustments or supports that might help you feel more at ease during the preparation phase, the active session and/or the integration phase. This compassionate approach not only prepares you for your experience, but also reminds us that every part of ourselves holds wisdom and is worthy of our respect, attention and consideration.

Step 1. List of Concerns (exhaustive)	Step 2. Associated Need (e.g. safety/comfort/information/a plan)	Step 3. Possible Protocol Inclusions (if relevant)

Sample:

List of Concerns	Associated Need	Possible Protocol Inclusions
Fear of losing control	Information about safety net	Start low and slow with dose, consider a booster protocol
Concern about physical discomfort	Comfort, bodily autonomy	Extra pillows, options to change position freely
Worry about reliving traumatic memories	Preparation, trauma-sensitive approach	Plan for grounding tools and post-session support
Concern about not getting any insights	Reassurance, plan for how to respond	Discuss ideas on how to work with different experiences
Anxiety about time passing too slowly or quickly	Orientation, agency over the session	Clocks present/removed per preference; check-ins
Worry about needing the bathroom often	Privacy, ease	Easy access to bathroom; protocol for bathroom use
Fear of nausea or vomiting	Preparedness, comfort	Basin nearby, anti-nausea strategies discussed and available
Anxiety about saying something embarrassing	Patience, care	Agreement not to proceed with disclosure until 100% ready
Concern about being too quiet or withdrawn	Permission, space	No pressure to interact; affirming silence as valid
Worry about forgetting what happened	Memory aids, integration	Note-taking (as comfortable)
Fear of physical reactions like shaking or sweating	Normalization, comfort	Education on somatic responses; have blankets, fans available
Concern about not connecting with the guide	Rapport, trust	Extra pre-session meetings to build connection
Worry about not being able to integrate learnings	Ongoing support, structure	Scheduled integration sessions post-experience
Fear of heightened anxiety during the session	Calm, coping tools	Practice calming exercises; have anxiety tools ready
Concern about losing sense of self	Groundedness, reassurance	Use a grounding object (like a stone or photograph); rehearse grounding techniques
Fear of not being able to communicate needs	Accessible communication strategies	Develop nonverbal signals for needs/interruptions
Worry about being too distracted by noises	Focus, peace	Soundproofing, white noise, headphones

Fear of medical emergency	Safety, clear protocols	Emergency plan review; medical support on call
Fear of disappointment after the session	Validation, follow-up	Plan for post-session check-in and validation
Worry about emotional overwhelm post-session	Continued care, support	Plan for aftercare plan and share resources
Fear of being “too much” for the guide	Acceptance, unconditional support	Explicit assurance of guide’s commitment to care of oneself
Anxiety about the unknown	Information, comfort	Provide detailed orientation, discuss questions
Worry about cultural or personal rituals not being respected	Cultural safety, acknowledgment	Discuss and incorporate meaningful rituals as possible