

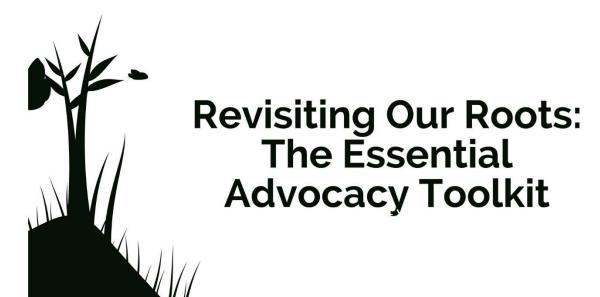
The Essential Advocacy Toolkit

A collection of trauma-informed resources & strengths-based activities for advocates supporting adult survivors of sexual violence.

Revisiting Our Roots: The Essential Advocacy Toolkit

A collection of trauma-informed resources & strengths-based activities for advocates supporting adult survivors of sexual violence.





Advocates are powerful people. Being present, listening, and validating are some of the most helpful skills advocates have that survivors are not likely to get elsewhere. Still, it may not feel like enough. This guide is intended to provide practical tools, activities, and resources to assist you in your work with survivors of sexual violence-- to build on the strengths you already bring to your advocacy practice.

We hope this guide can also be a springboard to embrace your creativity and generate additional activities in collaboration with survivors. You can add your most used tools and activities to further personalize this toolkit!

Acknowledgements

This publication is a collection of wisdom from many in the field of sexual assault advocacy and trauma.

This toolkit would not be possible without the review, recommendations, and contributions of:

Rosanna Herrera, SARC Kennewick Kai Hill, YWCA Vancouver Sara Kern, Quality Behavioral Health

Photos from Canva & Unsplash in the public domain unless otherwise noted.



Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
4317 6th Avenue SE, Suite 102
Olympia, WA 98503
(360) 754-7583 / (360) 709-0305 TTY
www.wcsap.org

Contents

Trauma Informed Care

- 5 Defining Trauma-Informed Care
- 7 Trauma Informed Meeting Space
- 8 Meeting Outside
- 9 Therapy vs. Advocacy
- 11 Ending an Appointment

Common Reactions to Trauma

- 15 What are Triggers?
- 17 Tracking Triggers
- 19 Trigger Plan
- 21 PLAN Tool
- 23 What is Dissociation?
- Neurobiology of Trauma

Grounding

- 31 What is Grounding?
- 33 Four Square Breathing
- 35 Lying Down
- 37 Essential Oils
- 39 Body Scan
- 41 Body Mapping

Coping

- 47 What is Coping?
- 49 Stress Ladder
- 51 The COPE Plan
- 55 Coping with Anniversaries
- 57 Coping Online Resources
- 59 Smart Phone Apps

Safety & Boundaries

- 65 What is Safety?
- 67 Exploring Boundaries
- 69 Boundary Activity
- 71 The Solar System Activity

Resilience

- 77 Compassionate Reframing
- 79 Connection to Culture
- 81 Self Affirmation Art
- 83 Hope-Action Board
- 85 Journalin
- 87 Support Circle

Legend

You will find symbols located along the top of the pages that indicate the purpose and audience.



Advocacy Considerations

These pages are specific to you, the advocate, on best practices, guidance, and creative ideas for enhancing the experience of survivors seeking services with you.



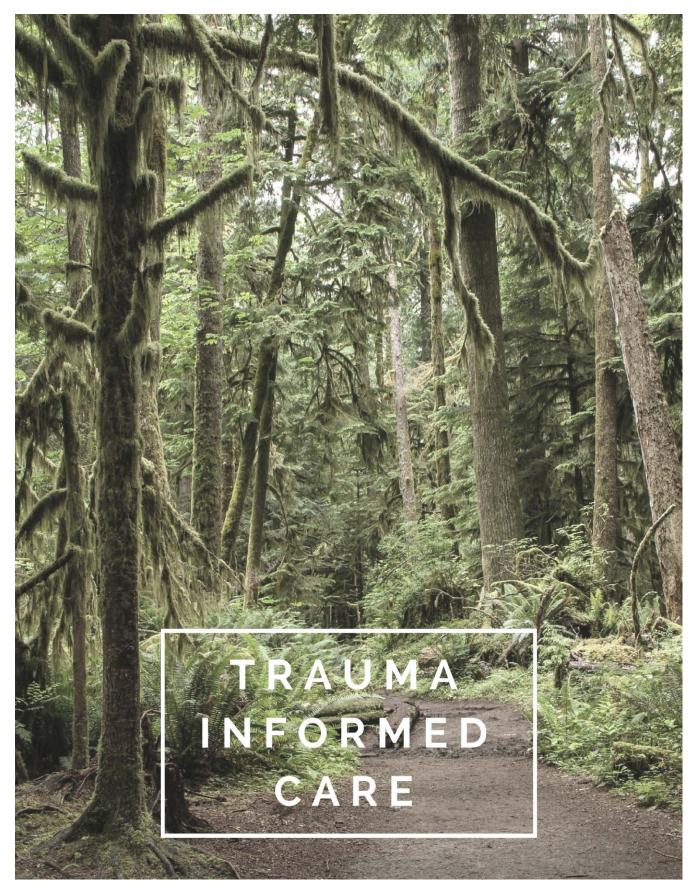
Activities & Handouts

These pages contain ideas for activities for advocates to do with survivors in advocacy sessions or for survivors to do on their own, and many can be copied and useful as informational handouts.



Tech Tools

This section contains online resources and smart phone apps that survivors may find as useful coping tools.





Defining Trauma-Informed Services

Trauma-informed services approach people from the standpoint of the question "What has happened to you?" rather than "What is wrong with you?" It is important to note that providing trauma-informed services does not mean service providers must determine exactly what has happened to an individual. Rather, organizations and providers should examine the way in which they conduct business and make modifications based upon an understanding of how a trauma survivor might perceive what is happening.

The advocacy field has used the term "survivor-centered services" for years to describe how we approach our work. Survivor-centered services use many of the concepts of trauma-informed services. However, the practice of trauma-informed services makes these principles accessible across disciplines, and is broader in scope.

From Building Cultures of Care, NSVRC & RSP:

Trauma-informed services are not specifically designed to treat symptoms or syndromes related to sexual violence, but they are informed about and sensitive to trauma-related issues present in survivors. A trauma-informed organization is one which all components have been reconsidered and evaluated in light of a basic understanding of the role violence plays in the lives of survivors (Harris & Fallot).

AN ECOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMA Individual factors: Age, Event factors: Frequency, personality, previously severity, duration of the Trauma developed coping skills, previous event(s), degree of violence or traumatizations, relationship bodily violation, extent of terror or humiliation, existence of to the perpetrator, resilience, developmental stage witnesses or bystanders Retraumatization **Ecosystem** Contributing factors of Environmental factors: Context in which trauma was retraumatization: Triggers, response to disclosure, contact experienced (home, work, Trauma Response with perpetrator, victimization, school, social gathering) pre-existing support system lack of control, empowerment, Psychological and physical reactions agency or safe environment

A trauma-informed approach also integrates an understanding of a survivor's history and the entire context of their experience. The attributes of the community to which the survivor belongs also can influence how a survivor is affected by trauma. The individual, the event, and the environmental factors can shape a survivor's reaction to trauma and the healing process. The survivor's strengths are at the center of trauma informed services. Resilience is the core focus, as opposed to pathology, problems, or symptoms (Proffitt). In practice, trauma-informed services involve striving to be culturally competent and to understand survivors within their familial, social, and community contexts and life experiences (Proffitt). Trauma-informed services also attend to the needs of those who serve trauma survivors by providing the same elements of care to survivors and workers.

Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Culture

Trauma-informed service comprises six basic elements that are applied to all activities and interactions with agency clients and with agency workers (Fallot & Harris). These core elements are: **safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment,** and **cultural relevance** (Proffitt). These philosophical principles help to shape the culture of sexual assault service programs and the services provided to survivors.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED CULTURE

Safety	Ensuring physical and emotional safety; "do no harm"	
Trust	Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, maintair appropriate boundaries	
Choice	Prioritizing survivor choice and decision-making; supportin survivors' control over their own healing journey	
Collaboration	Maximizing collaboration and sharing power with survivors	
Empowerment	Identifying strengths, prioritizing building skills that promot survivor healing and growth	
Cultural Competence	Ensuring cultural applicability of services and options; sensitivity to the role of culture in lived experience and decision-making	

Adapted from

Fallot, R. D., & Harris, M. (2009). Creating cultures of trauma-informed care (CCTIC): A self-assessment and planning protocol.

Proffitt, B. (2010, December). Delivering trauma-informed services. Healing Hands, 14(6). Resource Sharing Project & National Sexual Violence Resource Center. "Building Cultures of Care" (2013). https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_guides_building-cultures-of-care.pdf. WCSAP. "Creating Trauma-Informed Services" (2012).





Establishing a safe physical and emotional environment where basic needs are met, safety measures are in place, and provider responses are consistent, predictable, and respectful is a key component of Trauma Informed Care, **Safety**.

What helps:

- Comfortable furniture.
- Clean, private space.
- All use bathrooms- gender neutral, single use, staff and clients can use the same.
- Art conveys healing / hopeful messages; colorful, culturally diverse and child-friendly.
- Building and space is open and accessible in entry as well as movement while inside the building and meeting rooms.
- Customer service- welcoming greeters and clear messages on where to go or how long to wait.

What hurts:

- Violent imagery (a woman crouching in a menacing shadow, etc.) Some survivor's art can contain violent imagery and strong language. Consider the best venues for displaying the art, like SAAM, and post a trigger warning.
- Confusing signage or messages from greeters.
- Congested areas that are noisy.
- Building and/or office spaces are in disrepair.

Creative options and enhancements:

- Incorporation living items into the decor, such as plants and fish tanks.
- Program provides calming music.
- Program provides survivors with opportunities to make suggestions about ways to design and decorate the space.
- Meeting space has items that are displayed; invite clients to touch, hold, or play with anything in the room. Involve the practice of choosing as reinforcing advocacy principles of **Empowerment** and **Choice.**
- Having rocks or worry stones to hold.
- Fidget items like pipe cleaners, silly putty, fidget spinners.
- Items that have different textures.
- Paper and pens or markers for doodlers and note takers.
- Essential oils, but bottled or enclosed so as not to disturb folks with sensitivities.

Ensure there are options to choose from on where to sit. Some survivors prefer to not have their back to a door or a window. Find a place for you to sit that won't feel power-up from the person you are working with. If you sit in front of a computer or behind a desk when having conversations, it can create unhelpful separation. Sit in a way that can aid in the principle of **Collaboration**— if they sit on floor (and you are able to) join them on the floor. If they choose a chair, choose a chair that helps you face them with open body language.

Meeting Outside

Being outside and more specifically being in nature is helpful. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues may all be eased by some time outdoors, especially when it is combined with exercise. By observing the ever-changing environments in nature, individuals cultivate a positive attitude, renewed attention, mindfulness, and sensory awareness (Ulrich).

If your program is lucky enough to have an outdoor space, it would be well worthwhile to arrange it so it can be conducive to meeting with clients.

Sometimes sitting and facing someone is not useful for survivors as they discuss hard things. Consider taking a walk with survivors you are working with. A study, conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, found that taking group nature walks is associated with a whole host of mental health benefits, including decreased depression, improved well-being and mental health, and lower perceived stress. And the positive effects on mood seemed to be especially strong among people who had recently experienced a traumatic life event (Marselle, Irvine, & Warber).

Moving one's body helps to process trauma and the act of walking next to someone is **Collaborative** as well as helps those who feel uncomfortable with eye contact. Check out any tracks, like at a high school or park. Trails are also good options and it is always good to consider these areas could be possible triggers. Decide about meeting outside or taking a walk in **Collaboration** with the survivor. Chat about **Safety** needs while being outside and their privacy concerns. If you are on the move, it is less likely someone will eavesdrop on your conversation but people walking by could hear snippets and it is always good to have a plan in case you run into anyone either of you know.

References

Marselle, M.R., Irvine, K.N. and Warber, S.L. (2014) Examining group walks in nature and multiple aspects of well-being: A large-scale study. Ecopsychology.

Ulrich, et al. (1991). "Stress recovery during exposure to natural and urban environments." Journal of Environmental Psychology.



Advocacy vs. Therapy

There is no one way to heal from sexual trauma. Psychotherapy and support groups might be great healing tools for a survivor you are working with, but they are not a replacement for what you can offer as an advocate.

Self-determination and autonomy, feeling heard, and social support are important factors in healing that advocates can provide. Additionally, advocates are in a unique position to engage with survivors from different cultures who may require specialized cultural support outside of therapy or in addition to therapy.

While there are significant areas of overlap between a therapist and an advocate, it is because of their differences that they can both be important in someone's healing journey.

Differences Between Advocacy and Therapy

Advocacy	Therapy		
Crisis intervention	Processing trauma		
 Coping with symptoms 	Alleviate symptoms		
 Normalizes and validates 	 Deeper exploration of feelings 		
 Provides information, options and 	 Gives specific advice 		
resources	 Resolution of cognitive distortions* 		
 Provides psychoeducation about 	 Specific focus on emotional and 		
sexual assault	behavioral responses only		
 Identifies and responds to cognitive 			
distortions*			
Broad focus on all potential elements			
of victimization			

*Cognitive distortions are biased perspectives we take on ourselves and the world around us. They are irrational thoughts and beliefs that we unknowingly reinforce over time. These patterns and systems of thought are often subtle – it's difficult to recognize them when they are a regular feature of your day-to-day thoughts (Ackerman).

Cognitive distortions are:

- tendencies or patterns of thinking or believing,
- that are false or inaccurate,
- and have the potential to cause psychological damage.

For example, "it's my fault I was assaulted" or "I am a bad person."

Reference

Ackerman, Courtney. "Cognitive Distortions: When Your Brain Lies to You," 2017. https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/cognitive-distortions/

WCSAP. "What Advocates Need to Know About Therapy: Working with Children, Adolescents, and Families." (2016)



Strategies for Ending an Appointment

At times, advocacy appointments can be hard to wrap up. Participants may not be ready to leave or have more they want to talk about. It is important, not just for the busy schedules of advocates, but for modeling boundaries and creating clear expectations, that we end appointments when originally agreed upon. Maintaining expectations and boundaries helps lead to more **trusting** relationships.

You'll want to save about 5 minutes at the end of your appointment to do a closing activity. During orientation, it may be helpful to talk with a participant about what kinds of things help them transition back to day-to-day life after discussing hard things.

It can be helpful to end appoints with something positive and calmer, especially for heavier appointments, or thinking about next steps.

End with short grounding activity:

(The participant and advocate should do these together.)

- Incorporate movement into the last few minutes, standing, stretching, etc.
- "Shake it out"- Stand up, wiggle and shake off the discussion for about 30 seconds. This will already get you both standing up and ready to walk out.
- "Feet on the Floor-" Stand or sit with both feet on the floor, eyes open or closed, breathing and quite, feeling connected or planted to the ground for a full minute.

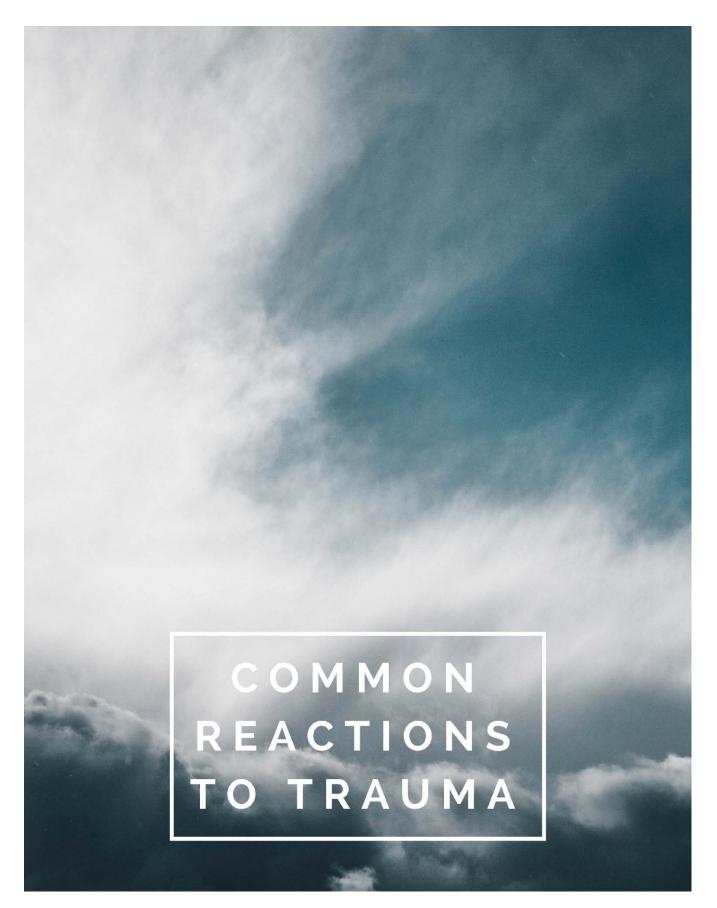
A short grounding activity, with or without the participant, can also be useful for the advocate to shift into different work, leave the survivor's story behind, and/or prepare for meeting with a different survivor.

End with next steps:

- Summarize what you talked about today and things you heard the participant say they wanted to do.
- Ask if it is helpful for you to make a list of the "to-dos" that the participant mentions.
- Ask the participant what they have planned for rest of the day or week (or even the next hour) depending on how far ahead the participant feels comfortable thinking about.
- Ask the participant to share one thing they are looking forward to today / this week.

Other options:

- With 5 minutes left, ask the participant what would be helpful to do in the last five minutes to transition to the rest of their day.
- Take turns at the end of appointments to show each other one fun/cute/inspiring video.
- Set a timer for when you both agree the session will end. This can work well if the survivor is the one that sets the timer on their own phone (if they have one) and chooses the tone that they prefer.
- Take a short walk, maybe walking with them to the bus stop or the parking lot.





What are triggers?

"Triggers act as signposts to what is in need of healing."

-Staci Haines, author The Survivor's Guide to Sex

Survivors often can use help figuring out what is going on in their brains and bodies, often asking advocates "is this normal?"

Triggers are a common part of recovery from trauma and advocates will need to be familiar with triggers and can work with survivors to plan for how they will respond when triggers come up and what strategies they might want to try.

"Triggers are automatic responses connected to your past sexual abuse / assault that suddenly rushes to the present. Certain acts, smells, words-- perhaps even a tone of voice-- can act as triggers that bring up images and feelings from the past. When you are in the middle of being triggered, it may be difficult to distinguish from the past and the present."

-Staci Haines, author The Survivor's Guide to Sex

A helpful place to start is to work with a survivor on figuring out what kinds of situations, scents, interactions, tones of voice, etc. might cause them to be triggered. You can use the "Tracking Triggers Worksheet" or create your own. It is helpful to complete this worksheet with a participant. Sometimes they may need prompting, examples, or help remembering triggering situations they may have described to you in prior meetings.

When survivors are more aware of what triggers them, it makes it easier to plan. This knowledge can help a survivor avoid triggers or create strategies to cope when triggers are a surprise or are unavoidable. Working with survivors to identify coping techniques is an important part of our role.

Reference

Haines, Staci. "The Survivor's Guide to Sex" (1999).



Tracking Triggers Worksheet

I get triggered when: (sights, sounds, smells, positions, places)

For example:

When I hear a door close when I am sleeping. When someone is too close to me and I can smell alcohol on their breath.

What happens in my body is: (sensations)

For example:

My breathing gets really shallow. The muscles in my legs get really tense / tight.

Recurring visuals, smells, sounds, emotions, and body memories are:

For example:

Having weight on top of me, which makes me feel panicked / trapped. I see the image of my abuser.

Adapted from



			•	^
IN	u	LI	L	⊏

What are some of your current triggers? What happens when you are triggered? How can you (or those close to you) notice that you are triggered? Be specific about behaviors. List at least three signals or signs that let you know you are triggered.
Stop
Take a deep breath. Stop the activity. Triggers can happen in any situation and sometimes thi makes it hard to stop. If you are in a group setting, in a work meeting, or even engaged in sexual activity, a very useful excuse is to go to the bathroom. Breathe again. Name three
things you can do to stop a triggering activity or remove yourself from a situation.

Choose

Choose how you would like to proceed. Keep breathing. Relax your body. It is easiest to do this step if you have already generated a list of options you feel will work for you. Choose from this list what will meet your needs and what is most accessible to you in the situation.

Engage

Engage in whatever strategy you have decided on. Continue to build your capacity to stay present and tolerate the sensations and feelings that are a part of this healing work. You can always change your mind and choose again. If you find that you consistently choose the same choice, try choosing something different. Bring yourself to your own edge of discomfort so that you can expand your possibilities and process the abuse.

Return

Go back to the beginning whenever you need to.

Adapted from

Haines, Staci. "The Survivor's Guide to Sex" (1999).

PLAN Tool

Sometimes you know beforehand that you are going to be in a situation that may have triggers that remind you of your traumatic experience(s). The PLAN Tool is a strategy to manage situations that you anticipate will be difficult.

Prepare for the situation

Your sense of control may have been weakened by experiencing a trauma. A great way to begin regaining your sense of control is by preparing for the trigger or stressful situation. Think about the upcoming situation and how to handle it. Talk about it with someone whose judgment you respect.

- How can you relax yourself before the situation?
- Would it help to take a friend along who knows what you might experience?
- Can you discuss it with a family member and decide on a plan if things don't go well?
- Can you change the situation in some way that will make it easier to deal with?
- What is it about the situation that causes you distress?
- Is this a situation you would be better off avoiding?

Let go of your worry

It can be helpful to know ahead of time when you are going to confront a trigger. Unfortunately, it can also lead to a lot of worry about how you will manage the trigger and the painful reactions you might have. Getting stuck in a struggle with the "what ifs" or drowning in dread can be worse than going through the actual thing you are worried about.

Accept that you will experience distress and it is possible to manage your reaction. After a trauma, the stresses of life can seem even more difficult to manage. Accepting that you will experience upsetting emotions and stress if you are triggered can actually make the stress feel less overwhelming.

- Accepting distress means having realistic expectations about your reactions. It does not mean that you like the situation or feel good about being upset.
- Accepting distress means, that even though you may have upsetting emotions, you will
 not allow those emotions to control or limit your life.
- Accepting distress means that your feelings don't have to dictate your behavior.
- You can choose how you respond, even when you feel bad.

Note all of your coping skills and helpful resources

Think about all of the skills you have for managing stressful situations (including the ones you are learning here). Say to yourself: "During the stressful situation, I can..."

- Have a friend or a loved one with me.
- Refocus my attention on enjoying myself.
- Use relaxation exercises.
- Tell myself things that relax and settle me (e.g., "I'm safe." "That was then, this is now.").
- Use strategies that have worked in the past when I've been triggered.

If you feel ready to deal directly with a trigger, try to remain in the presence of the trigger until you feel less distressed by it. Here is the idea: don't leave the situation until you feel that the trigger is not as powerful as it was when you first confronted it. This will retrain your brain. Your brain will learn to tolerate the trigger. Your brain will learn that you are not in actual danger, and your response to the trigger will gradually weaken.

In order to put these tools and recommendations into practice safely and effectively:

- -Actively talk yourself through the situation.
- -Use relaxation or breathing skills while you are dealing with the trigger.

Adapted from

After Deployment, "The PLAN Tool - Prepare to Face PTSD Triggers". http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/fact/post-traumatic-stress/the-plan-tool-prepare-to-face-ptsd-triggers

What is Dissociation?

Dissociation is a fairly normal coping strategy in the face of overwhelming stress. Dissociation is being disconnected from the here and now. Everyone occasionally has times of daydreaming or mind wandering, which is normal. Sometimes dissociation is a way of coping by avoiding negative thoughts or feelings related to memories of traumatic events.

"The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness."

-Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery

When people are dissociating they disconnect from their surroundings, which can stop the trauma memories and lower fear, anxiety and shame. Dissociation can happen during the trauma or later on when thinking about or being reminded of the trauma. The difference from active avoidance (on purpose avoiding thinking about or doing something) is that dissociation tends to happen without planning or even awareness. Many times, people who are dissociating are not even aware that it is happening, other people notice it.

Dissociation can look like / feel like:

- Spacing out; day dreaming
- Glazed look; staring
- Mind going blank
- Mind wandering
- Sense of world not being real
- Watching / seeing self from outside
- Detachment from self or identity
- Out of body experience
- Disconnected from surroundings

On a separate sheet of page or in your journal, make list of times when you don't feel fully "in" yourself. What does this look like / feel like for you?

Adapted from

Harborview Medical Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress, WA State CBT+ (2012) https://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/psychoeducation.html#

Neurobiology of Trauma and Tonic Immobility

Some common question survivors often ask themselves or others is "why didn't I fight? Why can't I remember exactly what happened?" This information can be useful to think more kindly about your body/brain's reaction to the violence you experienced. Because, Science!

The hippocampus is the structure in the brain that processes information into memories. It takes all of the different sensory information that's going on in your world right now and it has to organize it. This is a process called **encoding.**

Then it has to consolidate that information. It has to organize it. It has to pull out the visual, the auditory, the sensory— it has to link all of this. Everything that belongs together gets grouped together, and then it will be stored somewhere throughout the brain.

The information that's coming into a victim's brain and body during a sexual assault is traumatic. It is threatening. It is one of the most psychologically damaging forms of crime that anybody could experience. The amygdala is going to recognize this as a threat to the

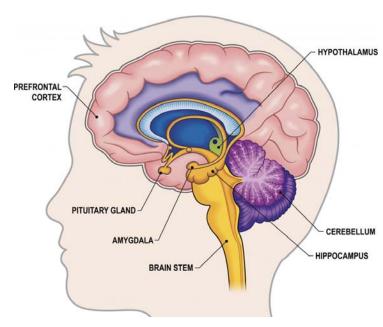


Image from Medical News Today

sustainability of the organism (the victim), much like an attempted murder. The amygdala processes it at that level of severity. It is going to signal to the hypothalamus, "We have a threat to the sustainability of the organism coming in." The hypothalamus is now going to signal to the pituitary and the HPA axis is going to kick in, and there is going to be a hormonal flood in the victim's body. (image Medical News Today)

The catecholamines are often going to be at very, very high levels during the assault. Specifically, there are four main chemicals that would be secreted by the adrenals during a traumatic event. The first one are the catecholamines (adrenaline is one). These are the

hormones that would be coursing through the body to help with the "fight" response, in the event that the body was going to be fighting back against the traumatic event that's happening to it. The catecholamines might also be useful if the response was to "flee" the situation — try to run away to try to get away from the threatening situation.

These hormones are very helpful for the fight-or-flight response; however, they may not be the best things in terms of **memory.** They also impair the circuits in our brain that control rational thought. So the parts of our prefrontal cortex that allow us to do "IF this THEN that" — that's rational thought in simple terms — those circuits literally do not work at their optimal levels when catecholamine levels are high. So a victim under sort of normal levels of catecholamine — meaning not being victimized — might be able to look at a situation and say, "Oh, well of course the rational, logical thing for me to do is this." The catecholamines have caused structural cellular damage to those circuits. It's not permanent; it's temporary.

Opiates are released in very high levels during sexual assault, blocking the physical pain, the emotional pain. Opiates are not sensitive to subtleties; they **block the pain**. So the affect that a victim might be communicating during the assault and afterward may be very flat, incredibly monotone, no emotional reaction, which again sometimes can seem counterintuitive to both the victim and other people. It's like "This was a horrible traumatic event. Why aren't you showing these kinds of emotions?" Opiate morphine is not letting it come through. It has been blunted.

And, finally, for some victims, it's the corticosteroids that have dumped out at very high levels and actually reduces the energy available to the body. People often only think that bodies respond in either fight-or-flight when in danger. A more accurate description is **fight**, **flight**, **or freeze**. Many who experience sexual violence don't fight or flee. Their body freezes on them because of this hormonal activation by the HPA axis.

It can trigger essentially an entire shutdown in the body. The technical name for which is tonic immobility. **Tonic immobility** is sometimes referred to as "rape-induced paralysis." It is an autonomic response, meaning that it's uncontrollable. This is not something a victim decides to do. It is evolutionarily wired into us to

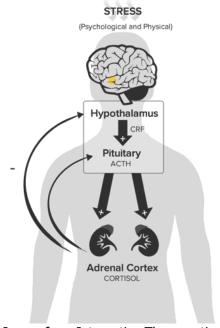


Image from Integrative Therapeutics

protect the survival of the person. Often the safest thing to do is not to fight or to run and for that reason our bodies have been wired for a freeze response too — to play dead, to look dead. Behaviorally, it is marked by increased breathing, eye closure, but the most marked characteristic of tonic immobility is muscular paralysis. A victim in a state of tonic immobility cannot move.

Research suggests that **between 12 and 50 percent of rape victims experience tonic immobility** during a sexual assault, and most data suggests that the rate is actually closer to the 50 percent.

There's also some emerging data that suggests that tonic immobility is slightly more common if a victim has a prior history of sexual assault. So if they had been sexually assaulted as a child and then was subsequently assaulted in adolescence or adulthood, the likelihood of experiencing tonic immobility at those later assaults tends to increase.

There are a number of reasons why a **sexual assault is not the fault of the victim**, but this is a helpful one for not just survivors but for those family, friends, or law enforcement who need additional help understanding.

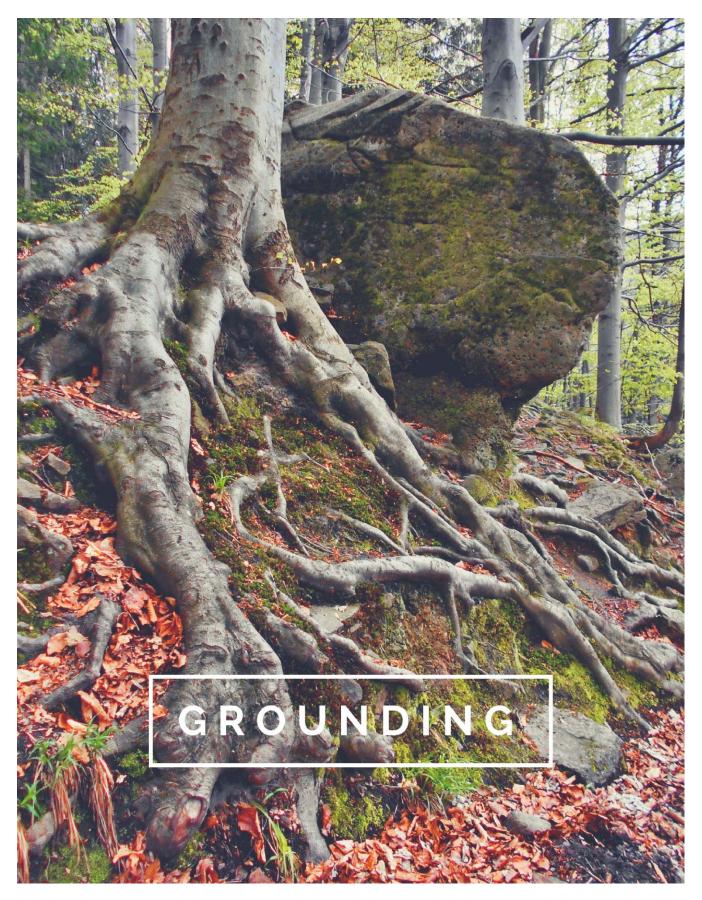
Adapted from

Campbell, Rebecca. "Neurobiology of Sexual Assault," National Institute of Justice webinar (2012)

Definitions

Catecholamines: Three commonly known ones are epinephrine (adrenaline), norepinephrine, and dopamine. Catecholamines can serve as neurotransmitters, transferring signals from neuron to neuron, as well as hormones, which regulate physiological functions such as your heartbeat and breathing rate. (Study.com)

HPA Axis: The hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis (HPA axis) has a central role in regulating many homeostatic systems in the body, including the metabolic system, cardiovascular system, immune system, reproductive system and central nervous system. The HPA axis integrates physical and psychosocial influences in order to allow an organism to adapt effectively to its environment, use resources, and optimize survival. (Wikipedia)





What is grounding?

Grounding is a particular type of coping strategy that is designed to "ground" you in or immediately connect you with the present moment. Grounding is often used as a way of coping with flashbacks or dissociation for people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Some basic and subtle grounding strategies can include:

- Eat something nourishing
- Drink water
- Take a walk
- Reassure yourself you are safe
- Remind yourself your feelings and reactions are normal
- Do simple math, spelling, or try the alphabet backwards

Placing both feet on the ground (shoes or barefoot). Feet on the Ground is a simple activity for a survivor's toolkit. It is a subtle strategy that can be used anywhere. If you are discussing challenging feelings or you notice the survivor you are working with is not very present and you notice they do not have their feet on the ground-- maybe crossed legs or curled up under them on the couch-- you can suggest they plant both feet on the ground. An extension of the Feet on the Ground is Tap Your Feet. Notice where you are.

Breathing techniques are a helpful way to ground and relax the nervous system. A lot of breathing techniques are subtle enough to do in any situation. (See 4-Square Breathing Handout)

Lying on the ground

This may not work for some survivors and may not be able to be done in some locations. (See Lying Down Handout for some helpful positions)

Essential oils

After experiencing trauma, one of the strongest triggers can be smells that are related to the abuse or the abuser. You can also use this sensory response to promote positive coping and to help with grounding.

(See Essential Oils Activity)

Body Scans, Body Mapping

Survivors of sexual violence often experience pain, discomfort, tension and/or have emotional responses in different areas of their bodies. In general, a survivor's body might feel unsafe and it might be hard for some to be fully present in their body.

It can be helpful to work with survivors to think about where their trauma sits in their bodies; it may be in many places. As with triggers, when survivors can identify when and how body pain or discomfort manifests related to their trauma, we can help they create self-care plans to comfort and/or minimize that pain.

(See Body Scan Worksheet / Body Mapping Worksheet)



Four Square Breathing

Also known as "Box Breathing," is a simple technique for self-de-escalation, grounding, and soothing.

Inhale the count of 4 Hold for the count of 4 Exhale the count of 4 Hold for the count of 4

Continue the exercise for as long needed.

Hold 4 Seconds 4 Seconds Hold 4 Seconds Hold 4 Seconds Hold Freathe Out

You can add more interaction or meditation qualities to this exercise.

Draw a square or print out an image of a square. Or find a square where you are (a picture frame, a square of toilet paper.) that you can focus on.

Start by focusing on the upper left corner of the square. As you inhale, move your gaze smoothly to the upper right corner. As you hold, bring your gaze to the lower right corner. As you exhale, move your gaze to the lower left corner. And, to complete the cycle, as you hold bring your gaze to the upper left corner. Repeat, as needed.

If you feel it would be helpful to shift thoughts from a negative place you can incorporate a gratitude practice. As you pause in each corner think of something quick and simple to be grateful for. Some examples might be:

- -Thankful for the hot shower I had this morning.
- -Thankful my child has enough to eat.
- -Thankful for the sunshine today.
- -Thankful for a specific person who loves me/helps me.

Reference

Leigh, Kristen. "Simple Stress Relief w/Square Breathing." http://www.sweetescapeyoga.com/simple-stress-relief-wsquare-breathing/



Many yoga classes end in a with practitioners in a resting position. These positions can relax the nervous system, muscle tension, as well as other benefits.

Savasana: Lie flat on your backs with the heels spread as wide as the yoga mat and the arms a few inches away from the body, palms facing upwards.



Image from w3doctor.com

Constructive Rest Pose: Begin by resting on your back. Knees bent and feet placed parallel to each other, the width apart of the front of your hip sockets. Place your heels approximately 12-16 inches away from your buttocks. Keep the trunk and head parallel with the floor. If not parallel place a folded, flat towel

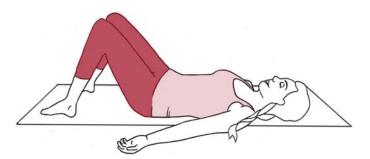


Image from julienelstrop.wordpress.com

under your head. For best results keep the arms below the shoulder height letting them rest over the ribcage, to the sides of your body or on your belly.

Legs Up the Wall: You lie on your back with your sit-bones as close to the wall as is comfortable for you. From there, you extend your legs up the wall, so that the backs of your legs are resting fully against it.



Image from tinasyoga.jimdo.com

This will be dependent on what positions feel unsafe or triggering and may not be an option for some survivors. Those who feel uncomfortable lying on their backs might try lying on their side or stomachs.

It can also be helpful, while lying on the ground in any position, to think about your body being connected to the earth or as being a part of something bigger and not alone.

Enhancement for Lying on the Ground: Lying on the ground might also have added relaxation benefits when done outside: on a blanket in the yard, at the beach, or under a tree. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues may all be eased by some time outdoors, especially when it is combined with exercise. By observing the ever-changing environments in nature, individuals cultivate a positive attitude, renewed attention, mindfulness, and sensory awareness (Ulrich).

References

田

Essential Oils

After experiencing trauma, one of the strongest triggers can be smells that are related to the abuse or the abuser. You can also use this sensory response to promote positive coping and to help with grounding. Preparing an essential oils spray with a survivor and connecting the smell to a positive healing environment and experience can be a beneficial tool. Survivors then can take this tool with them throughout their healing journey and use it when experiencing stress or triggers.

Materials needed: Small spray bottle(s), distilled water, witch hazel, funnel, a variety of essential oils to survivors to smell and choose from.

Instructions:

- 1. Use the funnel to add witch hazel to fill 1/3 of the spray bottle.
- 2. Add 10 drops of the essential oil.
- 3. Use the funnel to fill the remainder of the bottle with the water.
- 4. Shake to mix together ingredients.
- 5. Spray in the air, on skin, on linens, etc.

WCSAP. "Latin@ Support Group Guide" (2016). http://www.wcsap.org/latin-support-group-guide.

Body Scan

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, making sure that you do not have any constriction-loosen any tight clothing.

Starting with your feet, pay attention to the physical feelings in them: any pain, discomfort, coolness, warmth, tension, tightness, whatever. Simply pay attention to the physical feelings and sensations. Don't judge them as good or bad, don't try to change them, just be aware of them.

Slowly allow your awareness to drift up from your feet to your lower legs, again simply paying attention to any physical sensations in that part of your body, including any tightness, pain or discomfort. Then slowly let your awareness drift further up your body, doing the same gentle noticing for all of the parts of your body – your upper legs, hips, buttocks, pelvic region, stomach, chest, your lower back, upper back, fingers and hands, lower arms, upper arms, shoulders, neck, your head, forehead, temples, face – eyes, cheeks, nose, mouth, jaw line.

Then let your awareness drift gently and slowly back down your body, noticing any other places where there is pain, discomfort or tension and simply noticing this, until your awareness settles back at your feet.

Commence doing this exercise just for 5 minutes. It can be done sitting down in a chair or lying in bed. Over time, don't worry about how long it takes – just allow yourself to pay attention to the sensations in your body. If, while doing this exercise, thoughts intrude, that's okay – just notice the thoughts, notice yourself noticing the thoughts and gently guide your awareness back to your body.

Another option is to find (through online videos, mp3s, or apps) voice-guided body scans to help you center yourself in your body without getting distracted by troubling thoughts. Some options include:

- 30-Minute Body Scan for Beginners: https://www.mindful.org/beginners-body-scan-meditation/
- 5-Minute Body Scan: http://elishagoldstein.com/videos/5-minute-body-scan/

Reference

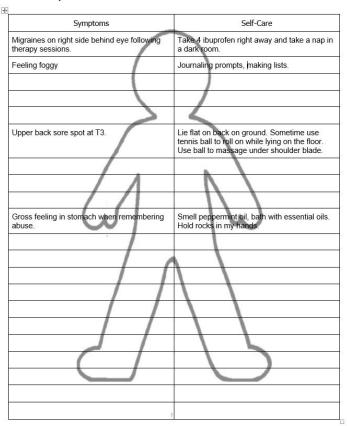
Compendium of Free Learning and Group Activities, "Activities, Games, Exercises in Resources in Mindfulness, Stress and Relaxation Exercises" http://activities.thetrainingworld.com/index.php?action=show&cat=33



Body Mapping

Sometimes people who have experienced trauma store memories in their bodies that cause area(s) to experience a number of sensations pain, tightness, nausea, discomfort, heat, cold, soreness, and many others. Using a body scan / ground yourself in your body. Scan for where in your body your trauma is manifesting. It can be helpful to document your symptoms using the following body mapping chart.

For example:



This can be an on-going list to document your body sensations and the self-care practices that help. This chart is useful in two ways: 1) it can serve as a reminder of what to do to take care of ourselves in times of great stress and distraction and 2) help us stay connected to our bodies. Sexual abuse and assault can sometimes make us feel disconnected from our bodies. Mind-body connection encourages us to take care of our bodies and help us stay present in our bodies.

Adapted from

Ardea, Naomi. The Art of Healing from Sexual Trauma. "Anatomy of Sexual Violation and Healing Care" (2016)

Symptoms	Self-Care
()
/ /	
ω	-1ω
	1



What is Coping?

Coping can be about getting through the day, practicing harm reduction, getting healthier, or even just distracting from stressors. For sexual assault survivors specifically, coping can include a number of strategies, some perceived to be positive or negative; however, it is important to remember that no one coping strategy is right and it is common to employ a combination of coping strategies that work in concert to help foster more positive experiences and higher tolerance for symptoms of trauma.

Some of shorter term coping behaviors might include:

- Dissociation: being disconnected from the here and now, mind wandering, out of body experience.
- Anticipating fearful events / prioritizing safety: avoiding going out, staying in bed.
- Avoidance / Escape- removing yourself from triggering situations, self-medicating to distract or numb.

Many people find these short term strategies helpful to provide temporary relief and survival but also move on from these strategies in lieu of more progressive coping that can further the healing process.

These longer term strategies can look like:

- Anticipating- planning, knowing the kinds of things that are triggering and creating plans to respond in those situations, medications like SSRIs.
- Social coping- seeking social supports, support groups, classes, running groups, family and friend support.
- Meaning-focused coping- finding a purpose in what happened / is happening, for some survivors this can look like speaking out, legislative lobbying, volunteering with trauma survivors, creating a positive aspect of the trauma experienced, help ensure it doesn't happen to more people through prevention work.
- Other coping / stress management- relaxation (meditation, massage), nutrition (eating enough food, drinking water), sleep (when you're tired, get regular: go to bed at the same time at night / get up at the same time every morning), physical exercise (any kind!)

"Until we understand that traumatic symptoms are physiological as well as psychological, we will be woefully inadequate in our attempts to help them heal."

- Peter Levine, Author of Waking the Tiger and Healing Trauma

The Stress Ladder

SO STRESSED I MIGHT EXPLODE



Think of a range of stressful things relevant to your life, from slightly bothersome to incredibly stressful.

How stressful something might be depends on the individual and the circumstances, and there is no right or wrong. For example, running out of toothpaste might be really stressful if you were on your way to a job interview.

Write each stressful thing relevant to your life near the appropriate rung on the ladder, depending on how stressful the item seems to you.

CALM and RELAXED

Reference

WCSAP. "Teen Support Group Guide" (2013). http://www.wcsap.org/teen-support-group-guide.



C - CALM

- When you are stressed, you tend to "climb the stress ladder." You are hanging out close to the top, and even if the next stressful thing that happens is a small one, it can make you fall.
- The goal is to do regular activities that help you stay toward the bottom of the stress ladder. That way, if something difficult comes up, you can work your way back down to the ground safely.
- Pay attention to your health habits if you want to feel calmer. It may sound boring, but getting enough sleep, eating three meals a day, and drinking fewer caffeinated drinks (like coffee, tea, or soda) can really help lower your stress level.
- Calming activities include
 - Regular exercise walking, bicycling, swimming, dancing, or any other aerobic exercise, preferably done on a daily basis. Yoga and tai chi are calming exercises, and you may be able to find a local class.
 - Meditation this can be as simple as breathing slowly and repeating a simple word, like the word "one." Try to clear your mind, and if thoughts come up, just let them float by. You can also find books, DVDs, and CDs on meditation.
 - Enjoying nature simply being outside in a beautiful setting can be calming.
 Try to find a safe park or any other place where you can pay attention to the natural environment.
 - Simple breathing exercises breathe in slowly and deeply to the count of four, hold for a count of three, and exhale slowly, releasing all the air in your lungs. Repeat several times.

My plan for increasing calming activities:			

O - OPEN

- Holding things in can increase your stress level. Find at least one adult you can
 confide in comfortably —a parent, another relative, a family friend, a school counselor,
 or a mental health therapist. If you worry you might be in an abusive relationship or
 you have had any unwanted sexual experiences, you can also talk to an advocate at
 your local domestic violence or sexual assault center.
- **Develop your assertiveness skills.** Begin by saying how you feel, explain how the other person's behavior affects you, and ask for change. "I feel really irritated because you showed up an hour late and we planned to see a movie. When you don't call and let me know what is going on, I can't make other plans. If something comes up and you are going to be late, please give me a call." If you don't feel safe or comfortable talking this way with a friend or someone you are seeing, that's a sign that the relationship may not be healthy.
- Be honest with yourself. If you are doing things that are increasing your stress level, such as waiting to the last minute to get your schoolwork done or increasing tension at home by not doing your chores, admit it to yourself and make a plan for improvement.

My plan for increasing openness activities:			

P – PLAYFUL

Having fun is a great way to reduce your stress. Make a list of things you really
enjoy doing. Then pick a few items from your list and figure out a way to make them
happen this week. Try to use your imagination to think of some things you would enjoy
but you haven't done before, like learning to play guitar or trying a new video game,
and be sure to include some simple things like calling a friend you haven't seen in a
while or watching a movie at home.

- **Build up your sense of humor.** Humor is one of the best ways to be resilient, which means that you can bounce back when tough things happen. Try to see the funny side of things. When you are feeling down or stressed, watching a comedy or talking to a friend with a great sense of humor can help improve your mood.
- **Find what you love to do**. When even working hard seems like play, you have found the right activity. It could be drawing, writing a song, making a video, building a website, putting together just the right outfit, learning a martial art, helping build a garden shed, or cooking a great meal. Remember that any new activity can feel a bit awkward or difficult at first, but if you stick with it, it can be really rewarding.

My plan for increasing playful activities:			

E – ENCOURAGING

- **Hang around with people who lift you up,** rather than tearing you down. When you are stressed, it is especially important to think about the people you spend time with. Who makes you feel good? How can you spend more time with those people?
- **Encourage yourself.** Pay attention to what you say to yourself. Would you say something like that to a friend who was having a hard time? Think of a simple, encouraging phrase (called "an affirmation") and repeat it to yourself. It might be something like, "I am a strong person, and I can get through this."
- Make sure you have encouraging adults in your life. If your mom or dad is going through a tough time, they may not be helping you to feel positive. This is when a grandparent, a teacher, or a coach who believes in you can be really helpful.
- **Encourage others.** When you make an effort to help others, it makes you feel better about yourself. Volunteer work is a great way to do this. You can also look for opportunities to help friends and family members or to do something positive in your community. Just remember to balance your needs with your desire to help, so you don't get in over your head or become overwhelmed.

My plan for increasing encouraging activities:			

Reference

WCSAP. "Teen Support Group Guide" (2013). http://www.wcsap.org/teen-support-group-guide.



Coping with Anniversaries

For people who have been a victim of rape or sexual abuse, the anniversary or anniversaries of what happened are far from easy to deal with. Sometimes the date when an assault happened is not as significant or is not the only date that feels hard. It can be the date the abuser died, their own birthday, or date they got sober. Holidays or traditional family gathering times can also be a challenging time for those who have experienced abuse within the family and/or whose family have not been supportive of their healing or safety.

These are just some of the potentially more depressing, triggering, grieving times for survivors. And each survivor you work with that has a fair amount of distance from their assault or abuse will have their own significant dates or anniversaries with which they will need additional support.

"I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become."

- Carl Jung, psychologist

Advocacy approaches for anniversaries

Talk about the dates and season more challenging for the survivor you are working with. Help them make a plan for coping during these times with any of the tools available here or other creative ideas you come up with together.

Activities that involve cleansing or letting go: Some people find ritual useful in coping or marking the occasion with a healing practice.

This could look like:

- writing a letter and then burning it
- taking a rock or other item, holding it while talking or thinking about the abuse or assault and them throwing it into the ocean or lake
- cleaning a room or cleaning out old stuff from that time period can be cleansing
- journaling, painting, drawing while imagining moving your experience from your body onto paper

Self-care activities: Doing what you would wish others would do for you on a hard day.

This could look like:

- buying yourself flowers
- baking a cake
- going to the spa or taking a bath
- taking the day off from work
- taking a walk outdoors, connect with nature
- keeping busy and social plan to meet up with friends, family, or play with children in your life
- or not making plans-- staying in bed all day

Activities that help to make meaning from your experience. This can look like:

- volunteering or donating to a local sexual assault center or other similar
- send a care package you'd wish you were given when you were in crisis
- donate books you found helpful in your healing to the library or sexual assault center

During these times of heightened stress and emotion, setbacks can happen—less healthy coping mechanisms might return or the day turned out much more overwhelming and devastating than expected. Help survivors you work with remember that healing is not a straight line and revisiting things we thought we had moved on from or healed from happens. It is normal and common.

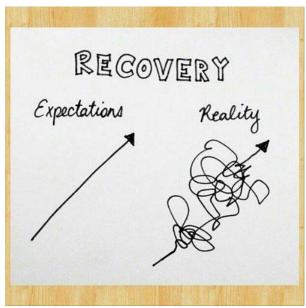


Image from Pinterest



Coping Online Resources

These are a list of a few online resources that can help support survivors in their coping, healing, and connection to resources when in person support is not available, accessible, or just not preferred. There are so many websites that provide a variety of resources for survivors and the list is growing and changing all the time.

Grounding Tools You Can Use

This tool, provided by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, is designed for all survivors and advocates. It will walk you through five easy grounding techniques. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/courses/grounding/eng/html5.html

Pandora's Project

This site provides support and resources for survivors of rape and sexual abuse which include message board, chat room, lending library, online support group, survivor-authored articles, and links to additional resources.

http://www.pandys.org/index.html

There is No Straight Path

A collection of self-care and reflection activities designed to support survivors in gaining tools for responding to stress and discomfort. Like a watering hole, 'There is No Straight Path' can be a source of respite and inspiration. If you click on the spiral you will open activities and reflection prompts, art projects and meditations, grounding techniques and recipes; ideas that can be accessed immediately and provide direction.

http://dcrcc.org/counseling/no-straight-path/

Technology Safety

This website, by the National Network to End Domestic Violence is the clearinghouse for being safe online. The resources contain safety tips, information, and privacy strategies for survivors on the use of technology. This is not related to coping but might be a good place to visit if you want to ensure your privacy in using other online tools or smart phone apps.

https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors



Smart Phone Apps that Support Coping

There are a number of smart phone apps that survivors find helpful and supportive to their healing. These are just a few examples—new apps are developed every day as technology continues to advance.

PTSD Coach has sections to learn about PTSD, tracking symptoms, managing symptoms, and getting support. Tools include: guided mindfulness exercises, positive imagery, inspiring quotes, grounding exercises, help falling asleep, and more. You can personalize soothing songs, mindful pictures, and support contacts. This app does not require creation of an account.

iChill shares with you a set of wellness skills called the Community Resiliency Model. Science tells us that when we exercise our resiliency muscle by practicing the skills, our wellbeing expands. This app encourages the user to practice skills (Tracking, Resourcing, Grounding, Shift & Stay). This app does not require creation of an account.

MindShift includes information on anxiety, symptoms tracking tool, relaxations and visualizations, inspiration, coping strategies, and includes more opportunities for documentation. This app does not require creation of an account.

Happify app is focused on increasing positivity. Tools include a game where the user "knocks out" negative feelings and a game where you gain points for selecting positive words. It includes a newsfeed of only positive or uplifting stories. It also includes tools for practicing empathy and thankfulness. It also connects to community if you choose. It requires you to set up an account (free) but also tries to upsell to premium account levels.

Virtual Hope Box contains simple tools to help patients with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking. It does not require an account.

Calm is an app focused on mindfulness and meditation. It includes guided meditations, Sleep Stories, breathing programs and relaxing music. It requires you to set up an account (free) but also tries to upsell to premium account levels.



Additional Coping Tools

In addition to the Coping Tools in this Toolkit, Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress (HCSATS) has a number of Coping Skills handouts, for both adults and children, that can be found on their website here

https://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/cognitive_coping.html#

Sections include:

- -Challenging Thoughts
- -Managing Anger
- -Managing Distress
- -Identifying and Rating Feelings
- -Relaxation
- -Sleep Hygiene



What is Safety?



Most people think of safety as a "feeling" of being safe. While this is one way to judge safety, it is not always reliable. You can be in a very safe situation and feel unsafe because you are dealing with an aspect of your abuse. Or, because you are a trauma survivor, you may be in an unsafe situation and feel just fine. While feeling safe is important, it does not necessarily give you reliable ground upon which to determine if you are safe, or safe enough.

What tells you that you are safe?

When checking in on your safety in a given situation, consider the following:

- How do you feel in your body? Do you feel safe, scared, unsettled?
- Is your physical environment safe and free of violence and abuse?
- Does your partner, lover, or friend consider your needs, wants, desires as important and relevant to their own?
- Can your partner, lover, or friend really meet your needs? Do they have the know-how, the tools, and the good intention?
- Do you have the power in this situation to act on your own behalf? To take care of yourself fully?
- Are you making your own choices? Not being pressured, pushed, or manipulated?

Asking yourself these questions gives you a way to assess whether or not you are safe—even when you do not feel safe.

Exploring Boundaries

Exploring boundaries with a survivor can be a very important part of healing and establishing more feelings of safety. Boundary work can range from saying no to telemarketers to thinking about the kind of sex you prefer and how to talk about it with a sexual partner.

Advocates can be helpful to a survivor in exploring this spectrum.

Advocates can help survivors transform the vulnerability sexual violence has created through extreme boundary violation, once or over several years, to empowerment through:

- taking inventory of (or map) their boundaries,
- practicing setting boundaries,
- brainstorming how to talk to someone about their boundary or reaffirm their boundary
- helping survivors connect these boundary discussions to consent, safety, avoiding triggers, and healing.

There are a two activities included in this toolkit but so many more available online. Below are some recommended starting places for boundary and consent explorations either with a survivor or as a referral for the survivor to check out on their own.

COM | PASSionate REVOLT

https://compassionaterevolt.wordpress.com/tag/compassionate-boundaries/

This website has worksheets with examples and other tools related to establishing boundaries and is more specific to sex and sexuality.

"Yes, No, Maybe So: A Sexual Inventory Stocklist" - Scarleteen

http://www.scarleteen.com/article/advice/yes no maybe so a sexual inventory stocklist This is an activity to take stock in a "Yes / No / Maybe So" extensive list to related to one's body, sex, and sexuality.

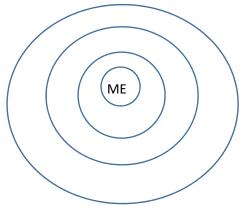
"Ask. Listen. Respect." Campaign- Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance http://www.teachconsent.org

Many of the survivors we work with a teens or young adults. This site includes curriculum and tools for teaching consent.

Boundary Activity



Draw a series of concentric circles descending in size like a target sign. The smallest most inner circle is you.



Write in where you would put people in your life, based on how close these people are to you. You can name individuals like "Michelle" or "my dad" and/or you can choose to list groups of people like "co-workers."

Once you have completed your boundary map, take a look and ask yourself:

- Do you move people from one circle to another? Is that an easy or a hard thing to do?
- Can you see the path someone took to get to the circle you keep them in now?
- If you don't like where someone is now, do you feel like you could move them to a different level?
- Are other people in your ME space?

Reference

WCSAP. "Circle of Hope: A Guide for Conducting Effective Psychoeducational Support Groups" (2014). http://www.wcsap.org/circle-hope-guide-conducting-effective-psychoeducational-support-groups.



The Solar System Activity

The Solar System exercise gives folks a visual snapshot of their relationship constellation. It gives them information on who is in their life and how close they feel to those people, as well as an opportunity to express for themselves some of the qualities, strengths and challenges of their individual relationships. More than anything, the Solar System offers a bird's eye view of our relationship life, and this perspective can bring valuable new awareness.

This exercise can bring up difficult feelings for people. It can feel intense or hard for people to take stock of who they have in their life and how they have them. Some people will find it clarifying, hopeful, or reassuring to see how many people they are close with. Others can feel frustration or disappointment at the make-up of their support system.

Activity instructions:

- 1. Have participant choose their favorite color from an assortment of markers, crayons, or colored pencils made available to them. This color is reserved only for YOU. With this color draw a smallish circle in the center of the page. This is YOU. Label it with your name, with the word "me" or with a personal doodle that you identify with.
- 2. Choose 3-5 other colors.
- 3. Choose 4-8 people in your life, who are closest to you. Plot them on the paper at a position and distance significant to you. Draw circles (or other shapes) around them.
- 4. Draw lines connecting you to these different people. These lines are like spokes on a wheel connected to you. These lines can be thick and bold, thin, jagged, dotted, loopy, any line you want. This is an opportunity to draw lines that represent an aspect of the connection you have to different people. For example, if my relationship to a specific person is hot and cold, I might draw a dotted line to show both connection and distance.
- 5. Next, illustrate the energy input and output each relationship represents. The question you are answering is: in this moment, is this relationship giving me energy and support or draining my energy? Using (+/-) or arrows to show the energy giving and energy depleting for your relationships.
- 6. It is important to remember that this is a snapshot of your solar system today. This is not an audit for your last year and it is not an audit of the lifespan of your relationships.

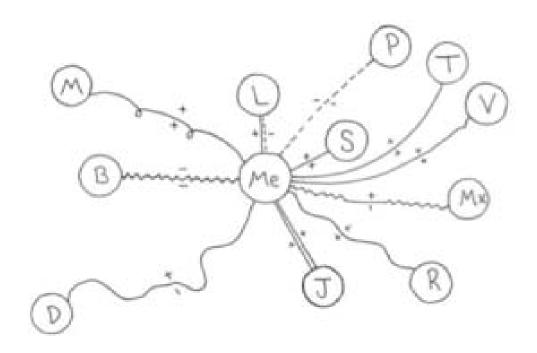


Image from Home Alive

Debrief with the survivor:

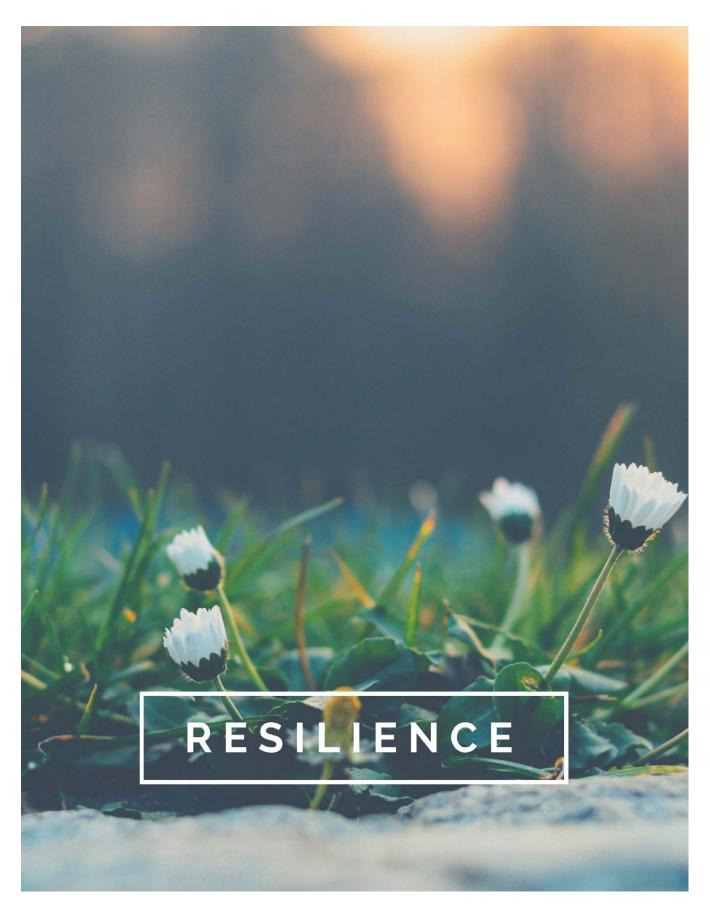
- Why do you think I had you change colors?
 - o Answer: This is ME, this is YOU. Having ourselves in our own unique color helps solidify the idea of this line of distinction between ourselves and our world.
- The bumper sticker for this exercise is: YOU ARE THE CENTER OF YOUR UNIVERSE.
 - Why? Of course we all know this does not mean that you are the center of THE universe. But without YOU there would be no 'your universe.' It is okay and necessary for YOU to be at the center. It is more than necessary, it is accurate. When we start putting other people at the center of our universe, it can be really difficult to know what our boundaries are and where we can assert our needs, desires, and expectations.
- What did you notice about your solar system?
- What, if anything, surprised you?
- What came up? What was it like to do this?
- How is this like life?

Additional Debrief Questions/Ideas to Consider:

- Is everyone in your universe in a place where you want them?
- Is there anyone who you want closer to you?
- Anyone who you want further from you?
- What can you do to bring people in who are currently far away?
- Are there any people who you find exhausting to be around?
- Any people who energize/revitalize you?
- What can you do to distance yourself from people who you don't want to be so close to you? Etc.
- What if everyone is far away?
- What if everyone is really close?
- There might be real/strategic/good reasons why everyone might be really far away or really close right now.
- Do you want your universe to look this way forever?
- Is the mapping of your universe currently serving you? Is it meeting your needs?
- Does the mapping of your universe match your values and intention?
- Encourage survivors to repeat this activity on their own every few months or once a year to see how their universe may change!

Reference

Home Alive Curriculum. http://www.teachhomealive.org/curriculum/iv-boundary-setting/the-solar-system/.





Compassionate Reframing

When survivors have a lot of emotional pain they often express it through negative self-talk, self-harm, or other forms of unhealthy coping. Work with survivors to proactively practice a more compassionate approach.

- Compassion involves validating and being kind to yourself, not dismissing or ignoring your feelings.
- Compassion will help healing.
- Practice, practice, practice!

Questions to explore:

- What does negative self-talk sound like?
- What does compassionate self-talk sound like?
- How might using compassion toward yourself and your situations prevent unhealthy coping behaviors?
- Does it bring up any feelings when you try talking to yourself compassionately?
- How are your traumatic experiences related to negative self-talk?

Example of Compassionate Reframing:

Negative self-view: "I am so stupid! I can't believe I relapsed!"

Compassionate self-view: "I still haven't found a coping tool that works for me, but I am trying and it's okay for to take a little longer. I am still growing by learning what does not work for me."



Connection to Culture

Staying connected to your culture provides a sense of belonging and purpose to one's life. We know that survivors heal and recover at far greater rates when they have solid support networks and a sense of community.

Provide a space where survivors can speak about the experiences of navigating through American culture while attempting to stay connected to one's native culture. Following traumatic events, many survivors experience anxiety and hypervigilance in unfamiliar situations. For immigrant survivors, nearly everything in their environment may be unfamiliar. Finding ways to provide even a small glimpse of something familiar from a survivor's home country can be a healing experience during advocacy.

Staying Grounded in Culture and Reducing Isolation

Help survivors reduce feelings of isolation by making connections between cultural practices and healing.

• What are common or favorite foods, celebrations, beliefs from the survivor's culture that they feel particularly connected to? What feels like home?

Staying rooted in one's home country culture increases feelings of safety, and promotes strong relationships.

- What do you like best about your culture?
- What in your culture are you most proud of?
- What do you like about how people relate to each other in your culture, in families, or in other relationships?

Identifying Cultural Values

What are the one or two most important values of your culture?

- Are these values also important to you?
- What messaging, positive or negative, do these values give?
- In what ways can these / have these values affected your healing from sexual violence?

Reference

WCSAP. "Latin@ Support Group Guide" (2016). http://www.wcsap.org/latin-support-group-guide.

Self-Affirmation Art



Affirmations can be a powerful tool to help you change your mood, state of mind, and manifest the change you desire in your life. But they work best if you can first identify the unwholesome belief that is opposing them.

Material ideas:

- Paper
- Stones
- Religious, spirituality, or belief system icon
- Markers, paint, or crayons

The materials in this activity can be varied. Ideally, the base material would have personal meaning to the client.

Activity Instructions:

Ask the client to first identify messages that resonate with themselves. For examples of possible messages use: http://refugecenter.org/transforming-negative-self-talk-with-positive-affirmation/

The client writes affirming and inspiring messages on whatever materials they choose.

An advocate can also participate and create some of their own. Plan with the client in which situations they would like to use the affirmation, for example at court or other stressful places.



Image from Pinterest

Reference

Psychology Today. "5 Steps to Make Affirmations Work for You" (2011). https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-wise-open-mind/201108/5-steps-make-affirmations-work-you.



Hope-Action Board

The key benefit of a vision board is to focus on the path to the goal with positive energy. In addition to the outcomes being represented, direct the client to include symbols of the path.

Research shows those who spend more time visualizing on how to obtain the goal were more successful in achieving it. For example, students who visualized how they were going to study for an exam did better than those who only visualized receiving an A. The path is as critical as, if not more so, then the goal. This may be useful in guiding clients in making their board. Before having a client do this activity, make sure to have conversations about the process of thinking of the present and the path to the future.

Be sure to emphasize the meditative aspect in the process of building the board.

Materials ideas:

- A diversity of magazines
- Scissors, markers, and glue
- Paper or poster board

Reference

WCSAP. "Youth Activity Guide for Advocates and Preventionists" (2016). http://www.wcsap.org/youth-activity-guide.



Journaling

Writing can be a powerful way to process your feelings. The act of putting pen to paper can also provide a venue for getting those feelings out of your body. It also can transfer those feelings into a tangible item that can be crumpled up, burned, given to another, read aloud, kept hidden, or saved for when you need a reminder of where you have been or what helps when you forget. It can be helpful to draw an artistic expression of your feelings or doodle to keep your mind occupied when you are feeling nervous or stressed.

Your writing can be kept together in a journal or on loose leaf paper with or without lines. Some enjoy to make their own journals or pick one out special for yourself from the store.

The following are some journaling prompts that can be helpful for individuals alone or with an advocate. These journaling prompts can also be useful for folks who do not enjoy writing but would rather process out loud as discussion topics in advocacy sessions.

- -What would justice look like for you?
- -What would it be like to confront who hurt you?
- -What would it be like to talk about your abuse with your family?
- -How do you wish knew about your pain and how would you tell them?
- -What does healing look like to you? What does healing mean? How will you know you have made progress?
- -Draw a visual representation of your breathing when stressed. Then, draw a visual representation of your breathing when engaged in a healing practice.
- -Choose a song that represents healing to you. What aspects of that song are significant to your experience? (In advocacy session, ask the survivor to bring the song in or search for it on YouTube, listen to it together then discuss the prompt.)

Support Circle

This activity should be done by the client and advocate in collaboration. It can be a particularly useful activity for those whose family is not supportive or have lost a few important friends and feel alone.

Draw concentric circles and have the client write in names of their support network. In the center, have the client write their name. In the closest to the center ring, write the names of those who help the most and those who are less supportive farther out. We then create a narrative on how each person can help them.

For example, they may have written "mom" close to the center so we would explore and then write what that support looks like. For example, "my mom listens to me when I am sad. She knows all of my coping skills and reminds me of them when I need them."

Work with the client to find out where you as an advocate might be located in this support circle. It doesn't matter where they put you, it is only important that they know there is one more person who can support them. You can use this as an opportunity to reinforce the role of the advocate and to have at least one person they know is supportive; something like:

- "I know my advocate believes me and gives me resources."
- "There is a 24-hour support line so I know I am never alone."

Use the support circle as a reminder at times when the client says they are alone or no one believes them or I don't know who can help me. The Support Circle is a working document and, like the Boundaries activity, can be changed with names added and subtracted over time.

Reference

Kern, Sara. Quality Behavioral Health Hererra, Rosanna. SARC Kennewick This toolkit is unfinished. **This is yours.** It needs your personal touch. Collect the activites you have used over the years or your mentor passed down to you and add them to this binder. Keep adding new things you think of, write in the margins, and, most importantly, capture the wisdom of the survivors you work with!

