TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE

A GUIDE TO USING TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE

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WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE?

What is trauma-informed language?

Trauma-informed language refers to communication that is sensitive and understanding towards individuals who have experienced trauma. It involves using words and phrases that respect the person's experiences and avoid triggering or re-traumatizing them. Here are some principles of trauma-informed language:

Principles of Trauma-Informed Language:

- Empowerment: Language that empowers individuals by acknowledging their strength and resilience.
- Safety: Creating a safe environment through respectful and non-judgmental communication.
- Trustworthiness: Being reliable and consistent in interactions.
- Choice: Allowing individuals to have choices and control over their communication and interactions.
- Collaboration: Involving individuals in decision-making and respecting their preferences.
- Respect: Using respectful language that does not minimize or invalidate their experiences.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Being aware of and respectful towards cultural differences in communication styles and preferences.

TIPS TO ENSURE USE TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE

Using trauma-Informed Language

1. **Check what their preferences** are for person first or identity first language, i.e person with trauma? A person who has experienced trauma?
2. **Avoid blame laden language**, i.e what's wrong with you? Why can't you just be normal? Why do you act like this?
3. **Find out** if they have any triggering phrases or words that you can avoid.
4. **Respect boundaries**. Learn about their preference for personal space, touch and certain topics of conversation. Arm them with phrases they can use for advocacy, i.e stop that, I don't like that, I don't want to.
5. **Provide options**. Many people who have suffered trauma have difficulty with making decisions.





REFRAMING LANGUAGE SO IT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED

Examples:

What's wrong with you?

Implies there is something 'wrong' with the victim, stigmatising and potentially triggering.

How can I help you?

Invites collaboration, respects autonomy and acknowledges the person's agency in determining their own needs.

You/He/She/They could speak fine the other day!

Implies the person is 'faking' communication needs. Not understanding of the impact of trauma on language.

I notice you seem quieter today, how are you feeling? Can I do anything to support you?

Validates that their communication needs may fluctuate, offers support and understanding.

Stop being so sensitive!

Invalidates the person's emotions. Can induce feelings of shame and guilt.

It's okay to feel emotions deeply; your sensitivity is a strength.

Reframes that feeling emotions is good, demonstrates sensitivty as a positive trait.

WHY USE TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE?

Why use Trauma-Informed Language?

- Trauma-informed language creates a supportive and understanding environment for individuals who have experienced trauma.
- It acknowledges the impact of trauma on a person's well-being and communication, emphasizing respect, safety, and empowerment in interactions.
- By using trauma-informed language, we aim to avoid triggering or re-traumatizing individuals, promote healing and recovery, and build trust and empathy in relationships.
- This approach helps to ensure that our communication is sensitive, respectful, and supportive of each person's unique experiences and needs.



FURTHER RESOURCES AND READING:

For additional information, free resources, and training, I have compiled the following:

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists - Mind Your Words - free training for anyone supporting children and young people with mental health needs.
https://www.rcslt.org/learning/mind-your-words/

Current Government guidance on trauma informed care - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice

Mind

MIND - Charity in the UK that supports and promotes the mental health and well being of all.
www.mind.org.uk

www.adhdslt.co.uk

I offer training and support for those who support people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) cooccurring with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Please visit my website for more information. www.adhdslt.co.uk

ABOUT

Thank you for exploring this ADHD SLT resource! 🌈
Created by a qualified Speech and Language Therapist with a neurodiversity-affirming approach.
Enjoyed this resource? Discover more printable activities, interactive games and communication resources at: www.adhdslt.co.uk
Supporting communication, autonomy and well-being through creative, flexible activities. Scan the QR Code to explore!

ADHD SLT

Neurodivergent-Affirming Speech and Language Therapist and Well-Being Support