

# Supporting Children and Youth Experiencing Trauma

## Group Discussion Facilitation Guide

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# Discussion groups overview



## Discussion groups are meant to:

- Provide time for personal and professional reflection to become more self-aware and deepen the skills learned in the series
- Help us recognize that our own experiences affect how we perceive situations, and learn from others' perspectives so we can broaden our view
- Create a safe space to acknowledge difficult feelings and challenges that may arise throughout this training as part of a group of educators and supportive adults who can provide valuable support



## The following pages provide helpful structure and guidance for running discussion groups:

- Tips for **trauma-informed** group facilitation
- Additional **best practices** for discussion group facilitation
- Sample **discussion guides** to accompany the training series

# Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation

- Set ground rules related to confidentiality so that participants can freely share their perspectives without fear of repercussions.
- As a team, develop operational principles as a team that the group can agree on at the first meeting. Example principles:
  - 1) We are open and honest with one another.
  - 2) We listen to and respect each other's ideas and opinions.
  - 3) We honor each other's lived experience.
  - 4) What is said in the group stays in the group.
- Open the floor for participants to share what they want to get out of the session.
- Start with a specific focus, but allow the conversation to diverge if helpful to promote reflection and exploration.
- Help participants feel empowered to provide coaching and feedback to their peers (e.g., encourage participants to connect between sessions).
- Recognize power dynamics that may be present, and create a space that affirms equality of opinions (e.g., being mindful of speaking time).
- Understand that conversation may include both personal and professional situations.
- Allow a "pass" if someone does not feel comfortable sharing.
- Provide a trauma-informed transition at the beginning and end of each session (examples provided in each session).



Session 1:

# The Trauma-Informed Educators and Supportive Adults We Want to Be



# The Trauma-Informed Educators and Supportive Adults We Want to Be

## Welcome

2 minutes

Introductions with an ice-breaker

Example: Share one win you had today, this week, or this month (can be big or small)!

## Trauma-informed transition to regulate

2 minutes

Mindful moment

Example: Let's take a moment to ground ourselves in the present moment. Take three cleansing breaths in through your nose for the count of 3 and exhale for the count of 5. Repeat: in through your nose and out through your mouth. Repeat. And now return to your regular breath and just spend one minute focusing on your breath. Your mind might wander, and that is okay. Just return to your breath.

## Group norms (operating principles)

2 minutes

Establish group norms that will be referred to for each session. Provide opportunities for everyone to have input. (See examples under "Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation.")

## Content review

5 minutes

In Session 1 of the course, you learned how to:

- Explain what trauma is and how it presents itself in children and youth
- Describe your role as a trauma-informed educator or supportive adult & how you can use the 4 R's of a Trauma-Informed Approach
- Recognize your mindset when faced with challenges
- Reframe your mindset using the Awareness, Pause, Reframe technique

## Activity

10 minutes

Pair up and share your biggest take away from Session 1. Have each pair share with the group.

# The Trauma-Informed Educators and Supportive Adults We Want to Be

## Discussion

20 minutes

Ask the group to think about a challenging time they have had in the past. This can be in your personal or professional life.

- What strengths did you rely on to get through this time?
- How did your mindset influence how you handled this time in your life?
- What relationships felt most supportive through this time?

One key element of becoming a trauma-informed educator or supportive adult is fostering your own resilience. Ask a member of the group to share their challenging experience, and have the listeners tune in to what strengths they hear in the story.

- What coping skills did the speaker use?
- Are these like yours?

Group sharing:

Ask the group to share what skills and strengths they use during challenging times.

When we don't take the time to "fill our cup," how does this affect our work setting?

## Weekly challenge ideas

2 minutes

This week, take 5 minutes daily to reflect on a challenge you face in the school environment. Use the Awareness, Pause, Reframe technique to reframe the challenge!

Awareness

Pause

Reframe the situation

This week, take 5 minutes daily for a mindful moment – this could involve fully engaging your senses in an activity like meditating, stretching, or yoga.

## Closing

2 minutes

Ask everyone to share one word that sums up how they feel after meeting.

Session 2:

# Foundations of Trauma and Resilience



# Foundations of Trauma and Resilience

## Welcome

2 minutes

Introductions with an ice-breaker

Example: Share one thing you are grateful for in this moment (can be big or small)!

## Trauma-informed transition to regulate

2 minutes

Mindful moment

Example: Everyone stands up and spreads their arms out wide. Ask the team to take in a deep long breath and bring the arms in to hug yourself and exhale. Repeat 3 times.

## Group norms (operating principles)

2 minutes

Review group norms that were created in the last session. Provide an opportunity to add a norm if something new came up at the last meeting. (See examples under 'Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation.')

## Weekly challenge review (Awareness, Pause, Reframe or mindful moment)

5 minutes

Ask one or two people to share how their weekly challenge went.  
Was it helpful, and if so, how?  
What barriers got in the way?

## Content review

5 minutes

In Session 2 of the course, you learned how to:

- Recognize when and how Adverse Childhood Experiences and other potentially traumatic events affect children's abilities to learn and engage
- Understand what it means to be a trauma-informed mandated reporter
- Recognize the impact that implicit biases can have on building supportive relationships with children and youth
- Identify children's strengths and protective factors
- Practice an approach to forging stronger relationships with all children and youth and support them in building resilience and positive coping strategies

## Activity

10 minutes

As a group, spend some time debriefing about mandated reporting. What is our school or employer's process? What supports are in place if you must report? Barriers/worries?



# Foundations of Trauma and Resilience

## Discussion

20 minutes

We all carry with us implicit biases that can sometimes get in the way of our ability to form trusting and positive relationships with children and youth.

Pair up with a partner to discuss the following questions. Ask each pair to share one take-away from their conversation.

What are some scenarios in which you have passed judgment?

- What do you wish you knew that would have changed your response?
- How do you think the child or their family felt?
- How do you feel when you reflect on this judgement?
- What would you do differently now?

One key element of becoming a trauma-informed educator or supportive adult is understanding that we often do not know what experiences children and their families are going through or have gone through in the past. When we show empathy as if we did, we promote a safe learning environment. Be curious, listen, and ask questions.

Group sharing:

Ask the group what tips or resources we can use and share with co-workers that can help us recognize our own biases.

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## Weekly challenge ideas

2 minutes

This week, reflect on a time when you were judged. How did it make you feel? What do you wish they knew? How would you have wanted them to respond without knowing the situation?

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## Closing

2 minutes

Ask everyone to share one word that sums up how they feel after meeting.

Session 3:

# Addressing Collective Traumatic Events with Children and Youth



# Addressing Collective Traumatic Events with Children or Youth

## Welcome

2 minutes

Introductions with an ice-breaker

Example: What strength do you use most often to connect with children and youth?

## Trauma-informed transition to regulate

2 minutes

Mindful moment

Example: Find a comfortable position in your chair. Take a couple of cleansing breaths. Now clench your fists and breathe into your fingers. Release. Repeat 3 times.

## Group norms (operating principles)

2 minutes

Review group norms. Provide an opportunity to add a norm if something new came up at the last meeting. (See examples under “Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation.”)

## Weekly challenge review (Implicit bias: reflect on a time you felt judged)

5 minutes

Ask one or two people to share how their weekly challenge went.

Was it helpful, and if so, how?

Has implicit bias impacted your ability to be at your best in and out of the classroom?

## Content review

5 minutes

In Session 3 of the course, you learned how to:

- Identify how trauma manifests in groups of people and why people of color, certain ethnic groups, and indigenous populations are disproportionately affected
- Recognize how implicit bias can impact perceptions of what trauma is and who may need help
- Apply the 4 Rs in the context of collective traumatic events, both with individual children and in a broader classroom setting
- Tailor specific classroom teaching strategies to the neighborhood context and avoid re-traumatization

# Addressing Collective Trauma with Children and Youth

## Activity

10 minutes

Ask the group to spend a few minutes writing down how they have seen collective traumatic experiences impact children, youth, and themselves. Have one or two people share how the 4 Rs can help support children and youth after a collective trauma.

## Discussion

20 minutes

Safe and brave spaces provide an environment in which all children and youth can thrive—no matter who they are, where they live, what they have experienced, or how much money their family makes.

What approaches have you tried taking to build a safe classroom culture and environment for children and youth of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities?

Ask one peer to share a strategy or intervention they have put into action to support a safe and brave classroom.

- Share the context and highlight the successes or challenges.
- Identify one key question the group can help with—additional ideas, ways to embed, what could be different or improved upon?

Have each member share a strategy used. Write down the different ideas and email them to the group. This will provide context for the weekly challenge.

## Weekly challenge ideas

2 minutes

This week, identify one strategy from the emailed strategies that were shared during your discussion. Try one or two new strategies that promote safe and brave spaces.

- How was it received by the class?
- What went well? What didn't go well?

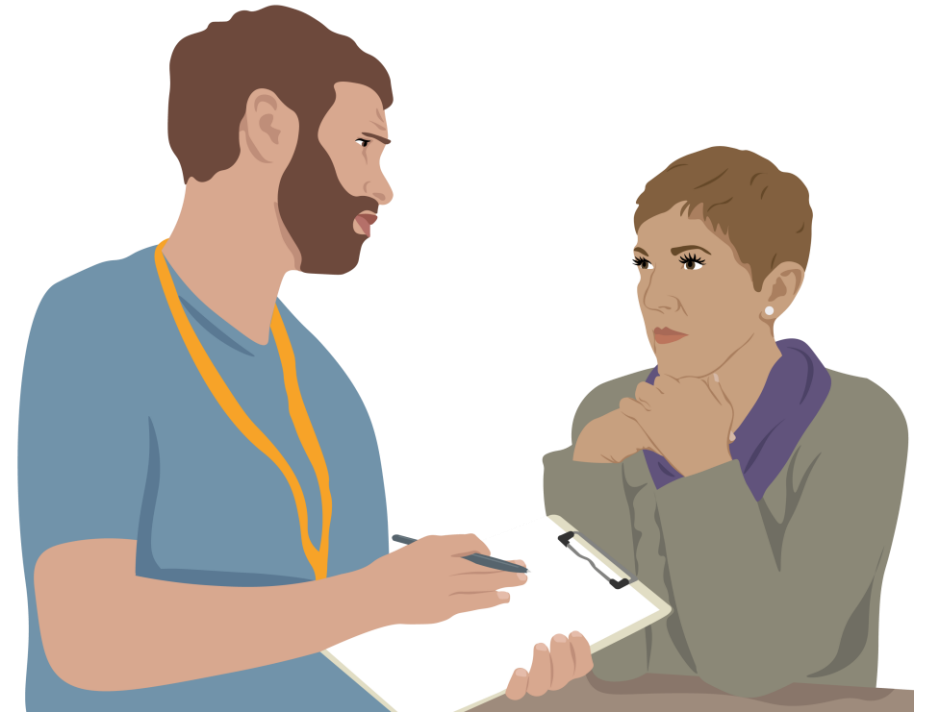
## Closing

2 minutes

Ask everyone to share one word that sums up how they feel after meeting.

Session 4:

# Addressing Trauma with Children, Families, and Caregivers in One-on-One Settings



# Addressing Trauma with Children, Families, and Caregivers in One-on-One Settings

## Welcome

2 minutes

Introductions with an ice-breaker

Example: Who in your life has shown resilience? How?

## Trauma-informed transition to regulate

2 minutes

Mindful moment

Example: Take 3 deep cleansing breaths. For the next two minutes take in the sights or sounds in this space. Count how many different sounds you hear or count the objects in the room you have never noticed before for the next two minutes. If you prefer you can just sit and focus on your breath.

## Group norms (operating principles)

2 minutes

Review group norms. Provide an opportunity to add a norm if something new came up at the last meeting. (See examples under “Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation.”)

## Weekly challenge review (safe and brave classrooms)

5 minutes

Ask one or two people to share how their weekly challenge went.

Was it helpful, and if so, how?

What made implementing the strategy easy or challenging?

## Content review

5 minutes

In Session 4 of the course, you learned how to:

- Apply the 4 Rs to support children and youth who have experienced trauma
- Apply the 4 Rs to facilitate conversations with families and caregivers

# Addressing Trauma with Children, Families, and Caregivers in One-on-One Settings

## Activity

10 minutes

Ask the group to spend a few minutes with a partner reflecting on a parent quote from this session.

“The teachers who build authentic relationships with us treated us like humans. They asked questions about my children and they wanted to know how to help us. They took time to write emails and make phone calls to check in.”

- What has helped you build relationships with families?
- What gets in the way of building relationships with families?

Have one partner from each pair share one “aha” moment.

## Discussion

20 minutes

In this session you created a trauma-informed purpose statement.

One key element of becoming a trauma-informed educator or supportive adult is reflection. Going back to the “why” and “what matters most” are ways to reflect on your current journey to becoming trauma-informed.

Ask each peer to share their statement and how it will influence how they work with children in the future.

What would be helpful to support each other as you move forward in upholding your purpose statement?

## Weekly challenge ideas

2 minutes

This week, reflect on the statements you heard from your peers. How do their statements resonate with you?

This week, identify one or two ways this group can stay connected and continue to reflect and share ideas. Share them with the team via email.

## Closing

2 minutes

Ask everyone to share one word that sums up how they feel after meeting.

# Addressing Trauma in the Context of Conflict and Displacement





# Addressing Trauma in the Context of Conflict and Displacement

## Welcome

2 minutes

Introductions with an ice-breaker

Example: Rose or Bud – Share either a “rose” (something positive that happened to you this week) or a “bud” (something you are looking forward to)

## Trauma-informed transition to regulate

2 minutes

Mindful moment

Example: Sit comfortably and approach yourself with compassion and kindness. Choose one kind or compassionate phrase to repeat to yourself silently for one minute such as: “May I be peaceful. May I accept myself as I am. May I be strong. May I be patient.”

## Group norms (operating principles)

2 minutes

Review group norms. Provide an opportunity to add a norm if something new came up at the last meeting. (See examples under “Tips for trauma-informed group facilitation.”)

## Weekly challenge review (staying connected)

5 minutes

Ask one or two people to share how their weekly challenge went.

Was it helpful, and if so, how?

Was it easy or difficult to consider ways to connect with each other and to reflect and share ideas from this course?

## Content review

5 minutes

In this session of the course, you learned how to:

- Explain what trauma is and understand how conflict and displacement can affect individuals physically, emotionally, and socially
- Understand the lived experiences of people who have been displaced
- Apply the 4 Rs of a Trauma-Informed Approach framework to the context of conflict and displacement
- Describe how the experience of conflict and displacement impacts youth and the family system
- Describe how to engage in self-care and build personal resilience
- Recognize the role that adults can play in supporting youth and families who have experienced conflict and displacement

# Addressing Trauma in the Context of Conflict and Displacement

## Activity

10 minutes

Ask the group to spend a few minutes with a partner reflecting on the self-care strategies for supportive adults (five-finger breathing, sensory grounding, self-compassion letter, circle of support, and kindness phrases).

- Which of these strategies were new to you?
- How do you think you may integrate any of these strategies into your own self-care practice?
- Are there other self-care strategies that you would like to integrate into your self-care practice?

Have a few partners share with the group the self-care strategies they plan to integrate moving forward.

## Discussion

20 minutes

In this session, you learned how trauma in the context of conflict and displacement can negatively impact children's well-being and development. You also learned that supportive adults can foster these children's protective factors to help them thrive in the context of adversity and loss.

Ask group members to remember a challenging time they have gone through and then to consider individual, social, and environmental factors that protected them during that time.

- What individual traits, relationships with others, and community resources helped you cope?

Ask the group to discuss which protective factors may be most helpful for youth who have been through conflict and displacement, and how they can help to foster those factors.

## Weekly challenge ideas

2 minutes

Self-care challenge: This week, write a letter to yourself with a message of acceptance of who you are and the feelings you experience. Write as if you were talking to a close friend.

Caring-for-others challenge: This week, identify one way that you can foster the individual, social, family, or environmental protective factors of someone in your life.

## Closing

2 minutes

Ask everyone to share one word that sums up how they feel after meeting.

# Additional best practices to make this training a success



## Orchestrate the session

Start and end the session **on time**.

Encourage participation **face-to-face** or using **video**.

Break down **group sizes** to support meaningful discussions (~2-5 participants per group).

Help ensure the group **achieves desired outcomes** – don't worry about hitting every agenda item.



## Focus on goals

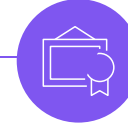
Concentrate on the **objective of helping** one another.

Open the floor for participants to **share what they want to get out** of the session.

Keep the discussion **concrete and practical**.

Go **deep instead of broad** – it's okay if not everyone gets to share during an individual session, but help ensure the full group contributes to coaching.

Encourage participants to **connect between sessions**.



## Foster inclusive discussion

**Listen with an open mind**, with humility and curiosity.

Ask **good questions**, grounded in an authentic desire to understand.

Suspend beliefs and “known” truths – open yourself up to hearing the experiences of others.

Reflect together by **challenging assumptions**.