

Trauma Informed Practices

What are Trauma Informed Practices?

Trauma Informed Practices are techniques to promote safety, empowerment, and respect for folks conducting or participating in research. These practices also aim to avoid re-traumatization in situations with power imbalances, like in research, care, or social services. Trauma informed practices aim to transform the power dynamics that can foster trauma and are a commitment to continuous self-reflection and lifelong learning. In the Ask Us project, we used trauma-informed practices in our research with youth.



What are examples from the Ask Us project?

- Worked with youth to develop project guidelines
- Reduced power dynamics between researchers and youth through youth-led interviews
- Shared the purpose and potential impact of the research with youth before their interviews
- Shared the interview guide before the interview
- Followed up with youth after the interview with the option to review their transcript
- Prioritized participant safety above research aims
- Had physical comfort tools available for participants (e.g. tangible comfort items, stim tools, breathing exercises, culturally specific or spiritual tools)
- Had resources on hand if youth participants become distressed
- Checked in to support team mates and contractors who may experience secondhand or vicarious trauma
- Protecting emotional labour via project plans and interview schedules

What did we learn?

Trauma informed practices in research require active consideration. How are you showing up? How is the participant experiencing your interaction? We learned to:

- Anticipate the potential needs of participants. Consider where there could be conflict or harm. This prepares you to prevent or support these difficult conversations.
- Offer options for participants to choose how they would feel most comfortable showing up to an interview. This helps to build trust ahead of time.
- Have youth-led interviews to balance power between researchers and participants. This allowed for a more comfortable peer-to-peer interview dynamic.

How could these practices work with youth in community?

- Offer options for services to accommodate differences in accessibility, capacity, or desires for privacy. This could include connecting by phone, text, or instant messaging, in a public place, or on a walk.
- Ask if they would like a third party present, like a social worker, Elder, family member, or trusted peer.
- Check in on their access needs and adjust your care to accommodate them where possible.
- Offer to take breaks as needed when spending an extended time with youth.
- Offer your positionality to help acknowledge any hierarchies and to highlight areas of shared experience.
- Ask for feedback (Did you like how we connected today? Is there any way I can show up better?)