

Trauma and stabilization

Ten original resources for More Than Therapy. Choose a page that fits the client's priorities and review the clinical notes before use. The materials support professional care and are not validated assessments.

TRA01 Noticing Present Day Cues

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA02 Making a Choice and Permission Plan

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA03 Mapping Stress Signals and Supports

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA04 Choosing From a Grounding Menu

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA05 Mapping Support and Boundaries

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA06 Planning After a Difficult Reminder

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA07 Understanding Trauma Related Reactions

Handout | 10 to 15 minutes

TRA08 Restoring Choice During Activation

Clinician script | 5 to 10 minutes

TRA09 Building a Present Focused Support Plan

Session guide | 50 minutes

TRA10 Reconnecting With Everyday Choice

Journal prompts | 10 to 15 minutes

Fillable responses work in compatible PDF readers. Save each completed worksheet separately in an approved record system.

Clinical notes

Trauma and stabilization

TRA01 Noticing Present Day Cues

Check orientation and current danger before practicing. Offer external rather than body focused anchors if needed. Stop or adjust when dissociation, sensory overload, or distress increases and use the individualized care plan.

TRA02 Making a Choice and Permission Plan

Explain actual limits, including safety procedures and confidentiality, without promising unlimited control. Avoid requiring trauma disclosure to honor a reasonable preference. Review consent throughout the work rather than once at intake.

TRA03 Mapping Stress Signals and Supports

Avoid presenting informal stress zones as validated neurophysiology. Consider medical conditions, sensory needs, and dissociation. If symptoms are severe or unfamiliar, assess appropriately instead of assuming they are trauma reactions.

TRA04 Choosing From a Grounding Menu

Grounding is optional support, not trauma processing or a guaranteed calming technique. Monitor for increased dissociation or distress. Use established assessment and escalation procedures when orientation or safety is compromised.

TRA05 Mapping Support and Boundaries

Ask about coercion, retaliation, and privacy risks before encouraging contact. Avoid assuming family is safe. Support culturally meaningful community connections while preserving consent and the client's control over disclosure.

TRA06 Planning After a Difficult Reminder

This is a coping plan, not a suicide safety plan or a trauma treatment protocol. Tailor escalation steps to the client's assessment and local services. Avoid forced recounting or immediate debriefing.

TRA07 Understanding Trauma Related Reactions

Do not imply that stabilization worksheets are a mandatory prolonged stage before evidence based PTSD treatment. Match support and referral to the person's presentation, preferences, readiness, and safety needs.

TRA08 Restoring Choice During Activation

Assess dissociation, current danger, and medical concerns within competence. Significant disorientation requires appropriate clinical response. Do not label every pause as a trauma reaction or promise safety that has not been established.

TRA09 Building a Present Focused Support Plan

This session supports coping and engagement; it is not PTSD treatment or a prerequisite that must be completed before trauma focused care. Use individualized assessment, shared decisions, and appropriate specialist consultation.

TRA10 Reconnecting With Everyday Choice

Keep reflection present focused and voluntary. Acknowledge structural constraints and current coercion. Do not frame empowerment as something the client must accomplish alone or require disclosure to validate a boundary.

Noticing Present Day Cues

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Identify present day information and an available choice without recounting trauma.

This practice focuses on the room and the current moment. You do not need to describe what happened in the past. Choose details that feel neutral or supportive, keep your eyes open if you prefer, and stop whenever you want.

Find current information

Look around and name a few things you can observe, such as the date on a calendar, a familiar object, the location of the door, or the sound of a nearby fan. If the setting is unsafe, prioritize getting help or moving toward safety instead.

Notice choice in the present

Identify one choice available now: where to sit, whether to move, who to contact, or whether to continue. Try a brief phrase such as "I am in this room, and I can choose my next step." Use words that feel accurate rather than forcing a claim that you are safe.

Three details that help me recognize the current place and time

One neutral or supportive detail I want to focus on

A choice I have right now

What helped, what did not, and what I want to do next

Making a Choice and Permission Plan

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Create a practical participation plan that makes consent and choice visible.

Support can feel more usable when you know what choices are available. This page helps you tell a clinician or trusted support person what helps you participate and what you want them to ask before doing.

Name preferences without explaining everything

You can state a preference without sharing the experience behind it. Examples include keeping the door in view, receiving a description before an exercise, choosing whether to close your eyes, or being asked before someone moves closer. Preferences can change.

Agree on a way to pause

Choose a word, gesture, written message, or other signal that means pause. Decide what should happen next, such as quiet, an explanation, a different activity, or ending the exercise. The plan works best when the other person confirms what they can provide.

Things that help me participate comfortably

Things I want someone to ask permission for first

My pause signal and what I would like to happen next

What we agreed on and when we will review it

Mapping Stress Signals and Supports

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Recognize personal stress signals and match them with practical supports.

People notice stress in different ways. Identify signals that are familiar to you and supports that fit those signals. This page is an everyday planning tool; it does not require telling the story of a traumatic event.

Describe your own pattern

You might notice faster speech, restlessness, tension, feeling distant, difficulty following a conversation, or wanting to leave. Use your own words and include signs another trusted person might notice. No single pattern is the correct trauma response.

Match support to the signal

Choose responses you can try or request. Examples include a quieter space, a brief movement break, an explanation of what is happening, a supportive voice, or stopping an activity. If a response has made things worse before, record that too.

Early signals I notice in thoughts, actions, or sensations

Signs that tell me I need more support or a pause

Helpful responses matched to those signals

What I want others to avoid and who can help

Choosing From a Grounding Menu

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Test a grounding option and personalize it using the person's response.

Grounding is a set of possible ways to reconnect with the current moment. Different options help different people. Try one brief option, notice its effect, and keep only what is useful. You can move, talk, or stop.

Choose an accessible option

Visual: describe three shapes or colors nearby. Sound: name two current sounds. Movement: gently shift position or press your feet against a surface if comfortable. Thinking: say the current date and name one planned activity. Connection: ask a trusted person to speak calmly about the present.

Review instead of pushing

Try for twenty to thirty seconds, then check whether you feel more present, less present, or unchanged. If touch, movement, body focus, or certain sounds are uncomfortable, choose another route. Do not force breathing patterns or use painful sensations to ground.

An option I want to try and an option I want to avoid

What I noticed before and after the brief practice

Changes that would make the option more useful or accessible

My preferred option and who can support me in using it

Mapping Support and Boundaries

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Identify appropriate support and prepare a clear boundary around disclosure.

You can choose different levels of support from different people. This page helps you identify who feels dependable for a specific need and what boundaries make contact more manageable. You do not owe anyone your full story.

Match people to roles

One person may help with a ride, another may listen, and a professional may help with assessment or treatment. Include services and community spaces as well as individuals. A person who is close to you is not automatically a safe or suitable support.

Choose what to share

Decide what you want to ask for and what you prefer to keep private. For example, "I am having a hard day and could use company. I do not want to discuss details." Plan an alternative if someone cannot help or does not respect the boundary.

A need I want support with and a person or service suited to it

What I am willing to share and what I want to keep private

The request or boundary I could say

My alternative if the response is unavailable or unhelpful

Planning After a Difficult Reminder

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Prepare a present focused coping sequence for after a distressing reminder.

A reminder can bring a strong response even when you did not expect it. Build a plan for what to do afterwards without recording the traumatic event. Focus on current needs, available choices, and people or services that can help.

Start with the present situation

Ask whether there is current danger or an urgent health concern. If so, use your agreed emergency or support plan. Otherwise, choose a familiar present moment cue, a quieter location, or another option that has helped you reconnect before.

Reduce the next demand

Decide what can wait, what basic need requires attention, and whether you want contact with someone. You may need rest, food, practical assistance, or a clinician check in. Review the plan later when you feel able; there is no requirement to process the reminder immediately.

Signs that tell me a reminder has affected me

My first present focused response and a place I can use it

A need to address and a demand I can reduce

Who I can contact and when I need more urgent support

Understanding Trauma Related Reactions

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Explain common trauma related concerns and the role of present focused support.

After overwhelming experiences, some people notice changes in sleep, attention, emotions, relationships, or their sense of safety. Responses vary, and not everyone develops PTSD. A thoughtful assessment considers the person's experience, context, strengths, and current needs.

Support can begin with the present

You can discuss sleep, routines, boundaries, relationships, or current stress without describing every detail of what happened. Ask what an exercise involves and choose whether to participate. A support plan can include practical help and connection as well as coping skills.

Skills have a role and a limit

Orientation, grounding, and predictable routines may support day to day coping for some people. They are not complete treatments for PTSD. When symptoms are persistent or disruptive, a qualified clinician can discuss assessment and treatment options with you, including evidence based trauma focused therapies when appropriate.

Choice continues through care

You can ask about the purpose, possible benefits, and challenges of a treatment. Share preferences about pacing, communication, cultural context, and accessibility. You do not need to complete these pages perfectly or achieve constant calm before discussing further treatment.

A current need and a question I would like to ask about care

Restoring Choice During Activation

Trauma and stabilization | Clinicians | 5 to 10 minutes

Use brief dialogue to offer consent, orientation, and choice during distress.

Use this dialogue when a client appears distressed during a conversation. Begin with observation and permission. The goal is to understand what they need now, not to obtain more details about an overwhelming experience.

Offer a pause without assuming

Clinician: "I notice it has become harder to stay with our conversation. What are you noticing?" Client: "I feel far away." Clinician: "Would you like us to stop the topic? We can look around the room, change position, talk about the present, or just pause."

Ask before guiding

If the client chooses orientation: "Would it be okay to name where we are and today's date together?" If they decline: "Okay. What would feel more useful?" Avoid touch or changes in proximity without permission. Use clear, brief language and allow time for a response.

Review and return control

Clinician: "Are you feeling more present, less present, or about the same?" If worse, stop the exercise and use the individualized assessment and support plan. If helpful: "Would you prefer another topic, planning for the rest of today, or ending here?" Do not require resuming the trauma discussion.

What the client chose and what helped or worsened the experience

Building a Present Focused Support Plan

Trauma and stabilization | Clinicians | 50 minutes

Structure a choice based session focused on present coping and support.

Outcome: the client identifies a helpful present focused option, a pause signal, and a support plan for the coming week. No trauma narrative is needed. Explain each exercise and make declining or changing it an explicit option.

Minutes 0 to 15

0 to 5: assess current orientation, distress, and immediate safety or health needs. 5 to 10: agree on a useful goal and review choice using TRA02. 10 to 15: use TRA03 to identify familiar stress signals without exploring event details.

Minutes 15 to 40

15 to 25: offer TRA01 or TRA04 and practice one option briefly, checking its effect before continuing. 25 to 35: use TRA05 to match a current need with appropriate support and boundaries. 35 to 40: begin TRA06 with a simple response sequence for a difficult reminder.

Minutes 40 to 50

40 to 45: review what helped, what did not, and any needed referrals or treatment questions. 45 to 50: confirm the plan for leaving, available support, and when to seek more help. Close with present orientation if desired. Replace the agenda with assessment and appropriate support if safety or significant disorientation requires it.

Preferred option, pause signal, support contact, and next review

Reconnecting With Everyday Choice

Trauma and stabilization | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Notice present day agency and identify one preference or support to strengthen it.

Use these prompts to notice choice in your present life. You do not need to write about a traumatic experience or find a lesson in it. A few words, a drawing, or a conversation can be enough.

Stay with the current day

Choose an ordinary moment, such as deciding where to sit, what to wear, whether to answer a message, or whom to ask for help. Notice which options felt available and which were limited by your circumstances. Having limited choice is not a personal failure.

Make one preference visible

Name one thing you would like more say in. You might communicate a preference, ask for information, set a boundary, or seek practical help. Keep the next step small and safe. Stop writing if the prompts pull you into details you do not want to explore.

One choice I made today and what it meant to me

An area where my choices felt limited and what contributed to that

A preference or boundary I want someone to understand

One safe step or support that could give me more room to choose

Clinical foundations

These sources inform the general clinical concepts. The original resources in this collection are not validated instruments or publisher-endorsed protocols. Links checked October 26, 2026.

S04 Doing What Matters in Times of Stress An Illustrated Guide

World Health Organization | 2020

Stress coping, present moment awareness, values, and kindness. Original exercises in this library are separate from the WHO guide.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>

S05 TIP 57 Trauma Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration | 2014

Trauma informed principles, cultural context, choice, collaboration, and prevention of retraumatization.

<https://library.samhsa.gov/product/tip-57-trauma-informed-care-behavioral-health-services/sma14-4816>

S06 Overview of Psychotherapy for PTSD

VA National Center for PTSD | n.d. discusses 2023 VA DoD guideline

Evidence supported PTSD treatment options and shared treatment decisions. Grounding sheets here do not replace PTSD treatment.

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/txessentials/overview_therapy.asp