

Finding Trauma-Informed Support

This resource is designed to assist you to find, and advocate for, health and social care that is trauma-informed, to help you build safety in your healthcare experiences.

Trauma-informed services do not require you to disclose traumatic experiences. Instead, in trauma-informed services, it is understood that women seeking support for chronic pain may have experienced trauma; so they create safe and trustworthy services, encourage collaboration and connection, and build on women's skills and strengths.

It is as important for you to have the confidence to advocate for trauma informed support, as it is for service providers to offer it. To support you in doing so, the following are key principles of trauma informed practice that you can advocate for in your care:

Connection

- Know that a respectful and positive connection with your provider is important to your care. It is in this way that trauma informed support can be reparative of prior unsafe and overwhelming experiences.
- Notice how the health/social care team models respectful relationships among themselves, with other professionals, and with you. This relational and emotionally intelligent approach is key to trauma-informed care.

Choice & Collaboration

- Ensure your health/social care provider listens to you, and involves your preferences as much as possible, at each stage of your pain management journey.
- Ask for options and discuss your choices – about diagnostic processes, pain management options, and who to add to your care team – so you feel empowered when accessing care.



Safety & Trustworthiness

- Tell your health care provider what safety means for you, including any options that the health or social care team could offer to help address your safety concerns.
- Discuss what the signs of feeling overwhelmed are for you (for example, do you get agitated, or become numb during some care interactions?); and what you find helpful to re-centre (e.g. mindfulness exercises, walking, saying affirmations, breathing exercises, having an Elder present). Ask for support in noticing these signs and using centering strategies.
- Ensure your health care provider explains all procedures beforehand with continuous consent as you go along, so the process is predictable for you.

Strengths & Skill Building

- Know that opportunities to learn and practice self-calming skills can be important to your wellness.
- Connect with community services that offer walking groups, mindfulness practice, yoga, drumming, and other wellness-oriented practices to support your wellness, growth, recovery, and healing.
- Connect with local anti-violence services and support groups as needed.
- Know that you are strong and resilient, that you already possess survival skills. You can continue to develop further skills to support your wellness, growth, recovery and healing.