

TRAUMA INFORMED SCRIPTS

Practitioner Prompts

Swap **JUDGEMENT** for **CURIOSITY** *(Used to reduce defensiveness and create psychological safety)*

“I totally know how you feel.”
“At least it’s not worse.”
“You’ll be fine”



“I don’t know how this feels, but I’m listening.”
“This sounds really hard, thank you for sharing.”
“What support would feel helpful right now?”



Reduce **SHAME**, Increase **SAFETY** *(When emotions are high, or someone feels judged or overwhelmed)*

“You’re Overreacting.”
“Calm Down.”
“That’s not a big deal”



“Your feelings make sense given your experience.”
“Take your time, I’m here with you.”
“It sounds like this is really affecting you.”



VALIDATE, without **TAKING OVER** *(helpful when the Participant is sharing a vulnerable experience)*

“I totally know how you feel.”
“At least it’s not worse.”
“You’ll be fine”



“I don’t know how this feels, but I’m listening.”
“This sounds really hard, thank you for sharing.”
“What support would feel helpful right now?”



Center **CHOICE & CONTROL** *(Used to shift power OVER to power WITH)*

“You have to…”
“Here’s what you should do.”
“I need an answer now.”



“You get to choose what works for you.”
“Would you like options to consider?”
“What amount of time would help you decide?”



Incorporate **STRENGTH-BASED LANGUAGE** *(Used to frame challenges without shame)*

“Non-Compliant.”
“Resistant”
“Difficult”



“Experiencing barriers.”
“Needs more safety/trust first”
“Navigating a lot right now”



Talk about **TRAUMA RESPONSIBLY** *(Used when discussing topics without forcing disclosure)*

“What’s wrong with you?”
“Tell me everything.”
“You’re triggering me.”



“What’s been happening around you?”
“Share only what feels safe for you.”
“I need a moment to ground myself; I’m still here.”



Support **AUTONOMY & EMPOWERMENT** *(Used to encourage Independence, Confidence, & Agency)*

“Let me fix this.”
“I’ll take care of it.”
“I don’t think you can handle this.”



“How can I support you as you lead this?”
“What part would you like to manage?”
“What strengths have helped you before?”



TRAUMA INFORMED SCRIPTS

Practitioner Prompts

REGULATE the Space *(Used when a Participant appears dysregulated, overwhelmed, or frozen)*

- “Let’s slow this down, we’re not in any rush today.”
- “You’re completely safe here.”
- “We can take a pause here or anytime you need one.”
- “Your voice really does matter.”



Trauma Informed POWER PHRASES *(Used to reinforce safety & belonging)*

- “Your feelings are completely valid.”
- “Remember, You don’t have to share any more than you want to.”
- “Thank you for trusting me with this information/experience.”
- “It is important you know that you get to move at your own pace.”



SELF-REFLECTION prompts for PRACTITIONERS - ASK YOURSELF.....

- “Am I creating good choices?”
- “Am I responding with curiosity, not assumption?”
- “Am I reducing shame and increasing safety?”
- “Am i honoring my lived experience?”



TRAUMA INFORMED SCRIPTS

Practitioner's Guide for Participant Engagement

To Reduce Shame, Restore Agency & Build Emotional Safety

Scripts for **PANIC** or **CATASTROPHIC THINKING**

- “This feels really frightening right now. We don’t need to rush anything—we can slow down and take this one step at a time.”
- “You’re not alone in this. We can look at this together when you feel ready, and there’s no pressure to make decisions today.”
- “It makes sense that your mind is jumping to the worst-case scenario. A lot of people feel this way when benefits might change. We can pause and just breathe for a moment.”

Scripts for **FREEZE** or **SHUTDOWN RESPONSES**

- “I’m noticing it feels hard to talk or think right now. That’s completely okay. We can sit quietly for a moment, or shift the conversation to what feels manageable.”
- “You don’t need to have answers right now. Let’s focus on what feels safest for you at this moment.”
- “If it helps, we can start with the smallest piece—something simple, like naming what feels overwhelming.”

Scripts for **SHAME** or **SELF-BLAME**

- “It sounds like you’re carrying a lot of pressure. I want you to know that none of this is your fault—the system is complicated, and people often aren’t told what to expect.”
- “You’re not doing anything wrong. What you’re feeling makes sense, and we can navigate this together.”
- “There’s no judgment here. You’re doing the best you can with a lot of difficult information.”

TRAUMA INFORMED SCRIPTS

Practitioner's Guide for Participant Engagement

To Reduce Shame, Restore Agency & Build Emotional Safety

Scripts for **PARTICIPANTS** who “**CAN'T LOOK AT THE NUMBERS**”

- “Thank you for telling me. We don't have to look at numbers today. We can focus on how you're feeling and what support would make this feel more manageable.”
- “That's completely okay. Let's regroup and talk about what feels hardest—the information can wait until you're ready.”
- “If numbers feel too overwhelming right now, we can explore other options, like talking through the big picture or just checking in emotionally.”

Scripts for **FEAR** of **REPORTING INCOME**

- “It makes sense that reporting income feels risky. Many people worry about losing support suddenly. We can talk through what the system usually does and what options you might have.”
- “You're not wrong to feel cautious. Let's explore what reporting might mean and how to pace this safely.”
- “Before looking at scenarios, we can talk about what you're afraid will happen—your concerns matter.”