

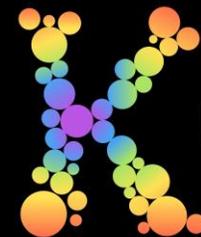


# How to get the most out of speaking to victim/ survivors of domestic abuse

Vickie Robertson BEM and Karen Evans  
November 2025

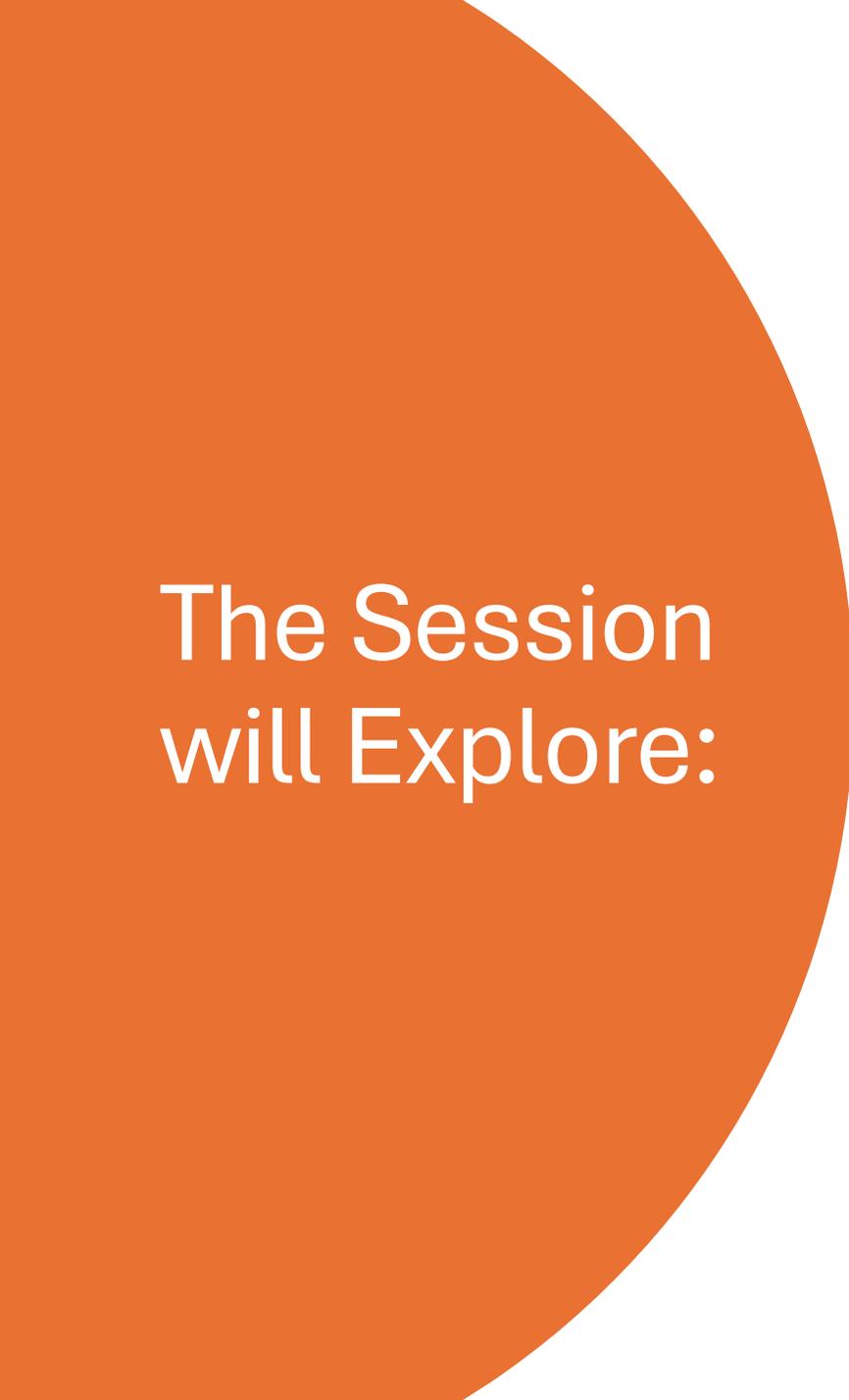


WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



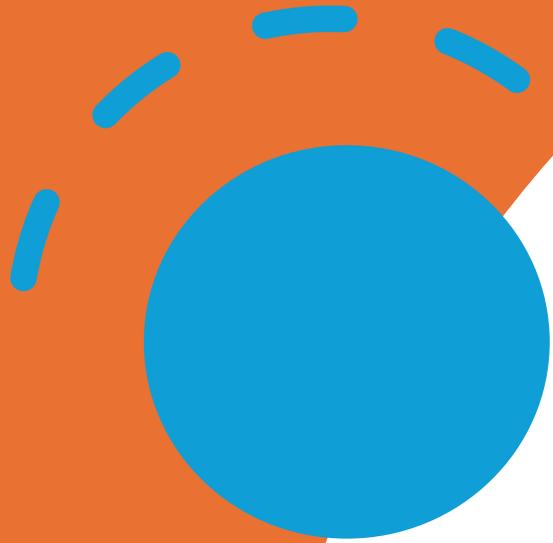
KALEIDOSCOPIK UK  
TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE





# The Session will Explore:

- Identifying coercive control
  - Use of language and how to build trust
  - The importance of using a trauma informed approach
  - Sources of support
- 



# Introductions

# Trigger Warning

Some of the discussions/topics today might be a trauma trigger for your own experiences and vicarious trauma is also very possible.

If this does happen please:

Prioritise your self-care

Let a member of your team/one of our team know for support

Practice some grounding techniques

Take a break



#Hername was Stacey

**Vickie Robertson BEM**

Survivor, Founder, CEO,  
Campaigner and IDVA



# NOT ALL BRUISES ARE VISIBLE NOT ALL ABUSE IS OBVIOUS



**PHYSICAL**

**MENTAL**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**

**TECHNOLOGICAL**

**ECONOMICAL**

**SEXUAL**

**VERBAL**

**CULTURAL**

**EMOTIONAL**

**FINANCIAL**

**SPIRITUAL**

**CONTROL**

**POWER**

domestic violence awareness month



kaleidoscope

# WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (PHYSICAL) LOOK LIKE?

**IF THE ANSWER TO  
ANY OF THE  
QUESTIONS IS YES,  
STOP WONDERING IF  
THEY WILL BE  
PHYSICALLY VIOLENT!!**

**THEY ALREADY ARE.**



KALEIDOSCOPIC UK  
TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

- » **HAVE THEY EVER TRAPPED YOU IN A ROOM AND NOT LET YOU OUT?**
- » **HAVE THEY EVER RAISED A FIST AS IF THEY'RE GOING TO HIT YOU?**
- » **HAVE THEY EVER THROWN AN OBJECT THAT HIT YOU OR NEARLY DID?**
- » **HAVE THEY EVER HELD YOU DOWN OR GRABBED AT YOU OR RESTRAINED YOU?**
- » **HAVE THEY EVER SHOVED, POKED, PUSHED, SPAT, KICKED, BIT, SCRATCHED, PULLED/ RIPPED HAIR OUT OR STRANGLED YOU?**
- » **HAVE THEY EVER THREATENED TO HURT/HARM YOU OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT?**
- » **DO THEY DRIVE RECKLESSLY, SLAM BRAKES, PULL HANDBRAKE WITH YOU IN THE VEHICLE?**



# WHAT IS COERCIVE CONTROL?

» A controlling partner will use your fears or the things you love the most to manipulate you into doing what they want.



## Tactics include:

- » Trying to cut you off from friends and family
- » Micro managing everything you do
- » Bombarding you with calls and texts
- » Blocking support or medical services
- » Threats of harm or reporting to services
- » Constantly breaking you down to control you
- » Control where you can go / who you can see
- » Depriving you of your basic needs
- » Undermining you to children / others
- » Telling you what to wear / no makeup
- » When or where you can sleep / eat
- » Constant false accusations
- » Using guilt as a way to control you
- » Denying you freedom to think

---

# Coercive control Examples

---

- isolating you from your friends and family
- controlling how much money you have and how you spend it
- monitoring your activities and your movements
- repeatedly putting you down, calling you names or telling you that you are worthless
- threatening to harm or kill you/ your child
- threatening to publish information/videos/pictures of you or to report you to the police or the authorities
- damaging your property or household goods
- forcing you to take part in criminal activity or child abuse

— Kaleidoscopic UK- DV awareness video.



# WHAT IS GASLIGHTING?

When someone intentionally twists your perception of reality for their own gain.



## What does it sound like?

**"I never said that."**

**"Why are you so defensive?"**

**"It's your fault"**

**"You're so sensitive."**

**"I was just joking"**

**"You're upset over nothing!"**

**"You must be confused again."**

**"You're so dramatic."**

**"I didn't do that."**

**"Just calm down"**

**"You twist things."**

**"You're overreacting."**

**"You're remembering things wrong."**

**"You need help"**

**"You're overreacting."**

**"Stop imagining things"**

**"What are you talking about."**

**"It's always something with you."**

Domestic violence awareness month



[kaleidoscopic.uk](http://kaleidoscopic.uk)

# WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE THEIR ABUSER?

- » Shame, embarrassment or denial
- » Lack of support
- » Danger and fear
- » Trauma
- » Low confidence / self esteem
- » Trauma bonding
- » Believing it is their fault / it will change
- » Isolation
- » Practical reasons



The term 'trauma bond' is also known as Stockholm Syndrome.

It describes a deep bond which forms between a victim and their abuser.

It is a repeat of traumas from perp to victim and then a reward after

This teaches the victim that there will be a reward each time and then trauma becomes part of the cycle.

This creates a TRAUMA BOND with huge highs and lows, this releases chemicals into the body, and the victim chases the highs becoming addicted to the cycle/relationship!



# Prosecutions for coercive behaviour/PSCCB

---

Prosecutions for coercive behaviour remain disappointingly low.

In England and Wales, year ending March 2024, there were just 745 defendants prosecuted for controlling or coercive behaviour.

There were 45,310 offences of coercive and controlling behaviour recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2024 with only 5.4% convictions in the same period.

ONS data



How many reports of domestic abuse were made in the Thames Valley in 2022?

a) 14,000 b) 29,000 c) 42,000 d) 56,000

# SURVEY RESULTS

**92%**

**Of respondents to our survey said the abuse intensified post separation**

**67%**

**Have been subjected to 5+ years of PSA**

**91%**

**Had been victim blamed for the Post separation abuse**



**KALEIDOSCOPIK UK**  
TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

**#PSAAW**

Visit our website

**kaleidoscopic.uk**

Find us here





# TRAUMA RESPONSE

## Triggering the Amygdala

The amygdala is part of the brain's alarm system. Its primary function is to call you to attention and, in an emergency, shut down your body and mind to survive.

- » Flight
- » Appease
- » Fight
- » Freeze
- » Flop

70% of people who experience rape freeze and do not fight back. Freezing is a completely normal trauma response.



# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TRIGGERED

- » You suddenly feel mad, sad, scared or frustrated and can't figure out why.
- » Something happens in your present life that reminds you of the trauma, and triggers the same emotions you had during that event.
- » Feeling frustrated reminds your brain of how you felt frustrated during the trauma.
- » During the trauma, your brain and body process and felt frustration at a level 9 out of 10.
- » The frustration you now feel at level 9 instead of 3 which is overwhelming and will kick in the FAFFF response (fight, appease, flop, freeze, flight).
- » Replaying the memory of the event in your head on repeat. We can't stop thinking about it and feel completely consumed by it.
- » This does not leave much energy and can cause you to be much less tolerant than usual.
- » You may have nightmares and re-live the feelings you had during the trauma which affects sleep.
- » Your nervous system can be highly activated due to FAFFF, making you feel hypervigilant, walking on eggshells or 'on guard' watching and waiting for the next incident.
- » You may startle easily and feel unsafe.



## REACTIVE ABUSE

The abuser will abuse their victim for hours, days, weeks or years before the victim hits a breaking point and reacts to the abuse.

The abuser then plays the victim and will convince others that s/he is the victim and the other person (real victim) is crazy and abusive.

The real heartbreak is people usually believe the abuser and the victim feels guilty for their actions instead of understanding this is a natural response to being emotionally and psychologically abused.

Not everything is what it seems. Some have a lifetime of experience manipulating others and are successful at it.



KALEIDOSCOPIC UK  
TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

**#LOOKBENEATHTHESURFACE**

Domestic violence awareness month



@sheconqueredabuse

kaleidoscopic.uk

# HELPFUL TIPS WHEN TRIGGERED



KALEIDOSCOPIK UK  
TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

## DOPAMINE

THE REWARD CHEMICAL

Completing a task  
Doing self-care activities  
Eating food  
Celebrating little wins



## OXYTOCIN

THE LOVE HORMONE

Playing with a dog  
Playing with a baby  
Holding hand  
Hugging your family  
Give compliment



## SEROTONIN

THE MOOD STABILIZER

Meditating  
Running  
Sun exposure  
Walk in nature  
Swimming



## ENDORPHIN

THE PAIN KILLER

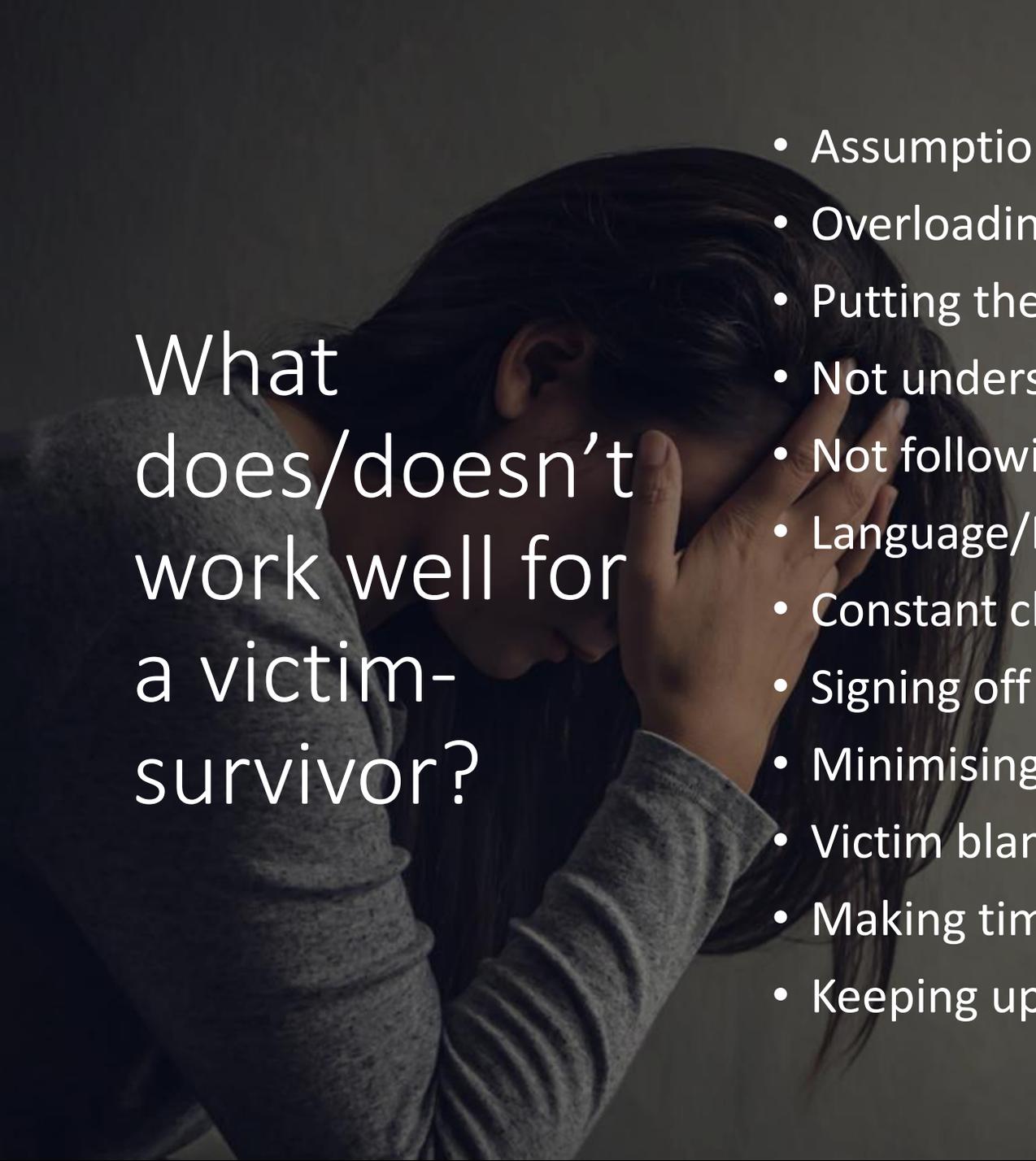
Laughter exercise  
Essential oils  
Watch a comedy  
Dark chocolate  
Exercsing



Domestic violence awareness month



[kaleidoscopic.uk](http://kaleidoscopic.uk)



What  
does/doesn't  
work well for  
a victim-  
survivor?

- Assumptions/Judgements
  - Overloading with information
  - Putting the onus on the survivor
  - Not understanding individual/family needs
  - Not following through/communication
  - Language/Body language
  - Constant change of lead
  - Signing off without ongoing support in place
  - Minimising
  - Victim blaming
  - Making time
  - Keeping updated
- 

# Use of Language

## **Language is a powerful tool**

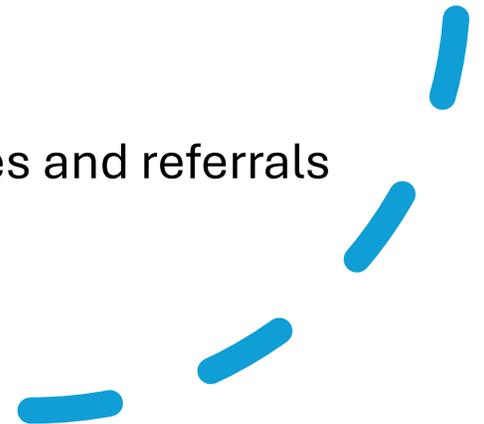
- Shapes how victims understand and express their experiences
- Can either empower or retraumatize
- Builds trust, safety, and connection

## **Trauma-Informed Communication**

- Use empathetic, validating, and non-judgmental language
- Avoid blame or disbelief (e.g., “Why didn’t you leave?” → “That must have been incredibly difficult”)
- Respect cultural and personal terminology

## **Written & Verbal Communication**

- Avoid jargon and legalese
- Be clear, factual, and sensitive in case notes and referrals



# Use of Language

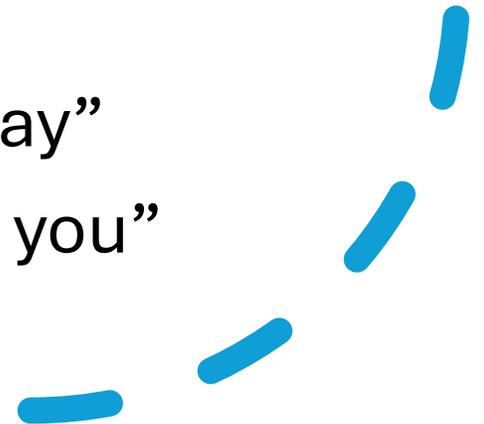
- Ask open-ended questions
- Validate emotions and experiences
- Use active listening
- Pause and reflect before speaking

“I believe you” v “Are you sure?”

“You’ve been strong” v “You should have”

“How can I best support you today”

“What has been working well for you”



# Trauma

---

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening.

While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause short and long-term impacts limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

Although with the right support victim-survivors can go from surviving to thriving.



Being informed on Trauma  
does **NOT** make you Trauma  
Informed

Implementing it does!!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

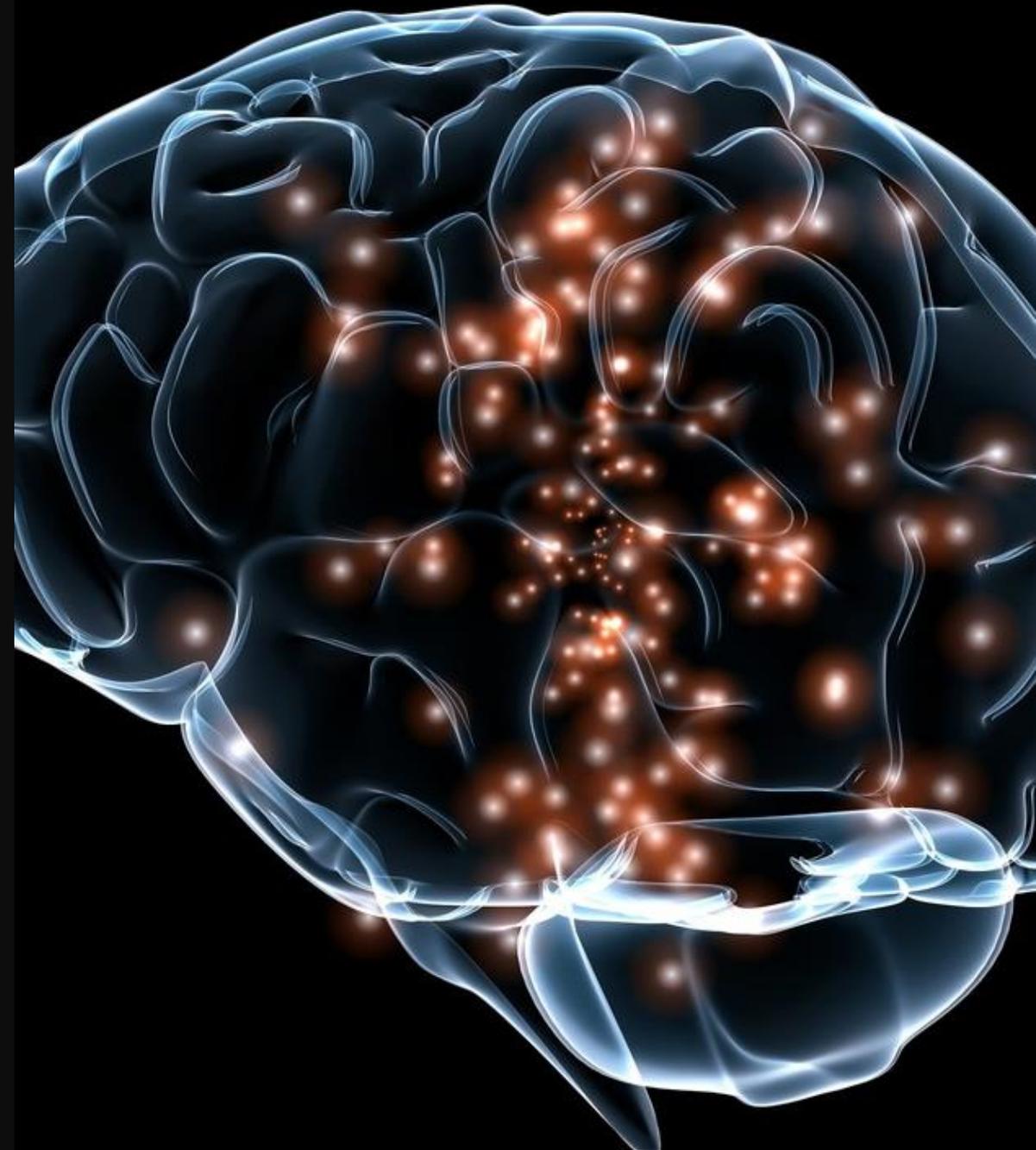
# What is the definition of trauma-informed practice?

---

**Realising that trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities**

Trauma-informed practice is an approach to health and care interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development.

---



## **PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED OFTEN...**

- » **FEEL LIKE THEY'RE NOT ENOUGH**
- » **STRUGGLE WITH NIGHTMARES & FLASHBACKS**
- » **FEEL VULNERABLE AND AFRAID**
- » **STRUGGLE TO PUT DOWN THEIR GUARD**
- » **STRUGGLE TO SEE THE BEAUTY IN THEMSELVES**
- » **FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM THEIR 'TRUE SELF'**
- » **FEEL NUMB WHEN THEY NORMALLY WOULDN'T**

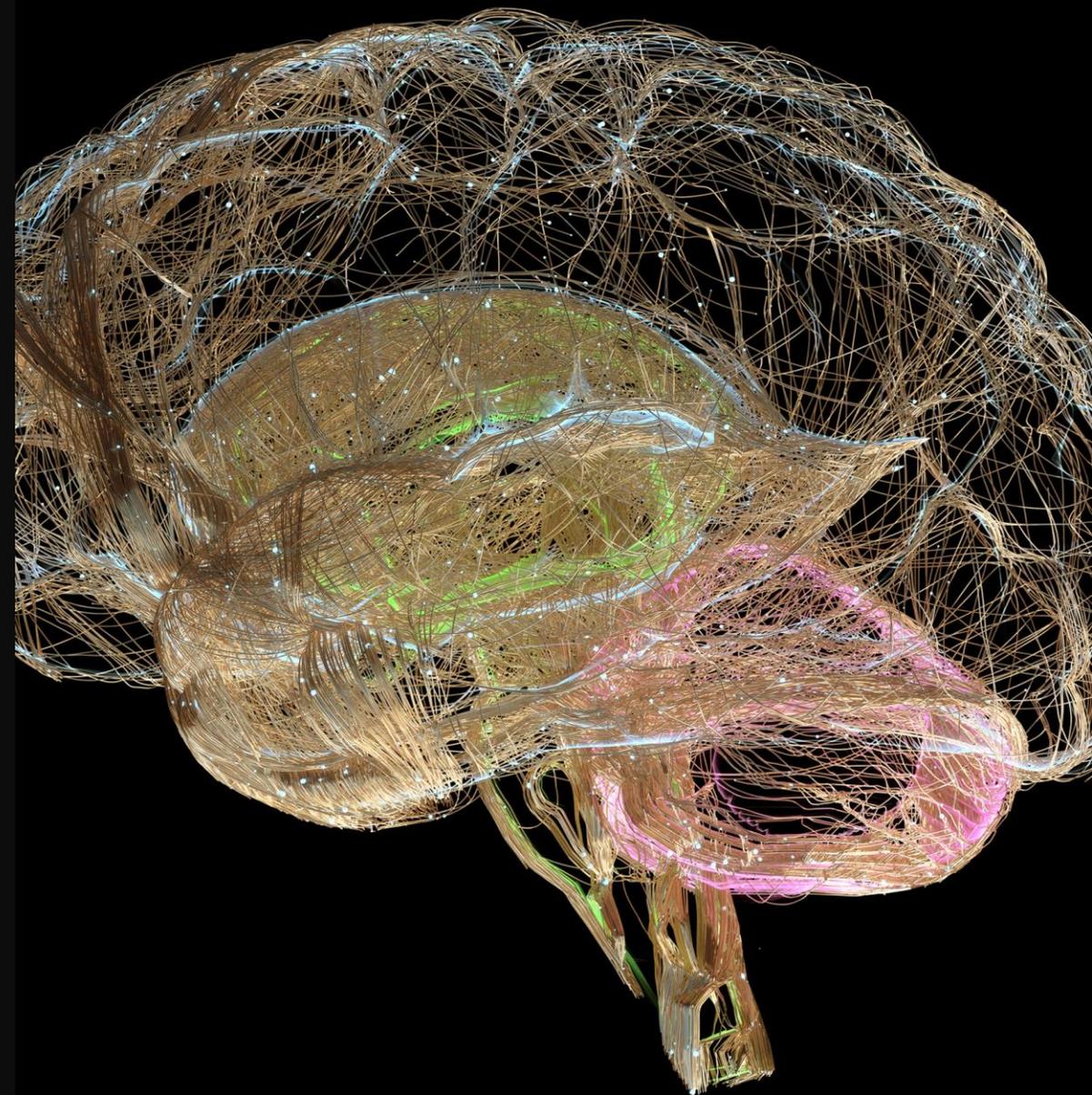
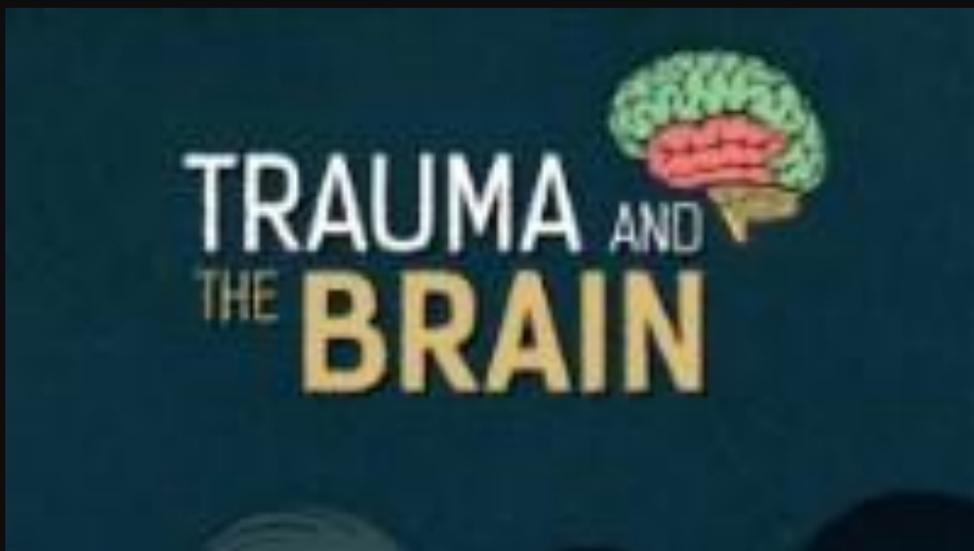
**Please be patient,  
the grief, trauma and pain  
from abuse takes a lot of  
time and work to heal from**

Domestic violence awareness month



# Trauma on the brain!

---



Beneath EVERY behaviour is a FEELING  
Beneath EVERY feeling is a NEED.



If we meet the NEED we begin to deal  
with the CAUSE, not the  
SYMPTOM/BEHAVIOUR

## SAFETY

Clients knowing they are safe or asking what they need to feel safer

**Having** freedom without threat or harm  
attempting to prevent re-traumatisation  
putting policies, practices and safeguarding arrangements in place per person

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

Organisation and staff explaining what they are doing and why

Actually doing what they say they will do

**Realistic, clarity and NOT** overpromising

Updating even if nothing has happened

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATION

Move past cultural stereotypes and biases based on, such as, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race or ethnicity.

offering access to gender appropriate services

**Respecting/enhancing** traditional cultural connections

incorporating policies, protocols and processes that are responsive to the needs of individuals

Gaining feedback/identifying gaps

## CHOICE

Are clients supported in shared decision-making, choice and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward for **THEM**?

## EMPOWERMENT

Do you share power and give clients a strong voice in decision-making, at both individual and organisational level?

validating feelings and concerns  
listening to what a person wants and needs

supporting people to make decisions and take action

acknowledging that people who have experienced or are experiencing trauma may feel powerless to control what happens to them, isolated by their experiences and have feelings of low self-worth

No ONE size fits all

## COLLABORATION

Overcoming challenges and improving the system as a whole, by:  
using formal and informal peer support and mutual self-help

Asking clients what they need and collaboratively considering how these needs can be met

working alongside and actively involving clients in the delivery of services

T.I  
PRACTISE

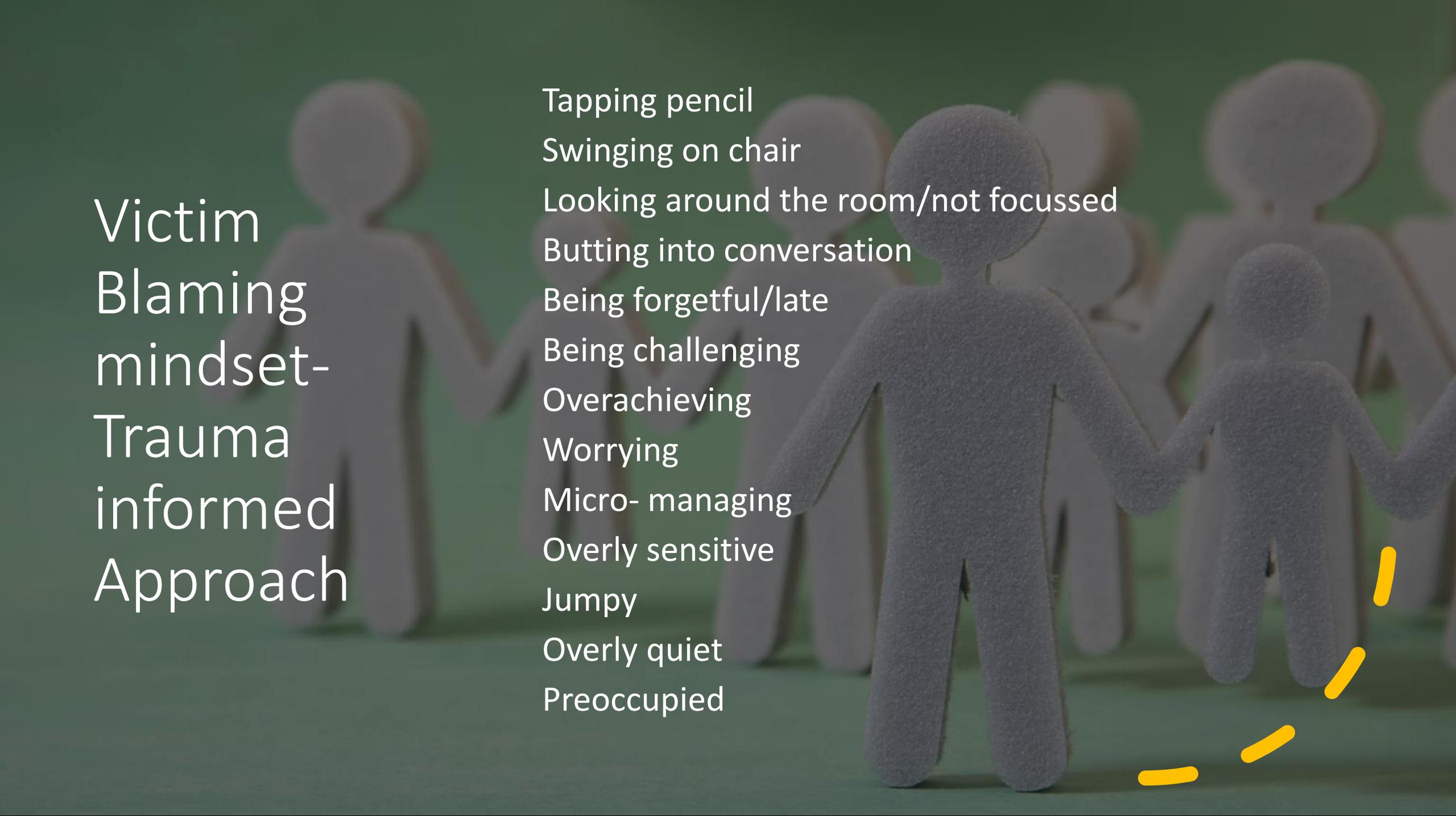




“Understanding trauma is not just about gaining knowledge.

It’s about changing the way you view the world. It’s about shifting from:

‘What is wrong with you?’ to ‘What happened to you?’



Victim  
Blaming  
mindset-  
Trauma  
informed  
Approach

Tapping pencil  
Swinging on chair  
Looking around the room/not focussed  
Butting into conversation  
Being forgetful/late  
Being challenging  
Overachieving  
Worrying  
Micro- managing  
Overly sensitive  
Jumpy  
Overly quiet  
Preoccupied



# What can help?

---

- Relationships and feeling safe are the first step to processing trauma
- Not every strategy will work, tailor your approach to the individual need
- Safe space and trusted people in order to regulate their emotions
- Self-care and recognising limitations
- Time
- Asking what they need
- Food/drink



WE ARE BACK!!

# FUN WITH MUM!

Safe space to connect and have lots of fun



Survivor Support

## Shine a light on gender based violence during the 16 days of activism

Join us by lighting a candle & sharing your thoughts on gender based violence.



#shinealight with us from Nov 25th for 16 days.

Monthly coffee/ craft mornings with those who 'get it'

### SURVIVOR-LED SANCTUARY



www.kaleidoscopic.uk

## EDUCATE 2 ERADICATE



## LIBERATION FROM ABUSE

*Delivered by survivors for those subjected to abuse looking for liberation and to break the cycle*



Funded by the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commission

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

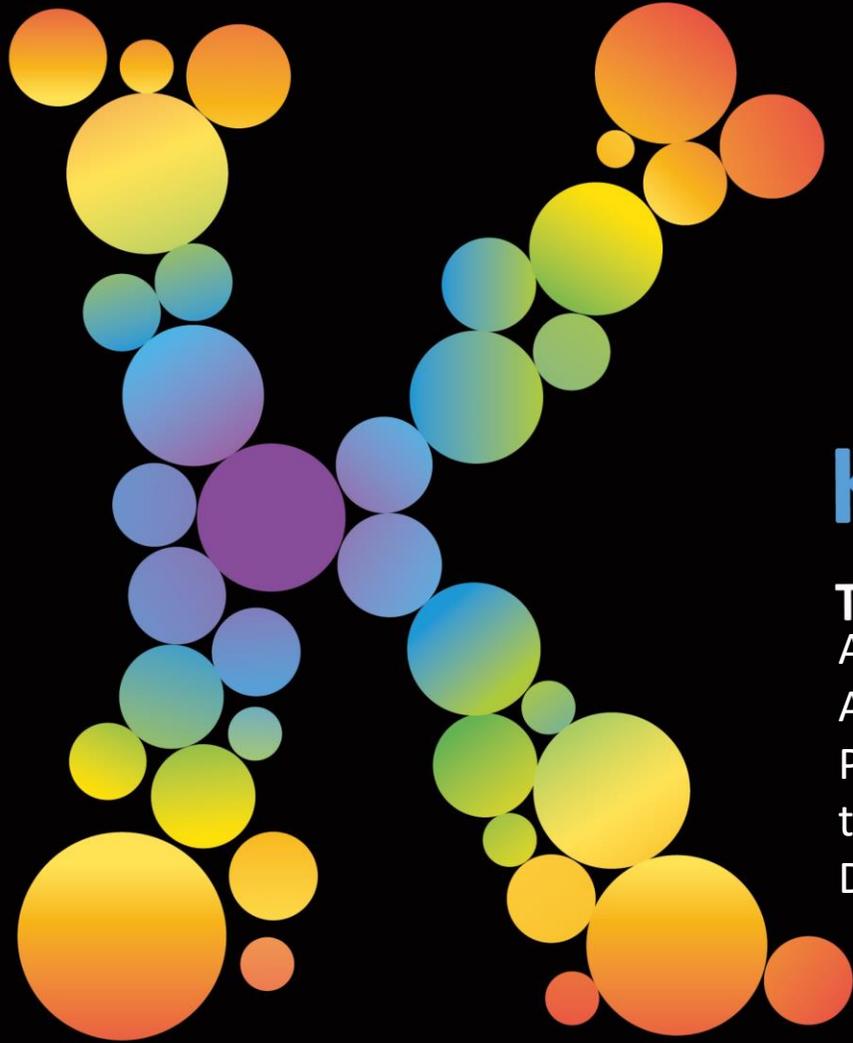


## Child and Teen Freedom Programmes

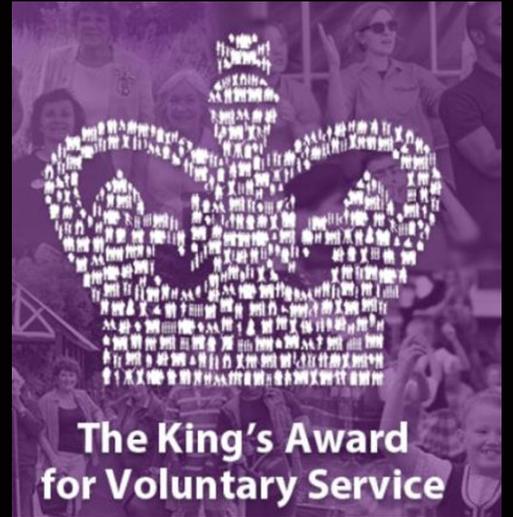
Recovery from abuse group sessions available for ages 5-11 or 12-16 delivered by Kaleidoscopic UK Qualified Facilitators in a Trauma informed environment.



Registered Charity: 1196530



Registered charity number 1196530



# KALEIDOSCOPIK UK

## TURNING THE LENS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

A charity for Children & adults subjected to any form of Domestic Abuse.

Providing survivor-led, specialist peer support and recovery services throughout the survivor journey.

Delivering prevention programmes, training and education for all

[www.kaleidoscopic.uk](http://www.kaleidoscopic.uk)



@ukkaleidoscopic



Kaleidoscopic\_UK



Kaleidoscopic UK



Kaleidoscopic.UK

# What do the These Mean?

IDVA

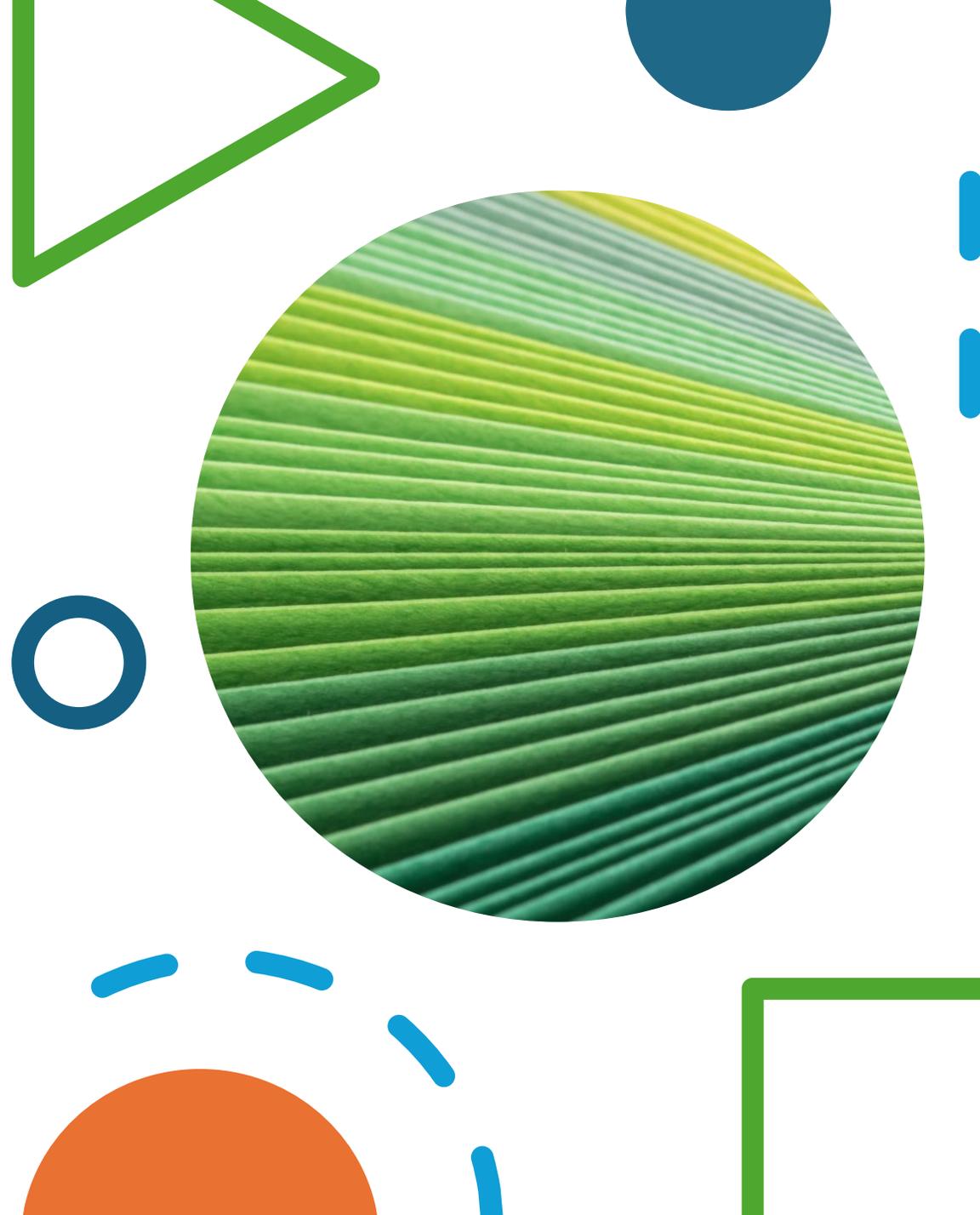
Outreach

Violence Practitioner

Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit

Marac

Others



# Sources of Support

## Local Commissioned Services:

- Wokingham domestic abuse service (delivered by Cranstoun)
- Support for victim-survivors, children and perpetrators
- Tel: 0118 402 1921; [www.cranstoun.org/dass](http://www.cranstoun.org/dass)
- West Berkshire and Reading (BWA): 0808 801 0882

## Thames Valley Wide:

- Kaleidoscopic specialist, open ended support delivered by survivors for survivors: [www.kaleidoscopic.uk](http://www.kaleidoscopic.uk)
- Hourglass support for victims of abuse aged over 60 (Wokingham community service) plus national
- Tel: 0808 808 8141 (24/7)
- Full directory: [www.directory.Wokingham.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.directory.Wokingham.gov.uk/domestic-abuse)



Question and Answers

# Contact Details

Vickie Robertson BEM

CEO and Founder of Kaleidoscopic UK

[www.kaleidoscopicuk.uk](http://www.kaleidoscopicuk.uk)

[kaleidoscopicuk@gmail.com](mailto:kaleidoscopicuk@gmail.com)

Karen Evans

Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Wokingham  
BC

[Karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk)

Tel: 07562 169321