

UN INTERRUPTED

WORKING WITH EXPLOITED YOUTH

UN/INTERRUPTED

HOW TO PROVIDE TRAUMA-INFORMED AND STRENGTHS-BASED SUPPORT

The purpose of this toolkit **is to equip educators, healthcare professionals, youth workers, parents, and others who interact with youth** with practical suggestions for how to support youth in a trauma-informed and strengths-based way. It is written to be a guide but is not a substitute for professional and individual training or education.

Our goal is for you to **feel more prepared to create safe, supportive, and empowering environments for youth with trauma, particularly those who are the survivors of exploitation.**

NEED HELP NOW?

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, **call 911**

Click to **learn about your duty to report.**

RESOURCES

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

- 1 833 900 1010
- use the chat function at canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/chat

Children of the Street

- Text their confidential line: 604 866 6779

Directions Youth Services

- 604 633 1472

Kids Help Phone

- text CONNECT to 686868
- call 1 800 668 6868

Youth Against Violence Line

- 1 800 680 4264

ABOUT UN/INTERRUPTED

As a society, we are responsible for our children and youth. Responsible for their health and wellbeing, for their futures. It is our responsibility to ensure they live a life uninterrupted by violence. The **Un/Interrupted** campaign is a rallying call for all who work with youth to really see what's going on and take action.



FAMILY SERVICES
of Greater Vancouver

fsgv.ca | [#UnInterrupted](https://twitter.com/UnInterrupted)



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRAUMA INFORMED

A trauma-informed approach is one that **recognizes the impact trauma can have in all the areas of someone's life**. When working with youth with trauma at FSGV:

- We establish a sense of safety. Vitality, this includes making sure youth feel respected and heard. They are the experts in their own lived experience.
- We center choice and autonomy. Youth should always be involved in the decision-making process. If you're making care plans, make them together.
- We focus on resilience. Every single person with trauma has survived something. They are capable and we believe that recognizing this makes further growth possible.
- We strive for inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Life happens within intersections of identity and experiences. We honour our clients' beliefs and cultural practices. We recognize the ways that race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and more impact the experiences each youth has.

TIPS FOR BEING MORE TRAUMA INFORMED

- Really listen to youth.
- Don't try to solve their problems for them.
- Don't assume what you see as a problem is a problem for them.
- Understand that some more difficult behaviour, such as yelling, distancing, and such, are very possibly symptoms of their trauma and/or ongoing circumstances.
- Implement an orienting practice into the beginning of your meetings with youth.
- Don't make decisions for them; collaborate with them.
- Focus on their strengths, interests, and talents.

WHAT IS A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH?

A strengths-based approach is one that **lets the clients' strengths, interests, talents, capabilities, and resilience lead the way in their care plan**.

The main way to implement this approach is to listen for these things and then apply them, collaboratively, into care plans. For example, if a client has a passion for basketball and is also looking to build community then you can suggest they (and possibly help them to) find a team to join.

If a youth is struggling to see how they can do anything right, remind them of what they've already overcome and the strengths you see. You might start the list but have them add to it with you.

WHAT IS AN ORIENTING PRACTICE?

An orienting practice can be used to help yourself and your clients ease into a meeting. The purpose is to support your nervous system and its processing of the setting you're in – to help create a sense of safety and presence.

Begin by focusing on the parts of your body that are making contact with the ground or furniture where you're sitting (or standing). Relax your eyes and face (i.e. unclench your jaw and let your shoulders drop).

Slowly look around and take in your environment. What catches your eye? Observe your surroundings – colour, shape. Now, how are you feeling in your body? What is your breathing like? Are there places you are tensing?

That's it! The goal is to anchor you in the present, which might be easier said than done. You may find it helpful to repeat the orienting during your meeting.

