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# The Anatomy of a Trauma Informed Script<sup>©</sup>

**Purpose.** Ensuring that your words are trauma informed doesn't necessarily mean the recipient of your messages will be happy with what is being said. However, if they respect you because of the way you've said something they are more likely to remain regulated and able to engage. This is true for you too. A trauma informed script will help you stay regulated when you are delivering difficult news or getting hard questions.

## Components of a trauma informed script

- Validating or normalizing** conveys that you understand what else could be going on for someone.
- Being clear and direct** is really important for a stressed brain. Complete information helps avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation.
- Providing the "why"** helps establish a sense of consistency and predictability.
- Providing options and choice** helps empower and create hope.

**Understanding the components of a trauma-informed script.** There are key components that make a script (or set of words) trauma informed (see box). We identify these elements in several sample scripts. During the COVID crisis, people have been asking for trauma informed words to use. Often, we feel nervous about our words when we are needing to set boundaries, clarify expectations, or delivery difficult news. We offer a few scripts to draw from. **These scripts are just examples**, and we invite you to think about what you are needing to communicate and how that can be said in **your own words** so that it feels natural and authentic. Remember, also, that body language, tone, and facial expressions impact how our messages are received.

Validating or normalizing

Being clear and direct

*"In these stressful times it is hard to keep track of everything and it makes sense you want to call to find out what is happening. I am unable to talk daily, I need to focus my time on making calls and tracking down supplies so that I can support you and others with resources during this difficult time. But, we can schedule a weekly check-in, or I can call and leave you a message every week to update you on my progress, or you can submit your questions through email that I will respond to on Thursday. Please let me know what you prefer."*

Providing the "why"

Providing options and choice

### Helpful TIPS:

- Sometimes when you are too specific with the validation statement, a person can dismiss the idea if it doesn't represent their situation. Try to keep it general unless you know how they are feeling and what is going on.
- You might also note that the script says precisely when the service provider will respond to the service user's question (Thursday). That is also part of being clear and direct, and helps a stressed brain know what to expect.

**Validating or normalizing**



**Being clear and direct**

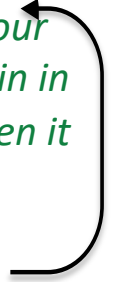


*“Physical distancing and staying separated can feel unnatural and hard. We need you to maintain physical distance so that you all can stay safe. Your options are to stand outside the doors on these pre-marked lines, remain in your car until we call your number, or reschedule for a different day when it isn’t as busy.”*

**Providing options and choice**



**Providing the “why”**



**Validating or normalizing**



**Providing the “why”**

*“What I know about stress and trauma is that it can cause our brains to operate more in survival mode. What this means for our attention is that we tend to be more distracted as our brains look for threat. It makes sense that you are having a hard time staying focused. But in order for our program to continue receiving funding so that we can provide needed services, we need to submit the report by Friday. I invite you to talk with me further about ways to stay focused, talk with a peer to learn helpful strategies, or try some of your own ideas. Let me know how I can support you in completing those reports.”*

**Being clear and direct**



**Providing options and choice**



**Helpful TIPS:**

- You’ll see that in the final script, the validating and normalizing portion is rather long. This may feel like too much for some people. We invite you to think about what feels natural to you, and use your own words to convey understanding.
- You might also notice that the clear and direct statement follows the portion that is explaining the “why.” That’s ok. The key is to be direct about what is needed, and offer a reason. Use the words and order that feels natural to you.



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