

Safety Protocols and Practices

Expressive arts programs can elicit strong emotions, particularly when exploring topics related to trauma, violence, migration, or personal experiences. Safety protocols ensure participants feel secure, supported, and able to self-regulate, while facilitators are equipped to navigate challenging discussions and care for themselves and their team.

Safety Protocols For Facilitators and Participants

Safety protocols are essential to prevent triggers and maintain participant security. They support self-regulation for both participants and facilitators, ensure staff can access agency supports, and help identify additional resources needed for safe, inclusive programming.

Facilitator Discussion Questions Prior to a Program

- What strategies do you use to stay calm when you feel stressed or triggered?
- How can noticing your own emotions help you respond to others more effectively?
- What ways can we support each other in managing emotions during group activities?
- How does taking a pause or grounding yourself affect your ability to facilitate?
- Can you share a time when co-regulation helped you or someone in a challenging situation?

Self-Regulation & Co-Regulation Valuable for Facilitators

Self- and co-regulation help facilitators maintain a calm, supportive environment and model healthy emotional management for participants. These skills reduce stress, support group dynamics, and foster trust and safety while guiding participants in managing emotions. Self- and co-regulation strategies for facilitators can include:

- Mindfulness and meditation
- Somatic resourcing (grounding, breathing, stretching, posture)
- Team debriefs and regular check-ins
- Seeking support from colleagues or managers
- Referring to organizational policies



When facilitators care for their own nervous systems, they make it possible for participants to feel seen, supported, and empowered.

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Managing Conflict Conflict often arises when needs or perspectives clash and emotions run high. Without careful management, focus shifts from problem-solving to defending oneself.

Conflict Approaches

- Power-Based: Authority, rules, enforcement
- Rights-Based: Laws, policies, contracts, social standards
- **Interest-Based:** Identify underlying needs, explore collaborative solutions. Interest Based conflict approaches are recommended when working with communities because it allows for co-creation of solutions to challenges.

Helpful Problem Solving Acronyms

C-L-A-I-M Tool: Mindful Verbal De-Escalation

C = Centre Yourself, remain calm and avoid reactivity

L = Listen for what is important to the speaker

A = Acknowledge what you have heard

I = Invite more information

M - Move toward problem solving

I - R - D

- Involve: Ask participants for suggestions
- Restate: Confirm feasible solutions clearly
- Decide: Collaborate to select options within program or organization



L-A-I Tool: Active Listening

L = Listen for what is important to the speaker

A = Acknowledge what you have heard

I = Invite more information

Prior to a Program Facilitators can reflect on the session's purpose and goals, consider their assumptions and personal triggers, identify needs and potential challenges, and review any policies or requirements that must be communicated. This can support common ground among all staff.

Debrief Meetings & Check-Ins Facilitators can conduct post-session debriefs to review successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, documenting session details, activities, participant referrals, and strategies for future sessions. This will improve programs moving forward.