**Trauma-Sensitive Practices**

**Safety**

* Take time to familiarize the person with the physical environment
* Ask about comfort level with lighting, environmental surroundings
* Share control
* Show respect
* Use a warm and compassionate manner to build rapport
* Speak in a calm, caring tone
* Actively listen without judgment

**Choice**

* Ask if you can touch them
* Ask if you can close the door
* Allow the person to decide where to sit / stand in the room
* Provide as many choices without compromising safety
* Make sure you can follow through with choices provided
* Explain rationale for your intervention and obtain consent

**Trustworthiness**

* Explain all interventions in terms the person can understand
* Tell the person what to expect and how long it will take
* Ask the person what they want or how you can help them
* Actively listen
* Do what you say you are going to do; apologize if you are not able to or if you made a mistake.

**Collaboration**

* Share information
* Encourage the person to make decisions about treatment
* Allow the person to problem-solve
* Provide opportunities to take on a leadership role

**Empowerment**

* Ask “What happened to you,” not “What is wrong with you?”
* Take time with the person so they feel genuinely heard
* If the person appears to have difficulty with an intervention, ask if there is a way you can help the person relax
* Pay attention to body cues; many survivors have been conditioned to be passive and defer to authority and so may not disclose distress
* Model and build self-confidence (acknowledge even the smallest positives)

**What Might You See?**

**Nonverbal Indicators of Discomfort & Distress**

**These behaviors are probably best understood as “fight, flight, or freeze” responses to the perception of a threat:**

Rapid heart rate and breathing (holding breath or sudden change in breathing pattern may also be observed)

Sudden flooding of strong emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, fear, etc.)

Pallor or flushing

Sweating

Muscle stiffness, muscle tension and inability to relax

Cringing, flinching or pulling away

Trembling or shaking

Pacing, muttering

Startle response

Staring vacantly into the distance

“Spacing out” or being uninvolved in the present

Being unable to focus, concentrate, or respond to instructions

Being unable to speak

**Common Trauma Triggers**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Loud or abrupt noises | Smells |
| Tone of voice | Glaring lights |
| Waiting for long periods of time | Having to repeat one’s story multiple times to multiple people |
| Aggressive behavior | Impatience |
| Not being listening to or being heard | Small spaces |
| Crowds / Chaotic Environments | Being touched |
| Removal of or denial of privileges | Colors |
| Anniversary dates | Signage |
| Darkness | Lack of choice or options; not being believed |