

# Printable Version

## A Visual Cheat Sheet for Clinicians Using Trauma-Informed Language in Crisis or High-Stress Moments

Use this quick guide to replace escalating phrases with grounding alternatives that foster safety, autonomy, and connection—especially when working with dysregulated or overwhelmed clients.

### TRAUMA-INFORMED LANGUAGE QUICK GUIDE

#### WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS:

In trauma-informed care, language is one of the most powerful tools clinicians have. Phrases like 'calm down' can unintentionally escalate situations by invalidating the client's emotional state. Instead, use language that centers safety, autonomy, and presence

#### TRY THESE GROUNDING ALTERNATIVES:

- 'You're safe right now.'
- 'Take your time. I'm listening.'
- 'What do you need in this moment?'
- 'Let's take a breath together.'
- 'Would it help to take a break and come back to this?'
- 'You're allowed to feel this. I'm here.'

#### TIPS FOR DELIVERY

- Match your tone and body language to the message.
- Slow your pace and soften volume.
- Validate before redirecting.
- Give space. Silence can be grounding too.



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### 10 COMMUNICATION PHRASES THAT CAN ESCALATE CONFLICT—AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

#### REACTIVE PHRASE

#### RESPONSIVE REFRAME

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS DO THAT?

WHEN THIS HAPPENS, I FEEL [X] BECAUSE [Y].

YOU NEVER LISTEN.

I FEEL UNHEARD WHEN I TRY TO SHARE SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

CALM DOWN!

YOU'RE SAFE. I'M HERE AND LISTENING.

YOU'RE BEING TOO SENSITIVE.

YOUR REACTION IS VALID - LET'S UNPACK IT TOGETHER.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!

THANKS FOR LETTING ME KNOW HOW THAT CAME ACROSS.

YOU ALWAYS MAKE THIS ABOUT YOU.

CAN WE PAUSE AND CHECK IN WITH BOTH OUR PERSPECTIVES?

YOU'RE OVERREACTING.

WHAT YOU'RE FEELING MAKES SENSE. LET'S TALK THROUGH IT.

YOU DON'T CARE.

I NEED TO FEEL SUPPORTED RIGHT NOW - CAN WE RECONNECT?

WHATEVER.

LET'S STEP BACK AND COME BACK TO THIS WHEN WE'RE READY.

IT'S YOUR FAULT.

I WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT LED US HERE SO WE CAN MOVE FORWARD.



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