



SUPPORTING DISCLOSURE OF CSA

How to respond with compassion

Responding to a disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA) requires an approach that prioritises safety, agency, and emotional well-being.

Here are the **key principles for a trauma-informed response** to supporting a client through a disclosure of childhood sexual abuse.

THE "HEART" APPROACH

**H****HELP THEM FEEL SAFE**

Offer reassurance, believe them, and respect their privacy.

E**EMPOWER WITH CHOICE**

Let them share at their own pace and give them control.

A**ADAPT COMMUNICATION**

Use simple language, visuals, or assistive tools as needed.

R**REDUCE HARM**

Stay calm, avoid probing questions, and limit retelling their story.

T**THINK HOLISTICALLY**

Consider culture, gender, disability, and past trauma in your support.



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: WHAT TO SAY AND DO

BELIEVE & AFFIRM

- "I believe you."
- "Thank you for telling me."
- "You are not alone, and this is not your fault."

ENSURE SAFETY

- Assess immediate risk and take steps to protect them from further harm.
- Follow policies and procedures while centering their needs.

RESPECT THEIR AUTONOMY

- "Would you like me to help you find support?"
- "You can decide how much you want to share."

PROVIDE NEXT STEPS WITHOUT OVERPROMISING

- "There are people who can help you."
- "I will do what I can to support you."

