



My Emotional Support Plan

Inclusion Saskatchewan's Supported Decision Making Series





INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities

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MY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Is this workbook for me?

Everyone feels scared, sad or worried sometimes. When we experience something that makes us feel this way, the feelings may stay with us for a long time or they may go away for a bit and then come back. This workbook will help you decide if you are ready to talk about your experience and will also help you think about some helpful tools to feel safer.

What is trauma?

Sometimes people feel like an experience they had was stressful or traumatic. Trauma is when you have an intense emotional response to a situation that made you feel your safety or wellbeing was at risk. Trauma can also happen if you felt a loved one's safety or wellbeing was at risk. Trauma can affect our brains, our bodies, and how we feel or act. Everyone reacts to difficult situations differently.

What can I do?

It is important that you feel you have control in your life. You do not need to talk about an experience that made you feel emotional until you are ready. Before you talk about it, it is best if you are somewhere you feel safe and with people you trust. Sometimes people need time before they feel ready to talk and that is okay.

Who can help me?

You can go through this workbook on your own or with someone you trust. A supporter can listen to your feelings and help you brainstorm ideas that will help you feel safe or help you connect with resources. They may not be able to give you everything you need to work through your emotions, but they can help you connect with people that have the proper skills, such as a counsellor.

Here are some things you might want to think about before you talk to someone:

- How much are you comfortable sharing?
- Where are you most comfortable? For example, are you most comfortable somewhere in your home or somewhere outside of your home?
- Is there a time of day that you want to talk about your experience?
- Would you like help to connect with other supports, such as a counsellor, or would you just like someone to listen?

When I feel ready to talk about my challenging experience, these are the people I am comfortable talking to (you can list one person or multiple people):

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

What I like about the way they support me:

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

What I like about the way they support me:

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

What I like about the way they support me:

How I Want To Be Supported

When I am ready to share, this worksheet can help me tell other people how I want to be supported.

I feel safe right now: Yes No

If you do not feel safe, you should take a break and come back to it when you feel more comfortable.

What makes me feel safe? For example, do you have a favourite place you go, a favourite song, someone you feel safe with?

When I feel overwhelmed or upset, how do I like to be supported? For example, do you need space to think or do you like to have someone listen but not give you advice?

If I feel overwhelmed or upset, what are some things I do not like?
For example, being touched, being left alone, loud noises, having to retell your story over and over again, seeing people wearing uniforms, or bright lights.

I feel supported to make my own choices
and feel that I have control in my life: Yes No

Is there an area of my life that I would like more choice and control?
For example, do you need space to think or do you like to have someone listen but not give you advice?

If I want to learn more about trauma and how my challenging experience affects me, who can I ask to support me?

If I do not have a counsellor, would I like support to find a counsellor?

Making A Plan To Help You Feel Safe

Once you complete this plan, you can look back at it when you are feeling upset or overwhelmed. You can make changes as you need. You may wish to print it off and keep it with you or save it to a device.

When I feel overwhelmed, what do I feel in my body? For example, many people tense their muscles, especially their stomach. Many people also find that their breathing becomes quicker, or they hold their breath.

What can I do to help my body feel better? For example, taking some deep breaths or doing some stretches.

Who can I call if I feel overwhelmed or upset and want to talk to someone? How do I contact them and what is their contact information? This can include both people and services. For example, a parent, a friend, Kids Help Phone, Mobile Crisis.

Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

If I feel upset, what are things I can do on my own to feel better? You can come up with your own ideas or include ideas from the list below.

Ideas and activities that might help you feel better:

- Journal/write
- Go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Take some deep breaths
- Make a craft
- Colour
- Meditate
- Move your body
- Go outside for some fresh air
- Read

Who can I call if there is an emergency? For example, you may call 911 if you are needing an ambulance, the fire department or if your safety is at risk. Depending on the type of emergency, there may also be other people or services that you can call such as Mobile Crisis, the Mental Health Clinic, a supporter, or a family member.

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

I would call this person or service for these types of emergencies:

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

I would call this person or service for these types of emergencies:

Name: _____ Contact Info: _____

I would call this person or service for these types of emergencies:

Where can I go if I feel unsafe? How will I get there? For example, my friend's house and I will take the bus.

Where I Can Go	How I Will Get There

What are some things I can do to help myself feel safer? For example, checking to make sure my doors are locked or keeping my phone or communication device with me.

Information for Supporters

This document can be used to allow the person you're supporting to think about how they want to be supported when they have experienced something traumatic or emotionally distressing. It is important to determine the type of support the person is seeking from you before you make suggestions. For example, an individual may just want to share something with you or they may be looking for additional support. The "How I want to be Supported" worksheet can help the supported person determine what type of support they are seeking once they decide they are ready to reach out.

Not everyone is equipped to support people experiencing trauma, which often requires specialized training. If an individual approaches you to talk about a challenging experience and you do not feel comfortable, tell them that you are uncomfortable while also validating their experience. This can include asking them if they would like your help to connect with a more appropriate support.

When connecting an individual to other resources or supports, it is important to help manage their expectations and express that sometimes finding the right supports, such as a counsellor that they feel comfortable with, can take time. Be patient with the individual and understand that they may not be ready to connect with an external support and that is okay. You can let the individual know you are there for them when they are ready to explore additional supports.

Here are some ways that you can allow an individual to feel safe if they open up to you:

- Validate their experience(s) by actively listening and creating an emotionally safe and non-judgmental space.
- Focus on what the person needs from you.
- Avoid platitudes such as "it's going to get better" or "it will be okay".
- Do not offer advice unless they are asking you for it and you are well equipped to provide it.
- Do not force support that they are not ready for (such as connecting them with a counsellor) and avoid leading them to what you think they should do.
- Allow them to set the pace of the conversation.

- Refrain from asking for more information than they willingly give
- Let them know that what they share is confidential and you will not share anything with anyone without their permission (unless there is a reasonable belief that there will be harm to the individual or others, or reasonable belief child abuse is occurring).

Note: In cases where a person has a legal guardian, you should let them know that a guardian is entitled to certain information and the individual should be aware of this before they share anything with you.

If you are comfortable, you can let the person know you are there for them even after you have connected them to a proper support, such as a counsellor. Be aware, however, that supporting a person with their trauma can also be incredibly challenging. Sometimes hearing about other's trauma can be stressful and even triggering, especially if you have experienced similar trauma yourself. It is important to be mindful of your own needs and limits while navigating supporting an individual through their experiences.