

# Planning with Care: A Toolkit for Trauma- Informed Conferences on Violence and Abuse

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# Content

**01 Introduction**

**02 Understanding emotional safety**

**03 Key roles and responsibilities**

Conference organisers; chairs and facilitators; speakers; support staff and measures; delegates

**04 Summary of recommendations**

**05 Practical tools and templates**

*See next page.*

**06 Appendix: Summary of research informing this toolkit**

*For a plain text / Word version of this document, [click here](#).*

# Tools

## 05 Practical tools and templates

### Planning Tools for Organisers

- Trauma-Informed Planning Checklist
- Lived Experience Involvement Guidance
- Session Planning Worksheet
- Commissioning Professional Wellbeing Support Guidance
- Support Roles Briefing Template

### Guidance for Speakers and Chairs

- Opening and Closing Scripts
- Content Warning Prompts
- Facilitation Tips
- Preparing to Speak Reflective Worksheet

### Attendee Self-Preparation Resources

- Personal Wellbeing Plan
- Buddy Support Planning Sheet
- Suggested Decompression Activities

### Communication Tools

- Pre-Event Welcome Email Template
- Post-Event Follow-Up Email Template
- Quiet Room Signage



# Introduction

**Recognising that emotional safety is central to scholarship, this toolkit offers practical tools and reflective guidance on creating trauma-informed conferences.**

Conferences that focus on violence, abuse, and trauma bring together people with diverse expertise, including lived experience. They can offer powerful spaces for knowledge exchange, solidarity, and collaboration—but they can also be emotionally demanding. These events often involve the sharing of distressing material, discussion of systems that have failed to protect, and reminders of professional or institutional harms. Such harms include a lack of support for researchers' wellbeing, barriers to progression for those with lived experience, or the absence of meaningful action on equity and inclusion. Conference attendees must also navigate power imbalances—between speakers and audiences, senior and early-career researchers, academics, practitioners, and people with lived experience—that can mirror wider inequalities within and beyond the research environment.

This toolkit is informed by research involving people with experience of conducting research and participating in conferences on violence, abuse, and trauma—including freelance researchers, university researchers, practitioners with research roles, and lived experience or survivor researchers. It is designed to support conference organisers, session chairs and facilitators, speakers, attendees, and supporters to create emotionally safe, inclusive environments that promote connection and care. Drawing on a trauma-informed approach, this toolkit offers practical tools and reflective guidance. It is rooted in the understanding that emotional safety is not peripheral, but integral to rigorous scholarship and collaboration.

Rather than prescribing a rigid set of rules, this resource invites thoughtful, context-sensitive planning. This toolkit can be used across settings—from academic conferences to professional training days and community-led workshops—to help build environments that recognise emotional labour, value embodied knowledge, and prioritise care. Emotional wellbeing is a shared responsibility—and this toolkit is one contribution to meeting that responsibility with intention and care.

# Understanding emotional safety

Emotional safety refers to the conditions under which people feel able to participate authentically—whether by listening, speaking, reflecting, or stepping away—without fear of judgement, invalidation, or re-traumatisation. It is about ensuring that people can stay connected to themselves and to others in spaces where emotionally and politically charged topics are discussed.

At conferences focused on violence and abuse, emotional safety is vital—not only for those with lived experience of harm, but for anyone engaging with difficult material in an intense and often public setting. These gatherings can evoke strong emotional responses, provoke ethical and professional tensions, and raise questions about one's role and responsibility in the field. For some, the content is viscerally familiar; for others, the act of witnessing distress or navigating emotionally charged discussions can be challenging in different ways. Emotional safety requires that these possibilities be anticipated, acknowledged, and supported—not sidelined or pathologised.

Trauma-informed approaches to emotional safety are grounded in principles of choice, trust, empowerment, collaboration, respect, and cultural humility. These principles ask us to:

- Anticipate emotional impact, not just respond after harm occurs.
- Offer meaningful choice and control, especially around participation and engagement.
- Build in time and space for reflection, rest, and regulation.
- Make visible the systems of power at play, and avoid replicating dynamics that threaten, silence, or isolate.
- Recognise and accommodate the diverse ways people experience safety, distress, and recovery.

**Creating emotional safety is not about removing all discomfort—it is about building the scaffolding for people to engage with challenging content in ways that are sustainable, supported, and consensual. This toolkit offers practical steps to help make that possible.**



# Key roles and responsibilities

Ensuring emotional safety at conferences is a shared responsibility. Participants in our research and members of our network identified several key roles – event organisers, session chairs and facilitators, speakers, dedicated support staff, and attendees – with specific responsibilities to foster a safe, inclusive environment. This section outlines these roles and their responsibilities, supported by quotes from focus group participants.

## Conference Organisers

Conference organisers set the overall tone and structure of an event and hold the critical responsibility of ensuring that wellbeing, accessibility, and inclusion are prioritised throughout.

Key responsibilities include:

- **Setting a supportive, trauma-informed tone from the outset**

The opening of a conference strongly influences how comfortable attendees feel. When organisers acknowledge wellbeing and inclusion early on, it signals that these values are taken seriously.

Creating a psychologically safe and supportive atmosphere includes recognising that attendees may bring lived experience of violence and abuse, affirming that this is welcome, and setting expectations for respectful engagement.

- **Providing guidance and resources before and during the event**

Organisers should ensure that attendees and speakers are well equipped to navigate the event safely and meaningfully. Participants emphasised the importance of receiving clear, timely information in advance—not only about the content of the conference, but also about its structure and social environment. This included practical details such as the venue layout, accessibility arrangements, and available facilities; information about the programme and session formats; and, where appropriate, a delegate list so attendees could anticipate who else would be present. For some, knowing in advance whether colleagues or peers would be attending helped reduce anxiety and enabled them to plan points of connection. Others noted that knowing where to find quiet rooms, whether food would be provided, and what the space looked like helped them feel more at ease before arriving.

*"The first couple of minutes really makes me feel comfortable or not depending on who's doing it and how they do it."*

- (Continued) Participants expressed mixed views on the use of content or trigger warnings. While research suggests that such warnings may increase anticipatory anxiety, many attendees nonetheless valued brief, specific warnings as a way of offering predictability and choice. When handled with care, content warnings can signal respect and give attendees the opportunity to manage their own engagement. They are most effective when used proportionately, focused on potentially distressing material that may not be obvious, and accompanied by a clear message that attendees are free to take breaks, leave sessions, and rejoin without explanation or judgement.
- **Designing an accessible and inclusive environment**

Logistical and venue decisions significantly affect participant experience. Accessibility must be planned and intentional, not treated as an afterthought. One participant described how a lack of access caused distress: “I went to a conference... it was on the 4th floor and the one lift had broken... all this disruption happened because the people who organised the conference didn’t think about it beforehand”. Organisers should ensure venues are physically accessible and consider a range of other needs—such as dietary requirements, space to take breaks, and cultural or religious considerations. Anticipating these requirements contributes to a sense of welcome and care.
- **Balancing the programme with breaks and space to process**

A packed schedule of emotionally intense sessions can be overwhelming. Participants valued conferences that included breaks, variation in session formats, and moments to reflect. One participant also suggested including uplifting or healing-focused content. A well-paced agenda—featuring rest time, informal spaces, creative activities or mindfulness—can help participants decompress and maintain focus. Programmes should be shaped to reflect the event’s purpose while safeguarding attendees’ mental wellbeing.
- **Providing wellbeing support**

It is increasingly recognised as good practice to provide on-site emotional support. Several participants described the value of having trained wellbeing personnel present. “We always have wellbeing workers there on site and that has been working really well and very appreciated by the audiences... it’s not particularly expensive to have two people be there for the day.” This might include local support workers, mental health first aiders, or volunteers trained in trauma awareness and trauma-sensitive support. Calm rooms or quiet spaces should also be clearly signposted. Support should be discreet but visible—available without requiring attendees to draw attention to themselves.

“I went to a conference...it was on the 4th floor and the one lift had broken”

“I’ve been to conferences where they put on just way too much and it’s very overwhelming”

“We always have wellbeing workers there on site and that has been working really well”

- **Involving diverse voices—including survivors—in planning**

Inclusive planning strengthens emotional safety. Involving people with lived experience helps organisers anticipate challenges and design events that are more attuned to the needs of participants. One organiser reflected: “Having survivors involved in the planning... helps me feel like I’m covering all bases... able to anticipate the different issues that might come up... you get the best way to run the day when you bring a diverse group of people together.” Applying an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens throughout planning stages—such as by reviewing language, diversifying speakers, and offering tailored accommodations—helps foster a more trusting and respectful environment. As another participant noted, visible evidence of this work “produces a sense of safety” for all involved.

- **Designing social events with emotional safety in mind**

Social events can foster connection, but not all participants will find the same formats comfortable or accessible. Providing a range of optional activities helps accommodate diverse needs and preferences. Organisers should carefully consider whether serving alcohol will enhance or hinder inclusion and ensure that non-drinking options are clearly available and visible. Offering informal alternatives—such as a group dinner at a local restaurant on the same evening as a formal reception—allows attendees to engage in ways that feel right for them. For those who prefer time alone or quieter activities, signposting local cinemas, cafés, or green spaces can support autonomy. Active and accessible options like museum visits or walking tours also allow participants to connect through shared experience, while staying grounded in the local context.

*"Having survivors involved in the planning... helps me feel like I'm covering all bases... able to anticipate the different issues that might come up... you get the best way to run the day when you bring a diverse group of people together"*

**In short, organisers carry the overarching responsibility to create conditions in which attendees can feel safe, respected, and supported from start to finish. This requires practical planning, attention to emotional wellbeing, and meaningful inclusion at every stage.**

## Session Chairs & Facilitators

Session chairs and facilitators play a pivotal role in shaping the real-time experience of conference sessions. As the visible presence “on stage”, they help guide the tone, pace, and interactions within panels, presentations, or discussions. Participants in the study highlighted the importance of chairs being confident facilitators who are attentive to both the content and the emotional atmosphere in the room.

Key responsibilities include:

- **Fostering a respectful and safe session environment**

Chairs are responsible for setting expectations at the outset and managing the tone of the discussion throughout. This includes establishing ground rules, encouraging respectful dialogue, and intervening if exchanges become inappropriate or insensitive. “I think there’s definitely a role for chairs... because there’s something about who controls the narrative,” noted one participant, emphasising that chairs can prevent discussions from veering into territory that marginalises or undermines the experiences of survivors.

Participants also shared examples of chairs failing to intervene when needed. One researcher described, “I expected the person who was officiating would have defended me, and that didn’t happen... that was a really horrible experience”. In such situations, chairs should step in—whether to remind the audience of ground rules, address disrespectful comments, or redirect the conversation, as appropriate.

There should also be a clear process for attendees or speakers to raise concerns about inappropriate behaviour, ideally with chairs being prepared to respond in the moment. Active facilitation and a willingness to uphold respectful conduct are essential to maintaining an emotionally safe space.

- **Encouraging participation while respecting personal boundaries**

An effective chair facilitates balanced discussion by creating opportunities for contribution without placing pressure on anyone to speak. Chairs should clarify from the outset that participation is voluntary, and that attendees are encouraged to take care of their own emotional comfort throughout the session.

Participants particularly emphasised the importance of not expecting or implicitly encouraging people to share personal experiences of trauma. One survivor reflected: “Maybe just some guideline at the beginning saying to people, please don’t

overshare... because the risk is that you will ruminate and not like [the fact that you did]”. Chairs can help normalise that sharing lived experiences is welcome but not expected; that it is entirely optional and that it is acceptable—and often wise—to hold boundaries around what is disclosed in public forums.

Chairs should also be attentive to group dynamics, ensuring that no single person or small group dominates discussion. Creating space for a range of voices might involve actively inviting contributions from quieter participants or offering alternative methods of input, such as written reflections or digital chat.

*“I think there’s definitely a role for chairs... because there’s something about who controls the narrative”*

- **Managing time and emotional tone**

While the overall agenda is the responsibility of organisers, chairs are responsible for managing the flow and atmosphere of individual sessions. They should be prepared to adjust timing, pause discussions, or take short breaks if a session becomes emotionally intense or if attendees show signs of distress. “The chair is a really important role and you do want someone who’s got facilitation experience... if you have someone who can hold the room well and make it feel safe, that feels really important,” one participant noted.

Skilled chairs should keep the session on track while responding empathetically to the mood in the room. This may involve gently redirecting presenters who go off-topic, summarising audience questions, or closing the session in a calm, thoughtful manner—even when challenging material has been discussed.

**In short, session chairs and facilitators act as the immediate stewards of emotional safety within the conference. Their actions bring the wider principles of respect, care, and inclusion to life in the moment.**

*"If you have someone who can hold the room well and make it feel safe, that feels really important"*

## Speakers & Presenters

Speakers play a significant role in shaping emotional wellbeing at conferences. While organisers and chairs set the broader conditions for safety, presenters contribute directly through the content they share and how they deliver it. Speakers should be attentive both to the emotional needs of their audience and to their own wellbeing.

Key responsibilities include:

- **Being thoughtful about content and emotional impact**

Speakers should consider how their presentation may affect the audience, particularly when discussing distressing or traumatic material. This is less about avoiding certain topics and more about presenting them with intention and care. One participant reflected: “Sometimes [speakers] have put stuff in their presentations and I’m wondering whether they needed to ... we often forget how that might impact other people. It’s just about being thoughtful about what we put on.” Thoughtful presentation might involve briefly preparing the audience for difficult content, avoiding unnecessary graphic detail, and focusing on key messages rather than shock value. Speakers are encouraged to follow any guidance offered by organisers and to consider in advance how best to flag sensitive material. This supports attendees’ choice about whether and how to engage with the session, without undermining the speaker’s voice and the importance of addressing difficult topics, including lived experiences.

- **Respecting personal limits and seeking support when needed**

Speaking at conferences can be emotionally taxing, especially for those with lived experience or those working closely with traumatic material. Several participants described feeling overwhelmed or unsupported before, during, or after their presentations. One participant, who had lived experience of violence and abuse, shared: “I had no idea [what to expect]... I felt absolutely overwhelmed... I had not anticipated the lack of care around me and how I would feel in that situation. I felt sick the whole time I was there.”

Where support is not offered proactively, speakers may need to advocate for their own needs. This might include requesting to see the programme in advance, arranging a co-presenter, having a support person attend, or asking for a quiet space to use after the session. For some, this also meant building in time to decompress or debrief afterwards. Speakers should never be expected to manage alone. Presenting should not come at the cost of one’s wellbeing, and organisers have a duty to plan accordingly. However, until such support becomes standard, speakers can benefit from considering in advance what will help them feel safe, grounded, and able to deliver their session in a way that is sustainable.

- **Connecting with the audience**

Effective speakers think beyond the slide deck: presenting requires clarity, sensitivity, and engagement. Speakers should consider avoiding academic jargon where possible and focus on communicating their message in a way that is accessible and meaningful. Where appropriate, speakers can consider moving away from one-way delivery in favour of interactive formats. This might include inviting questions, facilitating brief discussion, offering optional activities to engage in, or structuring the talk so attendees can reflect on how the content applies to their own work or context. Speakers should ideally offer attendees different ways of interacting so that they can choose what feels comfortable for them and/or reiterate that engagement is voluntary.

*"I had not anticipated the lack of care around me and how I would feel in that situation. I felt sick the whole time I was there"*

- **Recognising Co-production and Lived Experience**

Several participants stressed the importance of acknowledging how lived experience shapes and informs research. This includes being transparent about who contributed to the work, and how—especially where survivor researchers, peer contributors, or co-authors have played a role. Speakers can model inclusive, non-hierarchical values by recognising co-production meaningfully during their session. This helps prevent divisions between “academics” and “lived experience contributors” and reinforces the idea that both types of knowledge are valued. It can also help attendees feel more seen and connected to the work. Speakers who are presenting work as academic can consider introducing themselves not just by title and affiliation, but by briefly sharing their interest in the topic or relevant background.

- **Using Media with Care**

When using imagery, video, or audio material—especially if it includes sensitive content or survivor testimony—speakers should take extra care. Speakers should consider whether the imagery is necessary, particularly if it serves solely to illustrate violence or abuse. Videos can have a powerful emotional impact, which can be empowering but may also be triggering, even when brief or edited. Where videos are included, speakers should give a clear verbal warning before they begin and describe what the audience should expect. Attendees should be reminded that they are free to look away, step out, or mute their device if needed. Speakers who are unsure whether a video is appropriate should seek to discuss it with the organisers in advance.

## Wellbeing Support Staff & Measures

Building dedicated wellbeing support into conferences and events can help promote emotional safety and ensure both attendees and speakers are cared for throughout the event. Key measures include:

- **On-site wellbeing professionals or volunteers**

Bringing in trained support staff can significantly enhance the sense of safety for attendees. These individuals—often independent of the organising team, such as counsellors from local services or trauma-informed practitioners—are available to listen, support, or simply offer a quiet space when needed. They may staff a wellbeing or calm room or be clearly identifiable for private conversations. Announcing their presence at the start of the event helps normalise help-seeking and ensures attendees know where to turn if needed. Even if only a few people make use of the support, its presence can serve as a vital safety net and in itself be preventative of distress.

- **Buddy systems and designated support roles**

For delegates with lived experience or attending for the first time, having a trusted supporter or ‘buddy’ on hand can make a significant difference. This person may help monitor distress, facilitate self-care strategies, or simply provide companionship. One participant described how her organisation routinely prepares survivor speakers with a comprehensive safety plan: “We will have a safety and support plan... we’ll have discussed needs, we’ll have a safe word... We knew the exit plans, we knew the triggers that might be there. We have a pre-brief the day before, we have a debrief after at the person’s pace...”. In this example, the support person used a safe word to discreetly help the speaker exit conversations when needed and provided grounding tools such as stress balls and mindfulness exercises. They also followed up in the days afterwards, recognising that emotional impact may surface later. Organisers should consider offering buddy arrangements—for example, pairing new attendees with a more experienced delegate—and, where possible, cover any additional costs (such as travel or registration fees) associated with support roles for delegates with lived experience or access needs.



- **Clear emergency procedures and aftercare**

Conferences should have trauma-informed protocols for responding to distress in the moment, as well as supporting attendees after the event. This might include clear guidance for staff on what to do if someone has a panic attack or becomes overwhelmed. Aftercare is equally important; attending or presenting at a difficult event can leave a lasting emotional impact. Organisers should consider circulating helpline information, offering access to peer support groups, or hosting an optional follow-up online check-in to support emotional safety during and after the event. A brief, thoughtful post-conference message reminding attendees of support options and encouraging reflection can help reinforce that their wellbeing remains a priority.

**In summary, building wellbeing into the design and delivery of a conference is not a luxury—it is a core element of responsible practice when addressing difficult and sensitive topics. Trained support staff, peer support mechanisms, safe spaces, and follow-up care provide reassurance and reduce the risk of harm. These measures do not replace individual responsibility, but they strengthen the infrastructure of care.**

"You don't always know how something has affected you until later... even a check-in email a few days afterwards can make a big difference"

## Attendees

While the primary responsibility for ensuring safety and inclusion lies with organisers and facilitators, attendees also contribute to the emotional climate of a conference. Their thoughtful engagement—both with their own needs and with those of others—can foster a more respectful and sustainable environment for everyone involved.

- **Taking care of oneself**

Attending conferences that address violence and abuse can be emotionally demanding. Proactive strategies to support one's own wellbeing may include scheduling breaks, avoiding particular sessions, or setting aside time to decompress afterwards. While delegates are responsible for managing their own emotional needs, they also benefit from conference environments that recognise and support those efforts—for instance, by offering space to reflect, access support, or make connections with others.

"I plan ahead for how I'll manage the day—when I'll take breaks, who I might check in with, where I can go if I need a bit of space."

- **Respecting boundaries and shared expectations**

Attendees are expected to engage in ways that uphold the values and ground rules of the event. This means being aware of one's own limits and taking responsibility for emotional responses—whether by stepping out of a session, seeking support, or choosing not to participate in certain discussions. It also means being considerate of others, avoiding behaviours that may place pressure on fellow attendees or speakers, such as encouraging them to disclose more than they are comfortable with. Listening attentively, engaging respectfully, and accepting that others may process and respond differently are key elements of maintaining a supportive atmosphere.

- **Contributing to a respectful environment**

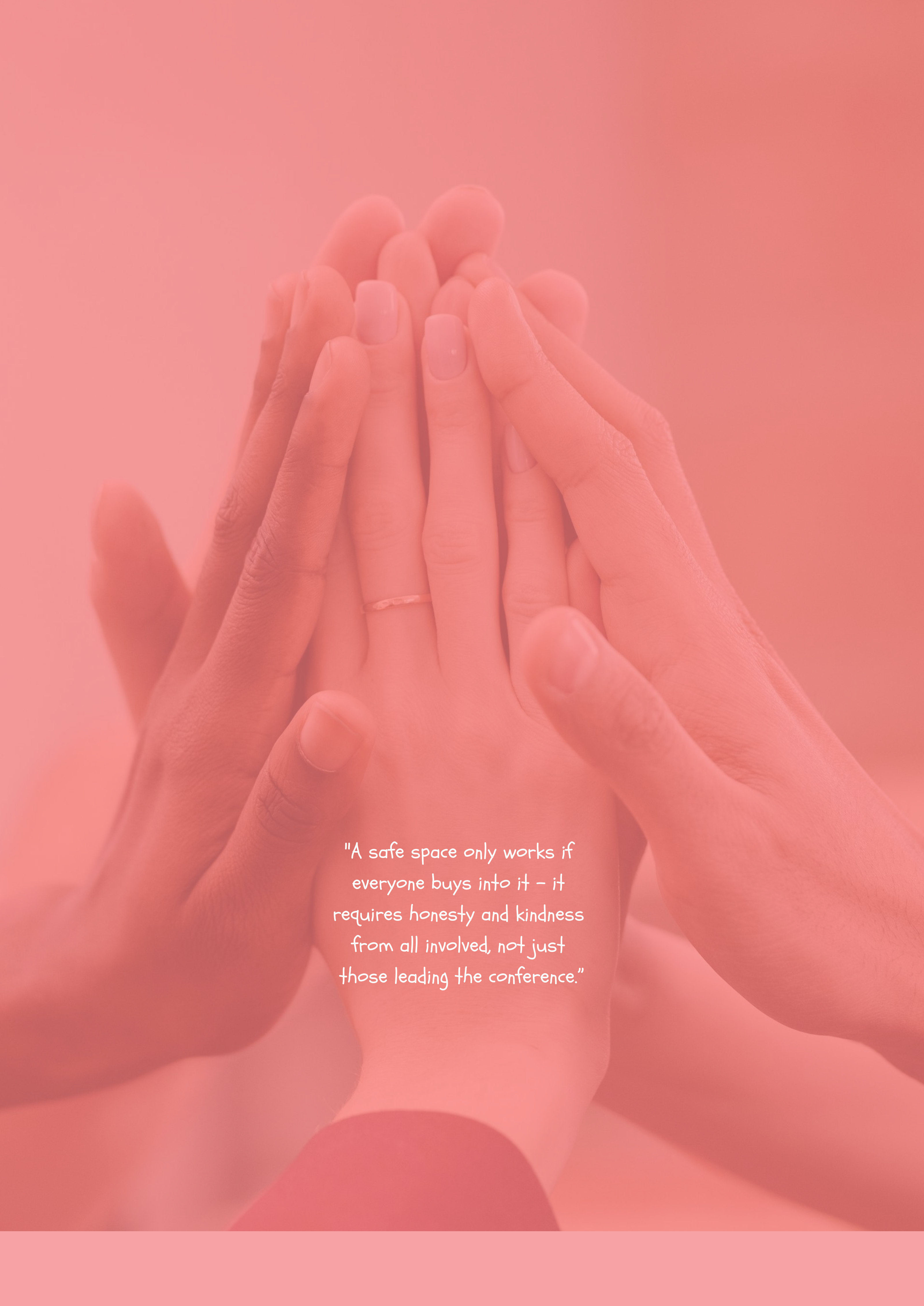
Delegates contribute to emotional safety not only through what they say, but also through their presence and behaviour. Checking in on someone who appears unsettled, stepping back to make space for quieter voices, or simply treating others with warmth and respect can all help foster a more inclusive and caring event environment.

## In conclusion

The wellbeing of attendees and contributors at a conference is not the job of one person alone. It is the result of careful planning and active, intentional roles played by organisers, chairs, speakers, support staff, and attendees alike. Each has distinct but interconnected responsibilities: organisers provide the foundations and resources, chairs guide the moment-to-moment experience, speakers prepare and share conscientiously, support staff help manage or prevent distress, and attendees engage with care for themselves and others.



**When each role is fulfilled with foresight and empathy, conferences on even the heaviest of topics can feel empowering and emotionally safe rather than draining or dangerous. The focus group insights and quotes above underline that investing in these roles and responsibilities is not optional – it is essential to advancing emotional safety in conference settings.**



"A safe space only works if everyone buys into it – it requires honesty and kindness from all involved, not just those leading the conference."

# Summary of Recommendations

Ensuring emotional safety at conferences is a shared responsibility. Participants in our research and members of our network identified several key roles – event organisers, session chairs and facilitators, speakers, dedicated support staff, and attendees – with specific responsibilities to foster a safe, inclusive environment. This section outlines these roles and their responsibilities, supported by quotes from focus group participants.

## Conference Organisers



### Advance Planning and Communication

- Provide a comprehensive information pack before the event, including venue layout, accessibility details, seating arrangements, schedule and information on what to expect from sessions, attendee list (if consented), and who to contact with questions.
- Use warm, welcoming language in communications to humanise the event and reduce pre-event anxiety.
- Offer pre-event self-care guidance (e.g. self-care sheets or reflective prompts) and encourage attendees to think ahead about what they need to feel supported before, during, and after the event.
- Clearly communicate conference values (e.g. inclusion, safety, respect for lived experience) and behavioural expectations in advance, including a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination or harassment.
- Share safety plans and clear reporting mechanisms for inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

### Inclusion, Co-production, and Format Design

- Involve people with lived experience meaningfully in all stages of conference planning—agenda setting, session design, and co-facilitation—to ensure inclusion is embedded and not tokenistic.
- Choose facilitators with strong skills in emotional safety and inclusive practice, rather than defaulting to senior academics.
- Consider pairing one more and one less experienced facilitator to co-chair, mindful of including a diverse representation of practitioners in the field.

- (Continued) Clearly define the conference's goals and intended audience(s); choose the format accordingly (e.g. conference, workshop, unconference\*).
- Help solo attendees plan their experience and build connections in advance (e.g. via buddy-up options or attendee list sharing).
- Help early career researchers by offering pre-conference activities—such as a PhD poster session, survivor researcher get-together, or informal meet-up—to build familiarity, reduce social anxiety, and create a sense of community before the main event.
- Ensure there is sufficient structure within flexible formats (like unconferences) to guide participation and manage expectations.

\*An *unconference* is a participant-led event where attendees shape the agenda, propose discussion topics, and take part in open, informal sessions rather than following a pre-set programme.

## Accessibility and Practical Support

- Be proactive in supporting the needs of disabled, neurodivergent, and solo attendees—this includes working lifts, clear signage, accessible seating, quiet rooms, and buddy systems.
- Choose venues with green or outdoor space and provide clear information about the physical environment.
- Consider travel logistics and costs as part of access—e.g. offering support with planning, accommodation options, or travel bursaries.
- Acknowledge and accommodate dietary requirements and choices—e.g. allergies, triggering foods, vegan/vegetarian options, religious or cultural restrictions—as part of caring for attendees' wellbeing and maintaining an inclusive environment.

## Wellbeing Infrastructure and Emotional Safety

- Provide clear yet discreet ways for attendees to opt out of photographs and video recordings—for example, through name badge stickers or designated seating areas marked by table runners of a specific colour. Seek consent from speakers prior to the conference day and, if consent has been provided for photographs or recordings, confirm that they are still happy with this once they delivered their presentation.
- Provide quiet rooms, creative regulation spaces and materials (e.g. art materials, stress balls, fidget toys), and optional wellbeing activities like guided walks, trauma-informed yoga, or mindfulness.
- Offer parallel sessions or spaces where attendees can express a range of emotions—e.g. post-it walls, small group reflections, peer support.
- Frame emotional support around a range of feelings—not only distress—and for all participants—not only survivors.
- Ensure on-site wellbeing staff are visible and well-briefed, ideally with lived experience or trauma-informed training.
- Provide a mix of spaces that allow both connection and retreat (e.g. cabaret-style seating, low-key socialising options, introvert-friendly networking).

## Content and Scheduling

- Carefully pace the programme—avoid cognitive or emotional overload, provide extended breaks, and don't place emotionally intense sessions at the end of the day.
- Provide paper copies of the programme with sufficient detail to enable delegates to make personal choices about which sessions to attend. This includes names and institutions of presenters and informative titles for each presentation.
- Include opportunities for joy, creativity, and shared reflection (e.g. music, movement, survivor-led exhibitions).
- Balance storytelling with agency: don't frame survivors solely through their trauma; enable them to speak as knowledge holders and collaborators.
- Provide guidance for speakers on content warnings, inclusive language, and emotional pacing.
- Offer clear options for people to opt out of sessions, skip networking events, or leave early without judgement.

## After the Event

- Follow up with attendees with thanks and a reminder of support resources, ideally including a short reflective prompt or group debrief invitation.
- Reinforce that the value of attendance goes beyond intellectual contribution—affirm participants' presence, relevance, and emotional labour.
- Consider summarising next steps or key takeaways: these can be particularly valuable for solo attendees who may not have informal networks for post-event reflection.

## Session Chairs & Facilitators

### Setting the Tone and Ground Rules

- Establish expectations for respectful discussion at the outset.
- Clarify with organisers and speakers how to manage emotional or difficult moments.
- Protect boundaries and discourage over-disclosure, while welcoming and validating lived experience where appropriate.
- Understand the session content, format, and audience.



## Supporting Inclusive Participation

- Invite contributions without pressure, ensuring no single person dominates.
- Plan how to introduce the session, set ground rules, and invite balanced participation.

## Responding to Emotional Dynamics

- Monitor audience dynamics and be prepared to intervene if behaviour is inappropriate or distressing.
- Be alert to signs of distress and adjust pacing or take breaks if needed.
- Reflect on what went well and share concerns with organisers in a timely manner.
- Follow up with speakers or attendees who may have become distressed, if appropriate.

## Speakers & Presenters

### Content Design and Delivery

- Reflect on the emotional impact of your material and present with intention and care.
- Consult with organisers about content sensitivity.
- Let the audience know they can take breaks or step out.
- Communicate clearly and avoid unnecessary graphic detail.
- Avoid academic jargon, speak accessibly, and, where appropriate, frame research in ways that resonate with non-academic attendees.
- Include, where appropriate, optional opportunities for discussion, questions, and participatory elements rather than defaulting to one-way delivery.
- Where relevant, include space in the presentation for how findings could be applied or used, particularly by practitioners or policymakers.
- Acknowledge lived experience contributions and describe how these have informed the work.
- Consider briefly introducing your own background, role, or motivation for the work.



### Self-Preparation and Support

- Prepare for your emotional needs—consider support requirements before, during, and after your presentation.
- Monitor your own limits and use support if needed.
- Debrief with a trusted colleague or support person.
- Make time to decompress and reflect.
- Provide feedback to organisers, if appropriate.

### Wellbeing Support Staff

#### Infrastructure and Staffing

- Recruit trained professionals or volunteers with trauma-informed practice experience.
- Set up clearly signposted quiet rooms or calm spaces.
- Agree on roles and protocols for support and referrals.

#### Support Delivery and Visibility

- Maintain a visible but discreet presence.
- Respond discreetly to attendees in need and offer appropriate support.
- Coordinate with organisers and chairs to monitor the emotional climate.

#### Follow-up and Reflection

- Join organisers in post-event reflection.
- Offer follow-up support where needed.



### Attendees

#### Preparation and Self-care

- Consider the location of your conference accommodation: do you prefer to stay in the conference hotel or nearby?
- Consider travelling to the conference location the day before and travelling with people you know.
- Consider whether there are trips you would like to take while attending or either side of the conference.
- Review the programme and plan for potential emotional challenges.
- Reach out to contacts or organisers with any needs or questions.
- Make a personal self-care plan, including breaks and decompression, and what you may need to do before, during, and after the conference to take care of yourself.
- Schedule time to rest following intense sessions.

### Engagement and Boundaries

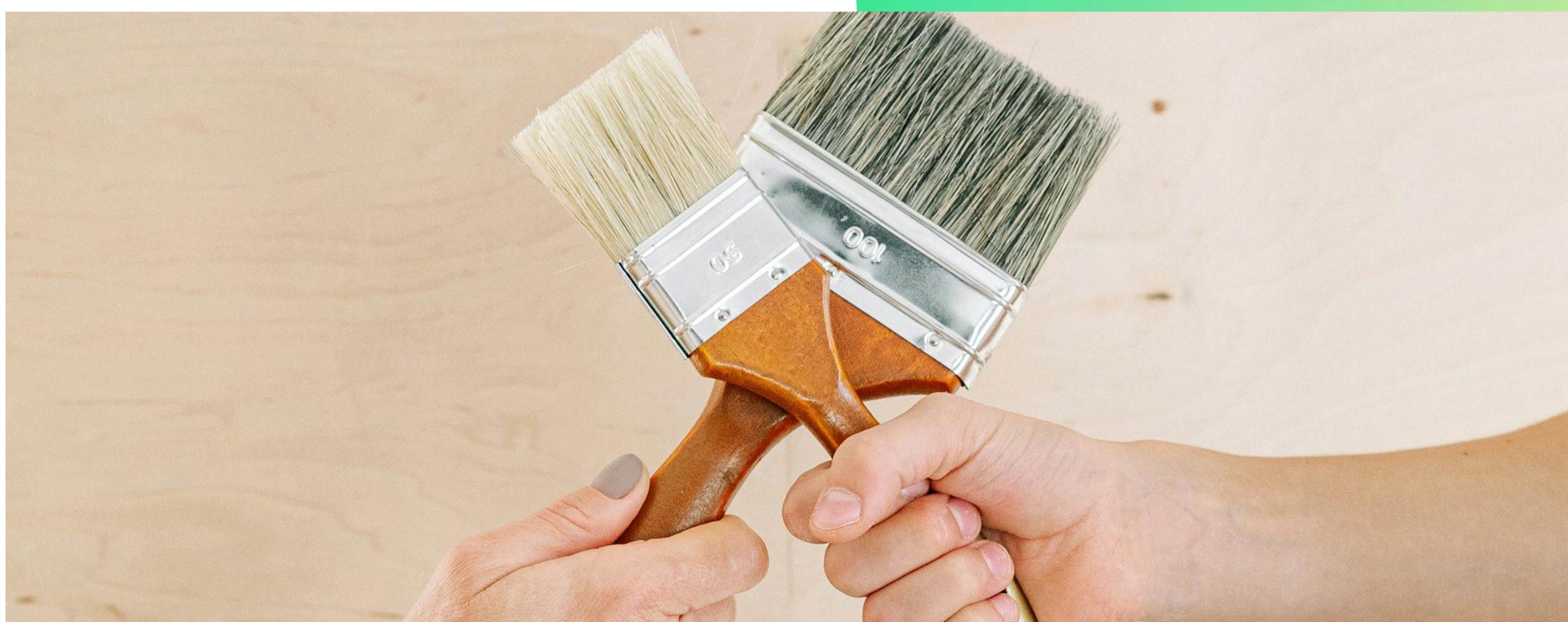
- Take breaks as needed—without apology.
- Respect others’ experiences and boundaries, and avoid pressuring disclosure.
- Be mindful of group dynamics and contribute respectfully.
- Consider how your choice of language might be understood by those with different experiences to your own.
- Support fellow attendees when appropriate.
- Build in time to eat, hydrate, and rest throughout the day.
- Use quiet spaces, outdoor areas, or calming activities if available.
- Take notes or journal to help process your thoughts and reactions.
- Know your emotional limits and step away from sessions that feel overwhelming.

### Reflection and Feedback

- Reflect on your experience and emotional response.
- Debrief with someone you trust or access support.
- Share constructive feedback with organisers.
- Share what you learned with colleagues and peers, to reinforce and amplify the content.



# Practical Tools and Templates



**This section presents practical tools to help translate the principles of emotional safety into action.**

These resources are designed to support organisers, facilitators, speakers, attendees, and support staff in planning and delivering conferences that centre care. Templates are intended to aid in this process, but their use alone does not mean that your conference is trauma-informed; words must be followed-through with action.

Each tool can be adapted for your specific context, whether you're hosting a multi-day academic conference, a community workshop, or an internal training event.

# Planning Tools for Organisers

Use these to embed emotional safety from the earliest stages of event design.

# Trauma-Informed Planning Checklist

A practical guide to integrating emotional safety into event design

## Agenda and Programme Design

- How can we build in extended and regular breaks (not just short pauses)?
- How can we pace the schedule to avoid cognitive overload and emotional fatigue?
- What creative or joyful content can we include alongside more challenging sessions?
- How can we design sessions to allow time for grounding, reflection, and connection?
- Can we schedule emotionally intense sessions earlier in the day?
- How can we support attendees to opt out of sessions, in-session interaction, networking events, or evening socials without feeling pressured?

## Venue and Environmental Design

- Which potential venues are physically accessible and clearly signposted?
- Which venues offer indoor and outdoor quiet or decompression spaces?
- Which seating arrangements allow for choice (e.g. cabaret tables, back rows)?
- How can we make the environment friendly to neurodivergent and sensory-sensitive participants?
- Which venues are located in settings that feel physically and psychologically safe?

## Emotional Support Infrastructure

- Can we commission professional wellbeing staff or peer supporters with appropriate training?
- How will we brief wellbeing staff? How can we make them visible but unobtrusive?
- Can we offer quiet rooms, creative regulation materials, or grounding activities (e.g. art supplies, fidget toys)?
- How can we support attendees to express themselves informally (e.g. post-it walls, creative sessions)?
- Which clear, private process can we offer for delegates to seek support or report harm?
- How will we ensure that people can opt out of being photographed or videoed?

## Inclusion, Co-production, and Facilitation

- How can we meaningfully involve people with lived experience in planning and delivery?
- How can we select session facilitators for their inclusive and emotionally aware practice—not just seniority?
- How can we manage power dynamics in speaker/audience formats and create opportunities for co-facilitation and dialogue?
- How can we make the programme welcoming to solo attendees, independent researchers, and non-academics?

## Pre-Event Communication

- What is included in our comprehensive pre-event information pack (venue map, access information, schedule, safety and wellbeing information, who to contact, details of nearby walks/cafes/exercise facilities)?
- How can we communicate the event's values (e.g. inclusion, respect, safety) clearly, in advance?
- How can we ensure that the language we use reflect our values and our commitment to inclusion and emotional safety?
- What support resources and self-care suggestions can we share in advance?
- How can we circulate behavioural expectations and zero-tolerance policies for discrimination or harassment ahead of time?
- How can we enable attendees to see who else is attending beforehand (e.g. consented delegate list)?

## Speaker and Content Guidance

- What guidance can we provide to speakers on trauma-informed presentation (e.g. content warnings, emotional pacing)?
- Can we discourage excessive graphic detail and encourage accessible, inclusive language?
- How can we include time for reflection or grounding after heavier presentations?
- How can any storytelling contributions be selected to centre agency and insight, not just distress?
- How can we best hear survivor testimonies, i.e. with care for both speakers and delegates?

## Post-Event Follow-Up

- What should our follow-up communication thanking attendees and offering support resources contain?
- Can we offer a reflective debrief or space for continued peer connection post-event?
- Can we share event takeaways or summaries?
- How can we affirm that participation—including presence and emotional labour—has value beyond academic contribution?

# Lived Experience Involvement Planning Guide

Involving people with lived experience of violence and abuse in the design and delivery of conferences can enhance relevance, emotional safety, and impact. This guide supports organisers to engage lived experience contributors ethically, respectfully, and effectively—without tokenism or over-reliance on emotional labour.

## 1. Clarify Your Purpose

- Why are you involving lived experience voices?
- What do you hope this involvement will contribute to the event?
- What are the limits of the influence you're offering?

*Tip: Be honest about where input is welcome and where limits are inflexible and why.*

## 2. Involve People Early

- How can lived experience contributors be involved in shaping:
  - The event's goals, format, title, and language?
  - Decisions about speaker mix and session design?
  - How emotional safety will be supported?
- How can we seek lived experience perspectives on accessibility, inclusion, and the atmosphere of the event?

### 3. Create Conditions for Safe and Valued Participation

- How can we agree roles, expectations, and ways of working together?
- Have we offered fair payment or honoraria and recognition (e.g. written acknowledgements in materials, inclusion of their photograph – if wanted and consenting) for contributors’ time and insight?
- Can we discuss access needs, emotional support, and flexibility in engagement?

*Tip: Remember that sharing insights—especially about trauma—requires energy and vulnerability. Respect participants’ limits.*

### 4. Make Involvement Visible but Not Exploitative or Extractive

- How can we involve lived experience contributors in multiple sessions?
- How can we embed lived experience perspectives in the programme, communications, and conference tone?
- How can we acknowledge lived experience contributors as peers or collaborators—not “stories” or “case studies” or “lay perspectives”?

*Tip: Language matters—avoid framing contributors solely in terms of their trauma.*

### 5. Attend to Power and Hierarchy

- How can we ensure that speakers share space respectfully?
- How can we set up the event to support genuine dialogue (e.g. roundtable, co-chairing, participatory formats)?
- How can we invite contributors to take on a range of roles (e.g. speakers, facilitators, planning advisors)?

### 6. Support Reflection and Follow-Up

- Can we offer contributors the chance to debrief after the event?
- How can we enable lived experience contributors to give feedback on their experience of involvement and how can we ensure this feedback is acted upon?
- How can we reflect back to contributors how their input shaped the event?

*Tip: Acknowledge emotional labour—and affirm the value of their presence, insights, and contributions.*

# Session Planning Worksheet

*This worksheet could be shared with chairs and panellists/speakers beforehand to facilitate and encourage their planning and discussions. Question prompts could also be included in abstract submission templates to help organisers to balance selection and scheduling of sessions with different tones across a programme.*

**Session title**

**Session lead(s)**

**What is the emotional tone of this session likely to be?**

(e.g. hopeful, confronting, reflective, mixed)

**What types of sensitive or potentially distressing content will be discussed?**

What specific advance guidance or content warnings should be given?

What opportunities can be built in for grounding or decompressing?  
(e.g. breaks, time for reflection, creative activities)

What session format can enhance inclusion and choice?  
(e.g. audience discussion, written reflections, breakout groups)

Who will be responsible for monitoring and responding to the emotional tone?

How can access, wellbeing, and language needs be considered when planning this session?

# Commissioning Professional Wellbeing Support

## Why Professional Support Matters

Conferences that centre violence, abuse, and trauma are emotionally demanding—not only for survivor speakers, but also for attendees, staff, and speakers with lived, vicarious, or professional exposure to these issues. While emotional safety is a shared responsibility, providing professional wellbeing support is increasingly recognised as best practice in creating safer, more inclusive conference spaces.

Wellbeing staff are not just “on call” for moments of crisis. Their presence can:

- Normalise and de-stigmatise emotional responses.
- Offer quiet, confidential support throughout the day.
- Help attendees regulate distress and re-engage safely.
- Reduce pressure on organisers and facilitators to manage emotional needs.

## When to Use Professional Support

You should consider professional wellbeing support when:

- The conference includes explicit content on violence, abuse, and trauma.
- Speakers with lived experience are presenting.
- You anticipate a mixed audience of researchers, practitioners, and people with lived experience (who may or may not also be researchers or practitioners).
- You are offering long-form sessions, sensitive panels, or participatory workshops.

## Budgeting and Planning

- Include costs in your event budget from the start (e.g. day rate, travel, preparation time).
- Consider commissioning through local support organisations or specialist agencies.
- Plan for a minimum of two staff if full-day or concurrent sessions are running.

## Who to Commission

Support should be provided by people with relevant experience, such as:

- Survivor support workers.
- Trauma-informed counsellors or therapists (especially with trauma specialism).
- Trauma-informed mental health professionals.
- Practitioners from local services with experience supporting survivors in community settings.

Avoid asking organisers, academic staff, or volunteers to take on emotional support roles unless they are explicitly trained and briefed to do so.

## What Their Role Should Include

Key responsibilities:

- Be visible and approachable throughout the event (e.g. coloured t-shirts, lanyards, badges).
- Offer confidential, low-pressure support to attendees.
- Provide staff decompression and quiet spaces if available.
- Respond sensitively to emotional distress and support grounding or exit strategies.
- Set supportive boundaries by signposting to external services or event organisers where appropriate.

They are *not* expected to:

- Offer therapy.
- Manage clinical risk independently.
- Intervene in public sessions unless specifically asked.
- Assist attendees to access external services outside the conference.

## What Organisers Should Provide

- **A clear briefing:** Use a structured support staff template to outline role expectations (including boundaries), event context, approach (trauma-informed practice), escalation procedures, and contact points.
- **Visibility:** Ensure attendees are made aware (e.g. in welcome remarks and printed programme) that support is available, how and where to find it, and that it is confidential, unless risks are disclosed, and optional.
- **Space and structure:** Assign staff to the quiet room or designated zones, with access to materials like water, sensory aids, or seating.
- **Follow-up:** Offer a short debrief or check-in for wellbeing personnel after every event day, to gather reflections and learnings.

# Support Roles Briefing Template

## Purpose

This document aims to ensure shared understanding of the support role at this event. While we trust your professional judgement, this briefing outlines the specific context, expectations, and boundaries agreed by the organising team to ensure clarity and alignment across all wellbeing personnel.

## Role Overview

As a wellbeing support professional at this event, your role is to provide a visible and approachable presence, offer trauma-informed emotional support when needed, and contribute to maintaining a psychologically safe environment. You are not expected to provide therapy or crisis care, but to assist attendees to regulate distress and access appropriate support if required.

## Key Contextual Information

- This is a conference focused on violence, abuse, and trauma. Emotive content will be present throughout the event.
- Attendees include survivors, practitioners, and researchers, many of whom may have dual roles and may be navigating complex emotions linked to their personal or professional experiences.
- A quiet room is available for decompression. You may be assigned to that space or circulate more widely.

## Responsibilities

- Be present and easily identifiable (organisers will provide a lanyard/badge/t-shirt).

- (Continued) Respond to attendees who signal distress or approach you for support.
- If appropriate, offer to accompany attendees to a quiet space or provide simple grounding techniques.
- Make a brief note of any situations requiring follow-up (with attendee consent, where appropriate); take the person's full name and number if you think someone should check in with them later.
- Maintain discretion. For example, keep disclosures confidential unless risks or levels of distress are disclosed that you need to escalate.
- Maintain professional boundaries. For example, be mindful of what you share and do not socialise with the person after the event.

## Escalation Protocol

- If you are concerned about someone's immediate safety or wellbeing (e.g. risk of harm to themselves or someone else), please contact [Name], the designated safeguarding or clinical lead, via [phone/email].
- All risk-related issues should be flagged to the event organiser once the attendee is safe.
- Please remain after each day of the event for a short debrief with organisers, to share any concerns or support needs.

## Closing Notes

We appreciate your professionalism and the expertise you bring. This briefing is not intended to direct care but to support a shared approach within the context of this specific event. Please feel free to debrief with [Organiser Contact] if you need to reflect on your role or experience during the conference.

# Guidance for Speakers and Chairs

Use these tools to create  
emotionally attuned and  
inclusive sessions.

# Opening and Closing Scripts

*You can use these sample scripts to set a supportive tone and help participants engage safely and meaningfully.*

## Opening Script (example for adaptation)

Welcome to this session. We'll be discussing topics that may be emotionally complex or challenging, and we want to acknowledge that from the start. Before we begin, I invite you to take a moment to check in with how you're feeling—and to remember that you're free to participate in whatever way feels right for you.

You are very welcome here, whether that means actively contributing or simply listening. If at any point you need to take a break, step out, or speak to someone, please do. Your wellbeing is important.

## Closing Script (example for adaptation)

Thank you for being part of this conversation. These discussions can stir a range of emotions, and we encourage you to check in with yourself as we close. You might want to take a few quiet minutes, talk to someone, or simply note how you're feeling.

If anything has felt difficult, support is available. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our wellbeing staff or use the quiet space. Your presence today has been valued.

# Content Warning Prompts

While empirical evidence on the effectiveness of content warnings is mixed—with some studies suggesting they may increase anticipatory anxiety rather than reduce distress—participants in our research consistently expressed a desire for them. Content warnings were viewed not only as a practical courtesy, but as a gesture of care that supports autonomy and emotional preparedness.

For that reason, we have provided sample prompts to give participants advance notice of potentially distressing material. Such prompts should not be used to avoid difficult conversations, but to support informed and supported participation:

- We all know that violence, abuse, and trauma are very common. It is very unlikely that none of us in this room has been personally affected.
- This presentation includes references to [topic, e.g. sexual violence], which may be upsetting to hear about. Please take care of yourself as needed.
- The following content may be triggering for people with experiences of [e.g. trauma, abuse]. Please take space or step out if that feels right for you.
- If you need a break at any time, please feel free to leave and return when you're ready.
- We acknowledge this content can evoke strong emotions—support is available during and after the session.

# Facilitation Tips

## Do:

- Set clear expectations and ground rules at the beginning.
- Encourage participation without pressure—offer alternatives to speaking aloud (e.g. written comments).
- Acknowledge distress and normalise breaks.
- Monitor group dynamics and intervene if someone dominates or causes discomfort, for example by re-stating the conference values and expectations of conduct.
- Ensure diverse voices are heard, especially those who might hesitate to speak.

## Don't:

- Assume everyone is comfortable with emotive content.
- Allow harmful comments, personal attacks, or dismissive or derogatory language to go unchallenged.
- Force people to participate, speak, or disclose personal experiences.
- Ignore signs of distress or power imbalances.
- Rush sessions without time for pause or reflection.
- Over-run: role modelling clear boundaries contributes to emotional safety.

# Preparing to Speak: Reflective Prompts

These prompts are designed to support speakers and presenters in preparing for delivering emotionally sensitive or trauma-related content. Use them to reflect on your material, your audience, and your own needs before, during, and after your session.

## Thinking About My Content

- What aspects of my talk could be emotionally challenging for others?
- What information should I offer in advance?
- How can I communicate difficult material sensitively and accessibly?
- Which parts of my talk could be simplified or reframed to reduce emotional intensity without losing meaning? If emotional intensity is necessary/unavoidable, what is the most appropriate way to present it?

## Considering My Audience

- Who is my audience? What experiences or expectations might they bring?
- How can I support a diverse audience to engage meaningfully with my material?
- What language, tone, or examples will best support accessibility and inclusion?

## Reflecting on My Own Needs

- How do I feel about presenting this content? Are there aspects of this talk that feel particularly personal, emotional, or exposing?
- How can I support myself before, during, and after the session?
- Who can I speak to if I need support after the session ends?

## Planning for Delivery

- How can I begin and end my session in a way that creates a sense of safety?
- What will I do if I (or someone else) becomes distressed during the session?
- How can I leave enough time for questions, reflection, or breaks in the session design?

## After the Session

- What will help me decompress or process my experience of presenting?
- How can I arrange time and space for myself after the session ends?
- What can I do if strong emotions linger?

# Attendee Self- Preparation Resources

Use these to reflect on what you need before, during, and after the event.

# Personal Wellbeing Plan

*This short reflective worksheet is designed to help you to prepare emotionally for attending a conference or event. Use it to identify your needs, recognise potential challenges, and plan simple strategies for care and regulation. You may wish to complete it privately or share it with a trusted colleague or support person.*

What helps me feel grounded and safe?

What might cause me distress at the conference?

What are signs that I might be feeling overwhelmed, distressed, or unsafe?

What strategies help me manage when I feel this way?

What kind of breaks or pauses do I find most helpful?

Who can I check in with if I need support during the event?

What will I do after the event to decompress, process, or reflect?

Other notes or reminders to myself:

# Buddy Support Planning Sheet

*This worksheet is designed for two attendees to plan mutual emotional support before and during a conference. It can help reduce isolation, normalise self-care, and provide reassurance through shared expectations.*

Buddy name

Best Way to Contact

Pre-Event Check-In

- ☐ Have we shared what we’re most looking forward to?
- ☐ Have we discussed anything we’re anxious about?

When will we check in with each other during the event? (e.g. lunchtime, end of day)

What kind of support do I find helpful? (e.g. someone to sit with, a brief chat, time alone)

During the Event

- ☐ We've agreed it's okay to step away from sessions
- ☐ We'll remind each other to eat, hydrate, or rest
- ☐ We've agreed how to handle unexpected distress (e.g. go to quiet room together, take a walk)

After the Event: How will we follow up with each other afterwards? (e.g. text, debrief chat)

Notes

# Suggested Decompression Activities

*Below is a menu of simple, grounding, creative, and joyful activities. You can use these during breaks or after the conference to help decompress, reset, and take care of yourself.*

## Grounding Activities

- Take a short walk in fresh air or a green space
- Stretch gently or do slow, mindful movement
- Focus on your breath for 2–3 minutes
- Hold a warm drink and notice the scent, taste, and texture
- Use grounding objects such as stress balls or sensory items

## Creative Activities

- Doodle or colour using paper and pens
- Make something with your hands – playdough, crafts, or clay
- Write in a journal or use a reflective prompt
- Create a playlist of calming or uplifting music and/or dance to your favourite music
- Try simple origami or collage with magazine cut-outs

## Joyful or Light-Hearted Activities

- Watch a funny video or lighthearted TV show
- Spend time with a pet or look at animal pictures
- Do a low-pressure hobby you enjoy
- Read something comforting or familiar

## Connecting Activities

- Check in with a friend or trusted colleague
- Text someone to say hello or share how you're feeling
- Join a post-conference reflection session (if available)
- Spend time with people who make you feel safe
- Talk about something unrelated to work

# Communication tools for event organisers

# Pre-Event Welcome Template

## Email Script (example for adaptation)

**Subject:** Welcome to [Conference Name] – What to Expect and How to Prepare

Dear [Participant's Name],

We're looking forward to welcoming you to [Conference Name], taking place on [Date] at [Venue or Online Platform]. This email includes key information to help you prepare for the event.

### What to Expect

This conference brings together researchers, practitioners, and people with lived experience to explore themes relating to violence, abuse, trauma, and healing. Sessions will include [academic presentations/creative contributions/reflective discussions].

Some content may be emotionally challenging. We are committed to creating a space where all participants feel respected, supported, and free to engage in ways that feel right for them.

### Looking After Yourself

We recognise that attending a conference on difficult topics can be demanding. Please take care of yourself before, during, and after the event. This might include planning breaks, identifying someone you can check in with, or simply giving yourself permission to step away from any session that feels too much.

### Support and Quiet Spaces:

- A quiet room will be available at the venue for rest or decompression.
- Trained wellbeing staff will be present – look for [describe how to identify them].
- Information on local or online support services is provided below.

(Continued)

Support Services

[Insert hyperlinks and details of geographically relevant resources]

Content Warnings

While we’ve asked speakers to include content warnings where appropriate. Please be aware that themes relating to abuse, trauma, and systemic harm will be present throughout the programme. You are encouraged to engage only as much as feels safe and manageable for you.

Practical Information

- Full schedule: [Insert link or attachment]
- Venue access map: [Insert link or attachment]
- Attendee list (if applicable): [Insert note or download link]
- Contact for accessibility or support questions: [Name, Email]

If you have any questions or concerns ahead of the event, please don’t hesitate to reach out. We look forward to seeing you soon.

With thanks,

[Your Name / Organising Team]

[Organisation / Conference Name]

# Post-Event Follow-Up Email Template

## Email Script (example for adaptation)

**Subject:** Thank You for Joining Us – Reflections and Resources

**Dear [Participant's Name],**

Thank you for attending [Conference Name]. We are grateful for your presence, your contributions, and the care you brought to the space.

We know that conferences focusing on violence, abuse, and trauma can be intellectually and emotionally demanding. Whether you shared, listened, supported others, or simply took part quietly, your participation mattered.

If you're still processing the experience, please know that this is normal—and that support is available if you need it. We've included some wellbeing resources below that you may find helpful in the coming days.

### Wellbeing Resources

[Insert hyperlinks and details of geographically relevant resources]

### We'd Appreciate Your Feedback

Your insights help us improve future events and continue fostering safe, inclusive spaces. If you feel able, please complete our short anonymous feedback form:

[Insert feedback form link]

### Stay Connected

We hope this conference offered opportunities to learn, reflect, and connect. If you would like to stay in touch or hear about future events, you can [insert instructions or mailing list link].

Thank you again for being part of this community.

Warm wishes,

**[Your Name]**

On behalf of the [Conference Organising Team / Organisation Name]

# Quiet Room Signage Template

## Signage Script (example for adaptation)

### Welcome to the Quiet Room

This space is here to support your rest, reflection, and emotional regulation during the conference.

Please keep noise to a minimum. This includes silencing phones and avoiding conversations inside this room.

You are welcome to use this space at any time, for as long as you need. Resources such as grounding tools, art materials, and seating areas may be available—please use them with care.

If you need assistance, a member of the wellbeing team is nearby and happy to help.

Thank you for respecting this shared space and each other's need for quiet.

# Appendix:

## Summary of research informing this toolkit

This toolkit was developed based on findings from a mixed method study exploring emotional safety at academic and professional conferences that address violence and abuse. The research was carried out in 2024-25 by a team of researchers with professional and lived experience of violence and abuse, working within a trauma-informed framework.

### Study design

The study consisted of two components:

- (1) An anonymous online survey (n=100) which asked researchers about their experiences of attending or presenting at conferences where violence and abuse were discussed. The survey included structured questions and free-text responses.
- (2) Four focus groups with researchers (n=18) including two groups specifically for participants who identified as survivors of violence and abuse. The groups explored participants' reflections on emotional impact, experiences of safety and harm, and views on how conferences could be made more supportive.

Participants were eligible if they were aged 18 years or older, proficient in English, had experience of conducting research, and had attended at least one conference with content on violence and abuse. Recruitment was carried out through academic and professional networks in the UK, Canada, and Australia.

### Analysis

Survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics (closed items) and content analysis (free text). Focus group data were analysed using framework analysis, developed through a collaborative coding process involving multiple members of the research team. Themes were generated inductively and refined through discussion, centring participants' own language and priorities.

### Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the King's College London Health Research Ethics Subcommittee (HR/DP-23/24-40452). Ethical design included clear consent procedures, safeguarding protocols, and multiple measures to support emotional wellbeing and confidentiality.



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2025