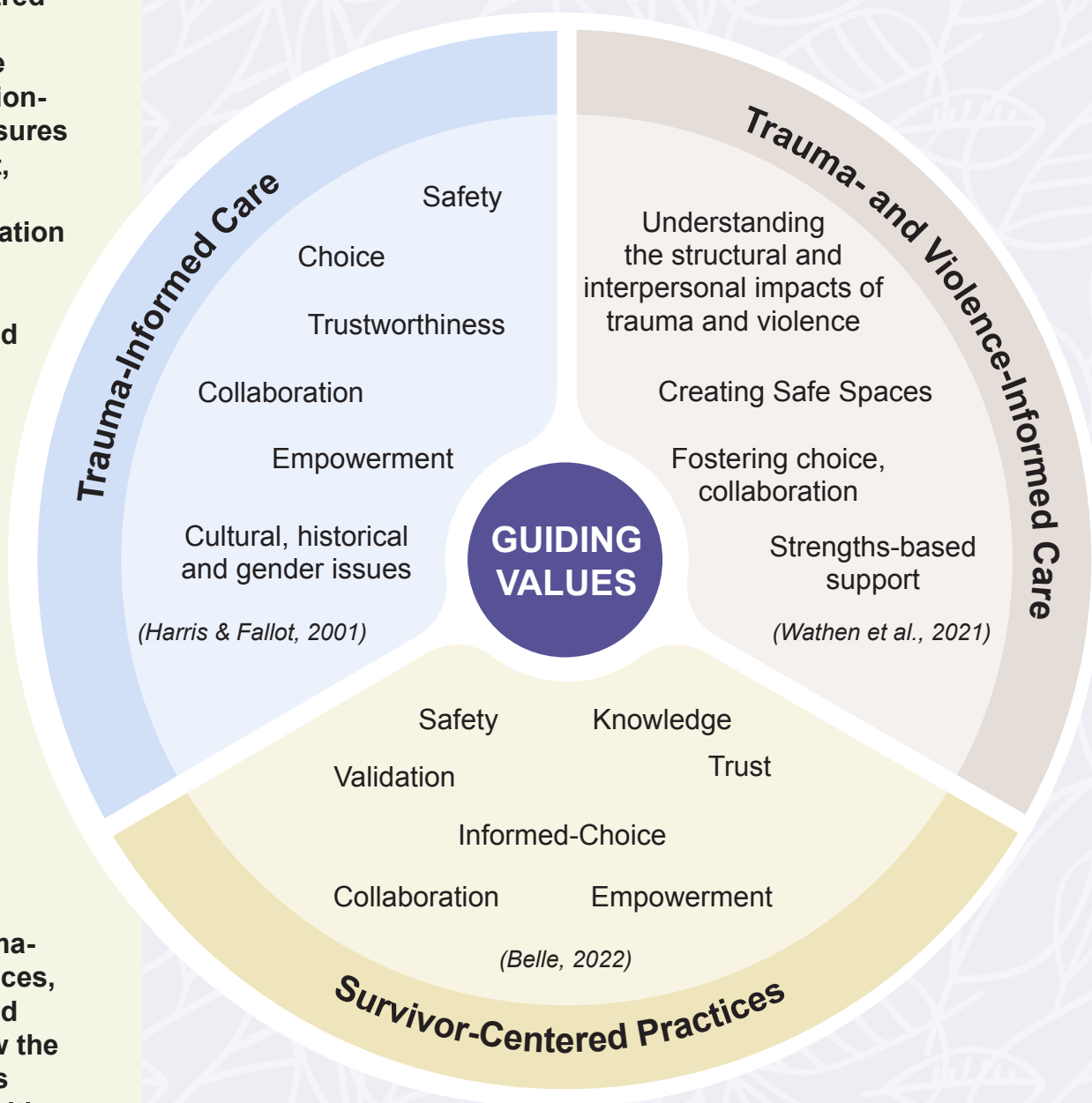


Centering Survivor Needs - Trauma Informed Care Tip Sheet

A survivor-centred approach puts survivors at the center of decision-making and ensures dignity, respect, which reduces further victimization and violence. Practicing survivor-centred approaches requires building and maintaining trust and respecting their choices. You can support survivors to reclaim their self-determination and safety (Unicef, N.d).

Much like trauma-informed practices, survivor-centred practices follow the same principles and practices with additional values specific to the experiences of surviving sexual/ gender-based violence.



References

Belle, V. (2022) *Survivor-Centred Training Guide for Social Service Providers*. Dandelion Initiative.

Unicef (N.D). *Caring for Survivors: A principled approach*.
<https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/15831/file/Module%202.pdf>



SAFETY

- Acknowledge them, validate them, and their experience
- Ensure they understand they are not to blame and deserve to be safe
- Use the same language the survivor is using to describe their experience or feelings
- Prioritize getting them to the hospital or emergency services if needed
- Explore barriers to leaving or safety (ex, children, lack of transportation, lack of child care, financial abuse, pet safety, etc.)
- Safety planning is critical and can save a survivor's life
- Connect them to the services or supports they need



CHOICE

- A survivor should always choose who they disclose to and how much they disclose; their choices have often been taken away, it's important they restore choice in their lives
- Informed choice means the survivor is aware of all their options and can make a decision based on all the information available to them
- Their choices may not make sense to you, but they are helping them stay alive, and ensure you are staying judgment-free



TRUSTWORTHINESS

- Be patient and empathetic; survivors may have a hard time concentrating or remembering everything in a linear or clear way
- Keep confidentiality and be open and honest about what the limits can be in the context of your work with survivors.
- Demonstrate that you are reliable and committed to their safety and dignity
- If you have a duty to report as part of your profession, ensure you let the survivor know before disclosing to you



COLLABORATION

- Collaboration means that you are self-reflecting along the way to ensure mutuality and mitigate disempowering the survivor or shaming them
- You are a team where the survivor is the lead



EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION

- Respect a survivor's insights, wisdom and abilities
- Validate the successes and the challenges along the way
- Honour that they have survived everything up until this very moment, and they will keep surviving
- Honour that they may have confused or mixed feelings about the person who is hurting them or causing violence.
- Be clear with them about the impact of the violence and risk but do not judge



UNDERSTANDING AND ACKNOWLEDGING SYSTEMIC INEQUITY AND VIOLENCE

- Acknowledge and discuss the barriers, challenges and possibilities with all systemic interventions (police, medical, children's aid society, workplace etc.)
- Validate the systemic barriers and violence that exist in systems against women, girls and gender-diverse people and that Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer survivors are disproportionately impacted and have fewer options and resources
- Apply cultural humility and cultural respect