



# Trauma Informed T.R.U.S.T. Framework

## *Creating Safe & Supportive Spaces for Healing & Growth*

### **T -Trigger Recognition**

Identify potential triggers that may activate trauma responses.  
Create predictability through clear communication and routines.  
Encourage self-awareness and coping strategies to manage triggers.

### **R - Reassurance**

Offer consistent emotional support to foster trust and security.  
Use calm, validating language to reassure individuals they are safe.  
Build a sense of belonging and connection in all interactions.

### **U -Understanding**

Recognise that trauma responses are natural survival mechanisms.  
Approach others with curiosity, not judgment.  
Validate experiences and provide space for emotional processing.

### **S -Safety**

Ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment with clear boundaries.  
Offer choice and autonomy to empower individuals.  
Foster psychological stability through predictable, respectful interactions.

### **T -Truth**

Be honest, transparent, and consistent in communication.  
Encourage open dialogue while respecting personal boundaries.  
Build trust through integrity, reliability, and follow-through.

**Together, we create spaces of healing, trust, and empowerment.**



## Welcome

This resource has been created to gently support individuals, groups, and communities in reconnecting with themselves and each other. The TRUST Framework is rooted in compassion, nervous system awareness, and the truth that healing requires safety. Everything here is invitational. Go at a pace that honours your body and lived experience.

## **About the Author – Deborah J Crozier**

Deborah J Crozier is a trauma-informed, person-centred counsellor and the founder of A Positive Start CIC, a community interest organisation dedicated to supporting emotional wellbeing, relational safety, and recovery from trauma.

Her practice is rooted in compassion, nervous system awareness, and lived experience, supporting individuals, families, and communities to develop self-understanding, emotional regulation, and relational trust. Deborah delivers workshops, community programmes, and training for professionals in trauma-informed practice, safeguarding, and person-centred support. She is committed to creating safe, supportive environments where people are met with dignity, empathy, and respect

# **TRUST is not a Tick-Box Exercises**

TRUST is not a curriculum to deliver - it is a way of being in relationship.

it cannot be understood through memorising steps or repeating phrases. It must be felt, practised and embodied.

Tick-box teaching creates the appearance of safety without the experience of safety.

People who have experienced trauma are highly attuned to:

- tone
- inconsistency
- emotional incongruence
- pressure
- performative empathy

If a facilitator says supportive words while their body, tone, or presence communicates something different, the nervous system will read the truth, not the script. This is why Congruence (being emotionally honest and real) is foundational.

# What “No Tick-Box Exercises” Means

It means:

- We do not perform understanding - we practice presence.
- We do not say we are safe - we show it through steadiness and tone.
- We do not teach regulation while we are dysregulated.
- We do not push for disclosure, insight, or emotional movement.
- We do not pretend to know, fix or rescue.
- We meet each moment with what is true, not what looks good.

Tick-Box approaches prioritise:

- Outcome over relationship
- speed over pacing
- image over integrity

TRUST ask us to prioritise

- relationship over technique
- truth over presentation
- pace over performance

The **CUE** person-centred foundations state:

- **Congruence** - I show up as I am. I don't pretend to feel what I don't.
- **Unconditional Positive Regard** - I value the person without requirement.
- **Empathic Understanding** - I listen for the meaning beneath the words.

Congruence matters because:

- The nervous system recognises truth, not language.
- Emotional safety is created through authenticity, not scripts.
- Healing cannot happen where pretence, performance, or emotional distance is present.

To be congruent is to say:

***“I am here with you, as a human, not a role”***

Truth creates trust.

Trust creates safety.

Safety allows the nervous system to soften.

Only then can healing begin.

# The Trauma-Informed T.R.U.S.T. Framework

T.R.U.S.T. stands for  
Trigger Recognition,  
Reassurance,  
Understanding,  
Safety, and  
Truth.

It is a relational way of supporting the nervous system and fostering emotional safety between people.

TRUST invites awareness rather than self-judgment, connection rather than control, and presence rather than pressure.

*“TRUST is not something we ‘do’. It is something we become.”*

## **Aims & Purpose**

Trauma can impact a person's ability to feel safe, seen, and connected.

The aim of TRUST is to bring understanding and compassion to emotional activation, reducing shame and restoring a sense of internal stability.

TRUST supports clearer communication, grounded presence, and relational safety.

## **Person-Centred Foundations – CUE**

CUE stands for:

- Congruence – Being real and genuine.
- Unconditional Positive Regard – Valuing the person exactly as they are.
- Empathic Understanding – Deeply listening to the emotional truth of another.

These qualities create conditions where healing becomes possible.

## **Why Person-Centred?**

Every nervous system is different. Every lived experience is unique.

There is no one-size-fits-all method for healing. The person-centred approach honours individuality and supports people in discovering their own inner wisdom.

Healing happens through relationship — through being understood, respected, and met where we are.

# Who TRUST Supports

The TRUST Framework can be used for:

- families,
- schools,
- community spaces,
- mental health settings,
- peer-support environments,
- relational healing work.

It is especially supportive for those who have experienced trauma, suppression, or environments where emotional truth was not safe to express.

## **Practical Application - Recognising Activation**

Trigger Recognition involves observing shifts in the nervous system in ourselves and in others. In professional, family, and community environments, this may be visible through changes in:

- Tone of voice
- Facial expression
- Posture and body tension
- Pace of speech or movement
- Withdrawal, collapse, or shutdown
- Heightened emotional intensity

This is not about analysis or diagnosis. It is about recognising cues of activation so responses can be supportive rather than reactive. Survival Responses:

- Fight – anger, defensiveness, urgency
- Flight – anxiety, overactivity, avoidance
- Freeze – shutdown, numbness, overwhelm
- Fawn – appeasing, placating, self-abandoning

# **Co-Regulation, Self-Regulation & Neuroception**

We learn regulation through connection. Co-regulation is the experience of being calmed by another regulated nervous system. Self-regulation becomes possible over time through this relational safety.

Neuroception is the body's unconscious scanning for danger or safety. TRUST helps environments become cues of safety rather than threat.

# **Reassurance, Understanding, Safety & Truth**

Reassurance means staying regulated ourselves when supporting another.

Understanding trauma reduces misinterpretation and judgment.

Safety allows the nervous system to soften.

Truth matters because trauma often involves denial, silencing, manipulation or gaslighting.

Without truth there is no trust.

Without trust there is no safety.

Without safety, healing cannot happen.

## Grounding Exercise

A Gentle Trusting Exercise:

Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Notice the breath without changing it. Slowly exhale longer than you inhale. Say quietly: “I am here. I am safe enough in this moment.”

We also offer a free trauma-informed resource for children, parents, and schools — The River Room Songbook — which includes gentle regulation songs and activities to support co-regulation and emotional safety.

<https://apositivestart.org.uk/the-river-room-songbook/>

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