

Culturally Safe, Trauma-Aware & Healing-Informed Care

The new Aged Care Act (2024) and Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards, which commenced in November 2025, place a greater emphasis on the rights, dignity, and well-being of older people, especially those with complex and/or diverse backgrounds.

As support workers, you play an important role in ensuring culturally safe, trauma-aware, and healing-informed care for your clients. These terms are being used a lot these days, so this handout will explain what they mean in the context of providing compassionate and respectful support to clients living in their own homes.

It is important to remember that you are not expected to counsel your clients or deal with complex psychological distress, so if you're worried about your client, please let your supervisor know.

What is Culturally Safe Care?

Culturally safe care is about creating an environment where older people feel **respected, valued and secure**, regardless of their cultural background, beliefs, or identity.

It goes beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity; it's also about reflecting on your own values and biases, recognising power imbalances, and responding to the unique cultural needs and preferences of each individual.

That's why it is so important to engage with older people about their cultural identity, traditions, and preferences, understanding that each person's culture and personal history shape their experiences and expectations of care.

Trauma-Aware and Healing-Informed Care:

Understanding trauma

Trauma-aware care recognises that many older people have experienced trauma in their lives. Trauma, regardless of how long ago it occurred, can **affect a person's physical, emotional, and mental well-being**, shaping how they respond to care and interact with others.

Trauma may result from childhood abuse, neglect, domestic violence, war, forced displacement, loss, racism, or institutionalisation. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, trauma can also stem from colonisation, the Stolen Generations, and ongoing discrimination.

Remember, you are not expected to talk about trauma with your clients. If they disclose information to you, it is not your burden to carry.

If you need to, please reach out to your supervisor for assistance in managing the situation, noting that providers must respect the privacy and dignity of clients and will always approach the matter confidentially and with sensitivity.

Healing-informed practice

This is about understanding that trauma may be present in a client's life. You can use this awareness to create an environment of safety and trust between you and your client.

Whilst you are not expected to be an expert on healing-informed care, having a basic understanding of the subject can help you in your everyday interactions with your clients.

Simple things like offering choices, allowing extra time for clients to respond, encouraging them to remain involved in daily activities, and empowering them to participate in decisions about their care can really make a difference.

Approaching all care scenarios in this way means you are showing that you see each person as an individual and value their life experiences.

Recognising your own needs

As a support worker, it's important to deliver care that is culturally safe, trauma-aware, and sensitive to your clients' complex backgrounds. At the same time, you may notice that clients' stories or behaviours resonate with your own past experiences. This can be both a source of empathy and a potential trigger for emotional distress for you.



Pay attention to your own **emotions, thoughts** and **stress levels** as you work with clients, especially when their experiences feel familiar or bring up memories of your own.

Noticing these reactions early can help you take steps to care for yourself before reaching a point of overwhelm.

Practising self-care and being prepared to reach out to your supervisor means you are looking after yourself so you can continue your supportive role with your clients.

Many organisations offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which offer confidential counselling that's free for staff. You don't need to inform your employer to access their EAP; you can contact EAP confidentially, and they are there to support you.

Check to see what's available in your organisation.



May 2026

Scan to watch a short and helpful explainer video for this topic!

