



# Understanding Trauma-Informed Care in ASD

## What is Trauma-Informed Care?

Trauma-informed care is an approach that asks one important question:

*“What is this person’s behavior telling me, and what do they need to feel safe?”*

Trauma-informed care in children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) recognizes that behavior is often a response to stress, fear, communication difficulties, and an overwhelmed nervous system.

Instead of focusing on correcting behavior, trauma-informed care focuses on creating calm, sensory-safe environments with a co-regulated approach that help children and adults with ASD feel safe and supported.

By staying calm, flexible and compassionate, providers and caregivers can mitigate further trauma during times of distress, meltdowns, avoidance, or shutdowns.



## What is Co-regulation?

Co-regulation is the interactive process by which caring adults (1) provide warm supportive relationships, (2) promote self-regulation through coaching, modeling, and gentle feedback, and (3) structure calm and supportive environments.

## Trauma-Informed Steps to Take in ASD

- **Accommodation:** Reduce sensory stimuli (lights, sounds, smells), adjust expectations, allow processing time, provide sensory aids, and space.
- **Acknowledgment:** Help the person feel seen and heard by validating feelings.
- **Predictability:** Provide clear routines and next steps using simple language.
- **Listening:** Patiently listen and respond to needs.
- **Flexibility:** Let go of social norms or rules when needed.
- **Understanding:** Avoid assumptions and maintain empathy.
- **Co-regulation:** Use calm voice and body language to offer reassurance.

