# Co-Design Toolbox

**MHCN**
Mental Health Carers NSW

Mental Health Carers NSW
Empowering Carers for Mental Health

# *Purposeful Storytelling*

## Trauma Informed Care (TIC):

TIC involves understanding, recognising, and responding to all types of trauma. TIC emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for carers, consumers and organisations.

## Recovery Oriented Practice:

Recovery is not simply an elimination of symptoms, it is an ongoing, non-linear process. Carers, just like consumers, can go through their own recovery journey.
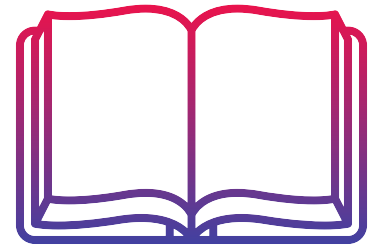
# Effectiveness:

Storytelling normalises experiences through connection, validation and acceptance. It also leads to positive change of self through cognitive reframing and connection.

# General Storytelling:

Telling your story with little thought or consideration of how it could affect others.

# Purposeful Storytelling:

Protecting yourself and others from physical/emotional harm by telling your story safely (safety for both the storyteller and the listener).

# How Can I Tell My Story Safely?

Check you are ready, don't make others look bad, don't emphasise divisions, avoid vivid details, focus on broader factors, and you are not your struggles!

# Crafting Your Story:

Define your audience, what you want them to learn, put your story together, avoid making the story too long, consider details that make you uncomfortable, eliminate irrelevant details, speak respectfully about others.
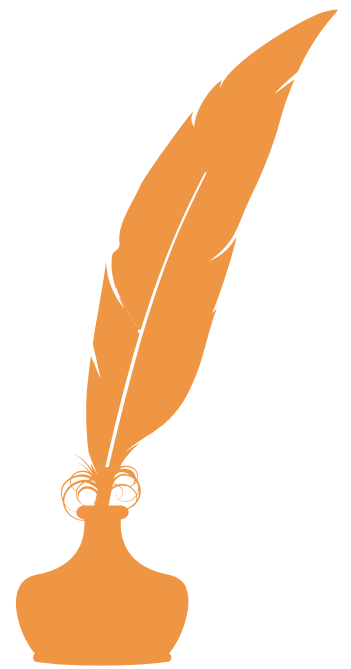
# Debrief and Self-Care:

Debrief with a trusted person before and/or after meetings, or use the 'Self-Reflection Activities Booklet'. Be aware of burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma, and engage in an individualised self-care routine.

## 1 Purposeful & Engaging Storytelling

## 2 Recovery Oriented Language

## 3 Self-Care & Reflection

## 4 Growth Mind-Set & Strengths Based Approach

*These positive approaches to measure our current strengths and weaknesses help us to be motivated and to motivate others.*

The growth mind-set states that intellegience is not static. No one is born with one set level of intelligence, everyone can learn and develop new skills. There are many stories of people who find something hard to begin with and who eventually go on to become high-achievers. Research demonstrates that when people approach problems with this mind-set they are more motivated to learn and to work at solutions.

The strengths based approach focuses on what is going right rather than what's wrong and on what people can do rather than what they can't. Getting rid of or solving problems is a great goal but it can go awry when we only look at problems and forget to think about strengths. In co-design, it is important to think about and identify each other's strengths. This way we recognise the value of everyone who participates and we understand how we can be supportive of each group member so they can contribute in the way that suits them. You can find out more about the strengths based approach here.

# Cognitive Flexibility and Intellectual Humility
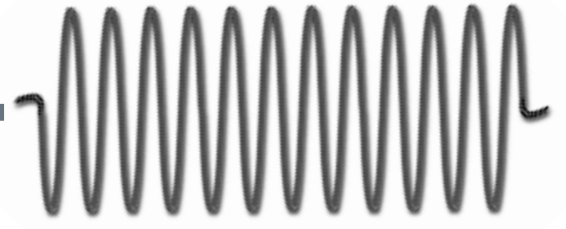
*Cognitive flexibility and intellectual humiliaty are skills which help us to be flexible and to engage with different and new ideas.*

Cognitive flexibility and intellectual humility can be thought about as "the willingness to change, plus the wisdom to know when you shouldn't". People who have intellectual humility and cognitive flexibility in their tool belt typically try to understand other people's viewpoints, the pros and cons of these ideas and the reasons why people think the way they do before they come to a judgement about a new idea. They are willing to change their mind based on new facts or points of view.

There are 4 key points that define intellectual humility. These are:

**1** Having respect for other viewpoints

**2** Not being intellectually overconfident

**3** Separating one's ego from one's intellect

**4** Willingness to revise one's own viewpoint

One study on intellectual humility found that most people think they have higher intellectual humility than average. Obviously this can't be true! This means that intellectual humility is a blind spot for a lot of people. If you are interested in finding out ore about your intellectual humility you can take a validated intellectual humility test here.

# Good Questions & Active Listening

*Good questions and good listening get us good information, just like a well written instruction manual.*

The 'right questions strategy' is one method for asking good questions. To use the right questions strategy, ask questions about;

- the REASON for a decision
- the PROCESS for making the decision
- the ROLE of the person affected by the decision-making process.

Use a combination of open and closed questions. Open ended questions seek more detail and closed questions help us to understand specific facts. Closed questions can be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' and often start with 'is', 'does', 'can', or 'are'. Open questions require someone to explain what they think and often start with 'why', 'how', or 'what'.

Listen actively to what others say. To listen actively:

Be attentive ajd listen carefully to what the other person is saying and observe their body language and tone.

Ask questions to build and understand how the other person thinks, how they feel and why they think and feel how they do.

Summarise what you have understood about how the person thinks and feels. Then check that you have understood.

You can access resources about asking good questions by visiting the Right Questions Institue website here.

# Being Wise About Feedback

*Use feedback wisely, sometmes hammer chisels are needed to build a castle, but if used wrongly they could do more damage than good.*

Feedback is a very important learning and teaching tool, but feedback can turn into destructive criticism if it is delivered in the wrong way. Good feedback should be a mix of positive feedback and constructive feedback. Provide positive feedback by letting the person know that you think highly of them. Provide constructive feedback by letting the person know exactly what you would like them to change and exactly how they can do it.

A feedback sandwich is one way to remember to give positive and constructive feedback. To give a feedback sandwich: say one positive thing about the person, provide some constructive feedback, then say something positive about the person. This way you start and finish on a positive note. But beware, sometimes it can come across as disingenous or confusing if the only time you say something good about someone is when you want them to change what they are doing.

Wise feedback is another method you can use to provide positive feedback an constructive feedback. Wise feedback follows these 3 seps:
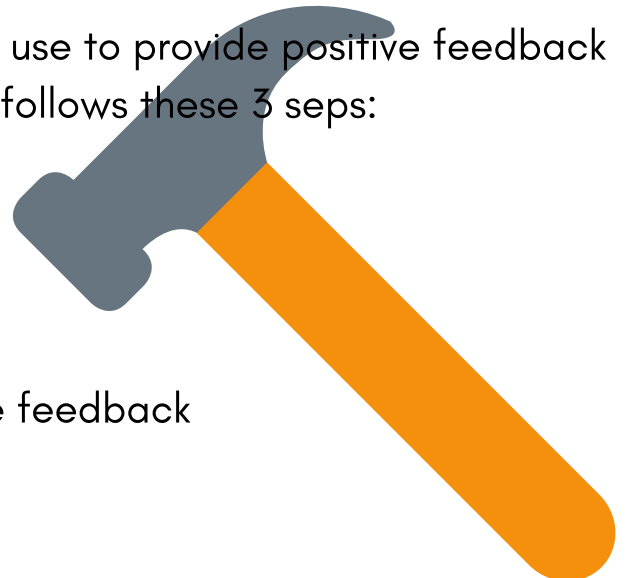
Start with specific actionable feedback

State high expectations

Express confidence in the person's ability to accomplish the task.

# Thriving with Conflict

*Sometimes a spanner can be a spanner in the works but sometimes we also need a spanner to get bolts unstuck and create something new.*

Conflict is natural in groups and can often be constructive when we are able to hear different viewpoints and then come to a resolution. Common mistakes that make conflict hard to resolve are:

- We assume we have been understood by others
- We assume that we can understand others if we just listen hard enough
- We assume other people see the world the same way that we do
- We assume that other people will have the same reactions to things that we do

Tips to respond to conflict are:

**Consider leaving it:** is this a small problem? Is this going to matter to you tomorrow? Is it something worth bringing up or sorting out?

**Listen actively:** try to keep an open mind about what the other person thinks, why they think that and what they want to achieve. Ask questions and check that you have understood.

**Consider the facts:** often, we look for facts that fit our own ideas. Is it possible to pause the conflict? It might be worth going away and doing some research into what is right. Try to look for evidence that supports the other persons perspective, consider the possibility that they are right.

**Try to understand the deeper problem:** is the person tired? Have you done something to offend them? Do they feel overwhelmed? Is something else going on?

**Try to find the common ground:** what do both people or groups have in common? Too often we look at what we disagree on, often we expect a solution that is win-win, where is everything is resolved. What can you agree on?

# Addressing Power Imbalances Transparently

*Shared power and collaboration are the nuts and bolts of co-design; it is what holds the whole process together.*

Co-Design is about changing the way that power works in communities. In the mental health sector, co-design is about carer and consumer control over the decisions that impact them. This means that professionals and services share the power that they have with carers and consumers. Professionals should contribute their knowledge and experience as a resource in the form of advice and support for carers and consumers to make their own decisions. Services should commit their resources such as staff time and budget to do what carers and consumers want. The final decisions should be made by carers and consumers.

Regardless of the situation, there will be differences in power between different individuals, different groups, different communities of people, different organisations and different institutions. Co-design can't change all of these differences. What co-design can do is:

- Look at these differences transparently through open and honest discussion
- Look at how everyone can pool together the power that they have to enable the community to have control over decisions that impact them.

There are questions that can help us to understand how people is shared:

- Who is driving? (who makes the decisions)
- What are they driving? (what are they making decisions about)
- Where are they driving (Are they focused on local services, state-wide policies, national issues, etc)
- When are they driving? (when do they make the decisions? Is it for problem identification, solution design, implementation or evaluation?)

# Following a Design Process

*No one would jump from the idea 'let's build a castle' straight to construction the next day. They need a logical blue print to follow first.*

A good design requires more than just a bunch of ideas. Most design processes have a clear scope, a clear purpose, and follow a logical order.

The scope describes what can and cannot be done within the project. It is useful to think about it in terms of 'dates, deliverables, and dollars'.

The purpose describes the big picture outcome that the co-design project will achieve.

The design process is a series of logical steps that helps individuals and groups to generate and evaluate ideas. Some common steps that are included in design processes are:

- Define the scope and purpose of the project
- Identify problems or issues that the project will solve
- Identify solutions to the problems or issues
- Implement solutions
- Evaluate solutions

Often this can be a reiterative process. For example, a group might decide on a tentative purpose of the project. Then they may do some research into the subject which looked at problems, issues and solutions. Then they would refine the purpose based on the results of that research. However, it is important to make sure that the scope, problems and issues are clearly defined before finalising solutions.

# Sticking to an Agenda

*A clamp keeps things in order, without it the entire project could fall apart and never get done.*
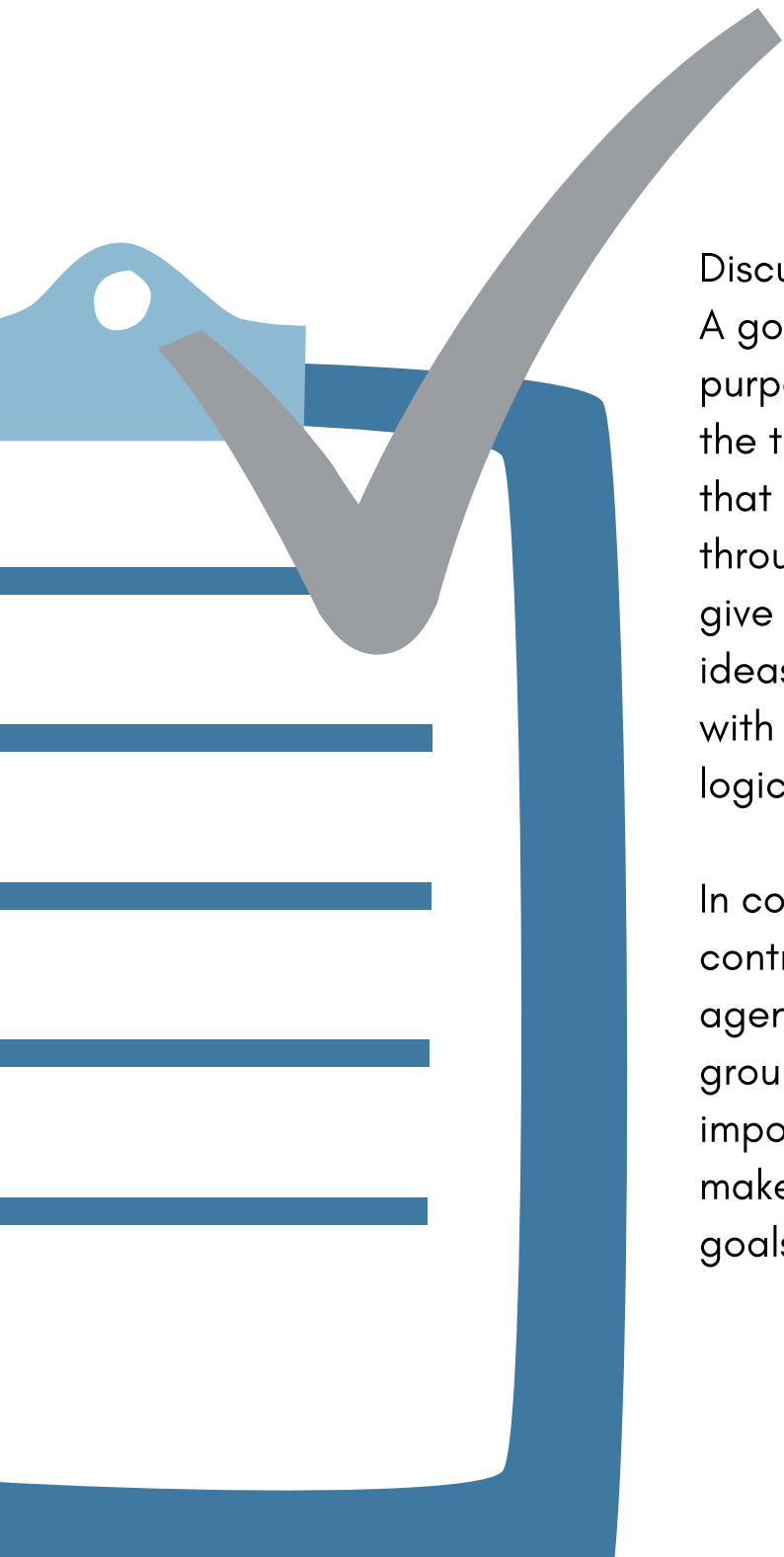
Discussion in co-design should be purposeful. A good agenda helps to give discussion purpose as it outlines the topic of discussion, the time that the group will take to discuss that topic and what the group will achieve through the discussion. The agenda should give the group time to discuss 'big picture' ideas, but it should also allocate time to deal with each of the details of the project in a logical order.

In co-design, all of the group is able to contribute to and decide on what the agenda should look like together. Once the group has decided on an agenda it is important to stick to the discussion topic to make sure that the group achieves all of the goals that they have set.

# Parking ideas

*Parking ideas helps us to divide the discussion up into manageable chunks.*

We can stick to an agenda and still have a chance to share our ideas by parking an idea when it is not relevant to the discussion topic at hand. When you park an idea, MHCN staff will record it and we will revisit it at a time where it fits into the agenda. The parked idea might be brought up for coming up with another project for MHCN or at a different point in the project that you are working on.

Parking ideas also helps to manage conflict. Sometimes when people have different viewpoints it is often good to take space to research and consider the different ideas. It may come up that we decide to park a decision for later in this case.
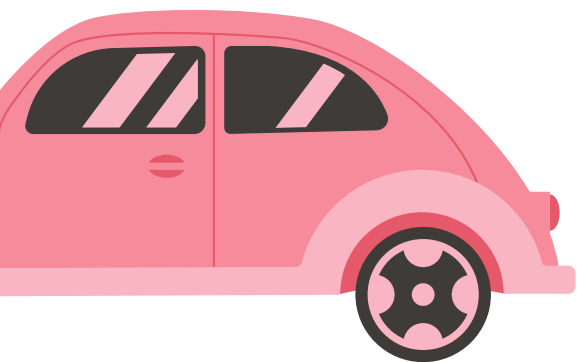
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