

LANGUAGE MATTERS

a brief guide to trauma informed language during sensitive exams

The language we use when we interact with patients/clients may reinforce trauma, such as past experiences of physical assault, or can trigger trauma responses.

Consider your setting, your clinical encounter and your approach.

Changing just a few words may improve your patients experiences.

INSTEAD OF	TRY..	RATIONALE?
BED	TABLE	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
STIRRUPS	FOOT REST	MEDICALIZED LINGO
RELAX	TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
OPEN YOUR LEGS, SPREAD YOUR LEGS	LET YOUR LEGS FALL TO THE SIDE	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?	ARE YOU DOING OKAY?	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
'SCOOCH' DOWN	MOVE DOWN THE TABLE	COLLOQUIALISM/ INFANTILIZING
COVER/EXPOSE YOURSELF	RAISE/LOWER THE DRAPE	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
TOUCH/FEEL (I.E. I AM GOING TO TOUCH YOU HERE...)	EXAMINE, PALPATE	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA

INSTEAD OF	TRY..	RATIONALE?
AWESOME, GREAT, PERFECT	OKAY, THANK YOU	VALUE JUDGEMENT
I'M 'JUST' GOING TO	IM GOING TO..	CAN BE MINIMIZING, BE DIRECT
POWER STATEMENTS, SUCH AS "I AM HERE TO GIVE YOU"...	YOU ARE HERE FOR...	DECREASES POWER DYNAMIC
I'M GOING TO GET YOU TO..	WOULD YOU PLEASE	DECREASES POWER DYNAMIC
IM GOING TO 'CLEAN' YOUR CERVIX	I'M GOING TO REMOVE THE MUCUS FROM YOUR CERVIX	VALUE JUDGEMENT
INSPECT/LOOK/INSERT	EXAMINE/ASSESS	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA
SPREAD I.E. I'M GOING TO SPREAD YOUR LABIA	SEPARATE	MAY TRIGGER TRAUMA

REMEMBER...

WE ARE ONLY HUMAN AND WILL MAKE MISTAKES WITH OUR LANGUAGE,
PLEASE AND THANK-YOU GO A LONG WAY!