

Trauma-informed work for people engaging with the Disability Royal Commission

Relationships Australia WA provides a free independent counselling and support service for people with disability or their carers who have been affected by the Disability Royal Commission.

When people first approach this service, they are often in a state of high stress and may have reached a crisis point. They are seeking safety. A place for their voice to be heard. Listening to each person's experiences and building a supportive relationship where trust and a sense of control and choice are felt, is the cornerstone of our trauma-informed work.

Working this way means we don't focus on the problems faced, but rather recognise the coping mechanisms used to survive. We work through the physiological impacts of trauma and increase their awareness of it. The strength of our work is in the therapeutic relationship where skills are practiced to overcome trauma responses.

Our small team of highly skilled and knowledgeable counsellors gently unpack the various barriers, ableism or other discrimination experienced. They support self-agency and provide information to assist self-advocacy. A large part of the work is also to link individuals with other appropriate services and community supports.

Case Study: Jodie

Jodie was incarcerated following numerous stints with Mental Health Services where inaccurate diagnosis resulted in mistreatment, over medication, inappropriate use of restraints and a missed diagnosis of Autism. A person that Jodie met in prison helped her to understand Autism and a journey of discovery began. Building on these insights our trauma-informed counselling supported Jodie to further manage anxiety. Autism burnout is very real for Jodie, mitigating the overload from stimulation and the demand from deciphering the meaning of communication has been a focus during counselling. Trauma-informed counselling that is paced according to her needs has provided the space for Jodie to develop strategies, build her self-esteem and exercise self-compassion. Post-traumatic growth is due to Jodie's resourcefulness and motivation to live a meaningful life, but also greatly enhanced by the trust and safety experienced with her counsellor.

