

## ABUSE- INFORMED TRAUMA THERAPY

(It might be helpful to read our “Abuse-Related Trauma” article first).

The trauma therapy model is based on an understanding of how abuse and neglect, especially in childhood, affect the way people think, feel, behave and relate to others. It understands that the way survivors of abuse learn to cope with overwhelming events can create problems in their lives; and that these problems are a result of the abuse rather than symptoms of something that is wrong with the survivor.

The trauma therapy model is based on the assumption that the best approach for working with survivors of trauma follows three stages:

### 1. Stabilizing and managing responses

Often survivors need to find ways to manage the effects the trauma has had on their lives before starting to look at the details of the abuse experiences. This stage is usually the longest.

The tasks of this stage of therapy may include: establishing safety; understanding the impact of the traumatic experience; learning new strategies to manage the responses of the trauma. New skills may be learned, in: maintaining supportive relationships; self care strategies; dealing with strong emotions; re-gaining a sense of control; building self-esteem.

### 2. Processing and grieving traumatic memories

In this stage the task is to begin facing and processing the painful experiences of the past, in the safety of the therapeutic relationship. While sharing the trauma story, new skills in managing difficult feelings in healthy ways are learned. The goal is to accept the reality of the past, understand the toll it has taken and mourn the losses experienced.

### 3. Re-connecting with the world

In this stage, the goal is to continue to understand the past with new meaning and find ways to bring optimism and hope for the future.