

# Psycho-Educational Workshops

## For Caregivers of Young People Who Have Experienced Trauma

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*SeaStar CYAC Child and Youth Advocate  
Suspected Trauma & Abuse Response Team (START)*

*IWK Health Centre  
Halifax, Nova Scotia*



# Today's Agenda

- **SeaStar Child & Youth Advocacy Centre** (Halifax, Nova Scotia)
  - How Workshops fit into Role as Advocate
- **Psycho-Educational Workshops**
  - History and Purpose
  - Content Overview
  - Outcomes and Evaluation
  - Where to grow from here?



# SeaStar Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

A coordinated response for children and youth  
who may have experienced trauma



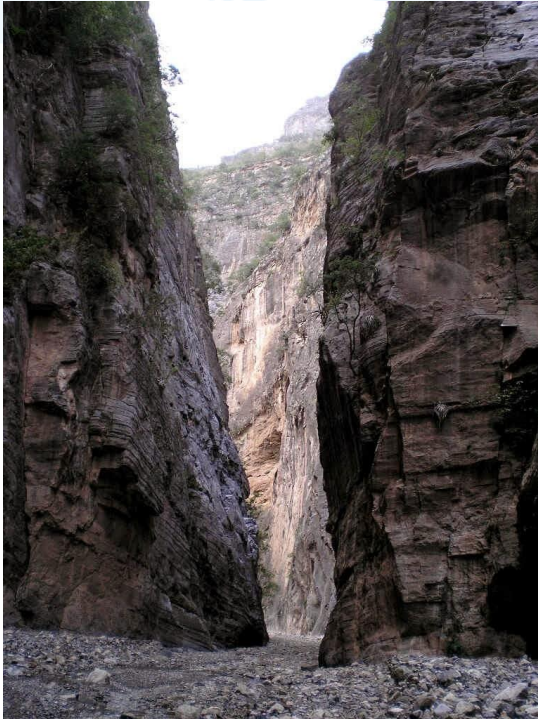


# SeaStar Caregiver Workshops

Psycho-Educational Workshops for Parents and Caregivers of  
Children and Youth who have Experienced Trauma



# History



- Identified gap in available resources
  - Long wait lists
  - Common questions
- Gaps will be unique in each community
- Pay attention



# Adapting to Client Need/Feedback

- Have tried different approaches
  - Full series vs ‘Buffet’
  - Who can attend?
    - SeaStar clients
    - Caregivers in the broader community (foster, adoptive parents)
    - Helping professionals
- Low barrier
  - Free
  - Parking
  - Transportation and child care



# Purpose

- To empower caregivers and parents
  - De-mystify trauma and how it is healed
  - Concrete, practical ideas for supporting their kids

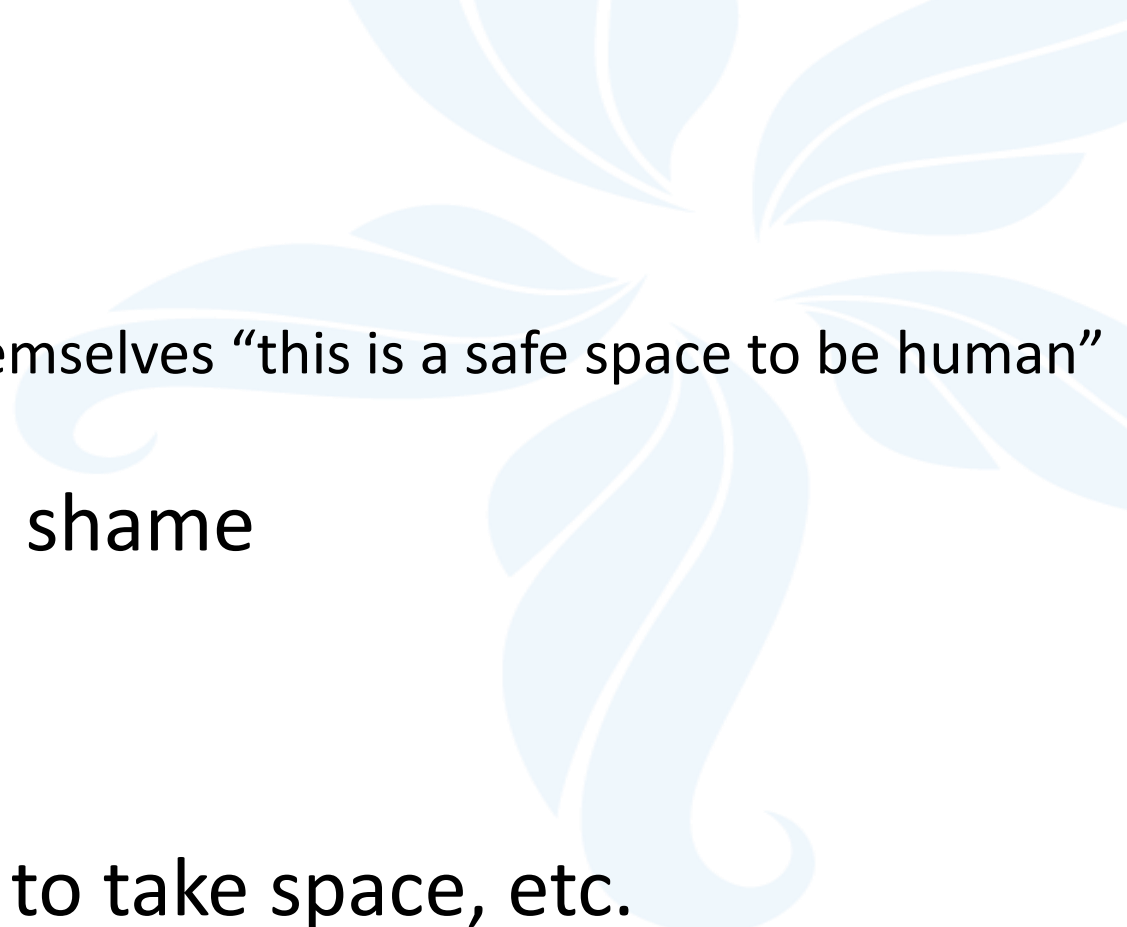


When it comes to trauma,  
especially in relation to  
children, there are  
*so many reasons  
to be hopeful*

## The truth is:

- If you only have **one hour** to spend with a child who has been traumatized, spend that hour with the **child's caregiver**.
- No one is in a better position, or more motivated to support a child's healing than their caregiver.

# Be Trauma Informed

- Cultivate safety
    - Create warm, inviting environment
    - Offer food and beverages
    - Encourage them to be gentle on themselves “this is a safe space to be human”
  - A word on caregiver guilt and shame
  - Plant seeds
  - Give permission for self care, to take space, etc.
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# Workshop Content

- Understanding Trauma
- Parental Style
- Emotion Coaching
- Teaching Mindfulness to Young People
- Trauma Informed Yoga
- Meditation
- Practicing Grounding Activities with Kids
- Navigating the Justice System

**Spring 2016**

Monday	Tuesday	Wedn
Apr 11	Apr 12	Meditation Halifax Sham 1084 Tower 10 am to 11:
Apr 18	Trauma Informed Yoga Halifax Shambhala Centre 1084 Tower Road 10 am to 11:30 am	Apr 19
Trauma and the Importance of Self Care Parker Reception Room IWK 6:30 to 8:30pm	Apr 25	Apr 26
May 2	Trauma Informed Yoga Halifax Shambhala Centre 1084 Tower Road 10 am to 11:30 am	May 3
May 9	May 10	Teaching B ness Skills and Youth Halifax Sham 1084 Tower 10 am to 11:
Becoming Your Child's Emotion Coach Parker Reception Room IWK 6:30 to 8:30pm	May 16	May 17
May 23	Meditation Halifax Shambhala Centre 1084 Tower Road 10 am to 11:30 am	May 24
		More on E Coaching Parker Rece IWK 6:30 to 8:30p



**WHAT IS TRAUMA?**  
Trauma is a normal response to a situation our brain reads as dangerous.

When a person is going through an emergency situation, they are responding to a threat. Our brains are hard-wired with an "emergency response system" to help us deal with threats. This is our brains' way of trying to keep us safe in an unsafe situation. In that moment, our brain's main function is to get us through the emergency.

The brain helps us to survive by activating biological reactions involved in the "fight, flight or freeze" response. Adrenaline is released so your body is ready to move: to fight or flee. Your heart rate and blood pressure go up. If you can't fight your way out of the situation, or flee (run away), we "freeze". This is the human being equivalent of "playing dead."


When someone is traumatized by an event (or series of repeated events), they can get "stuck" in the freeze response. The adrenaline and other hormones that are telling our bodies there is an emergency keep flowing. So even when we are safe, our bodies do not really know that we are safe.

There's good news: brain scientists have recently learned a lot more about trauma. There are ways to help our bodies return to "safe" mode. There is much hope for healing. This is particularly true for children as their brains are still growing.





# Workshop Content

- Psycho-Educational vs Therapy Groups
  - Mostly lecture format, relatable
  - Do not need to share their story
  - Supports work of other helping professionals in community  
(not *in lieu of*)
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# Why these workshops?

- Seminars specific to de-mystifying trauma, and practical things caregivers can do to support their kids to heal
- Practice
- Informational workshops responding to caregiver requests

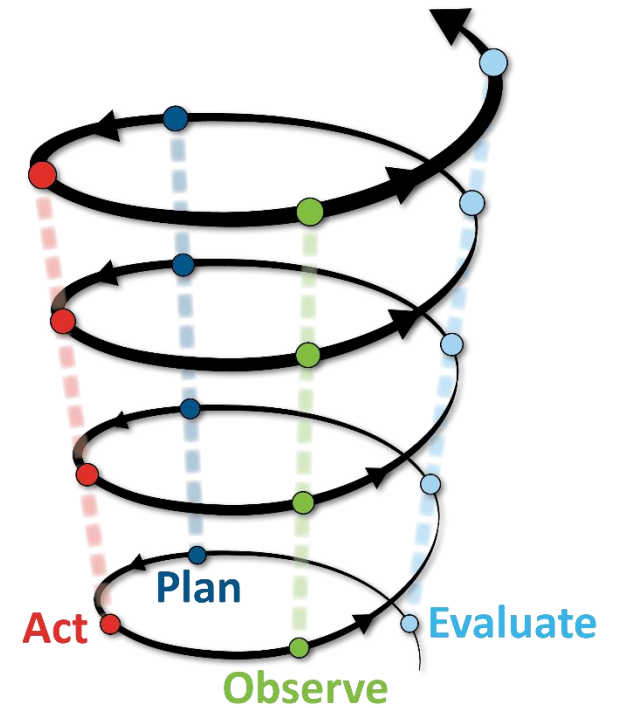
# Why Emotion Coaching?

## From Emotion Focused Family Therapy (EFFT)

- Parents/caregivers are the most important relationship in child's life
- Families are key in the recovery process
  - Increases success rates astronomically
  - Can help loved one interrupt symptoms, get back on track with development/life
- Families can interrupt cycle of emotion avoidance, heal old emotional wounds, so loved one can heal from within, no longer needing symptoms to cope

# Outcomes and Evaluation

- Incorporate evaluation and opportunity for feedback into program design
- Continual change process for every aspect of program, from design, to content, to evaluation
- Helps to assess client needs and to identify areas for growth



*Adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005*



# Participant Feedback

**1,200+ attendees**

Caregivers and Professionals

“ We have been going through this for about four years now... After last week’s workshop was the **first time I have felt hope [my daughter] might be able to heal from this.** ”

“ I feel like I have been **thrown a lifeline.** ”

“ This has helped me to **better understand** the students I work with. ”

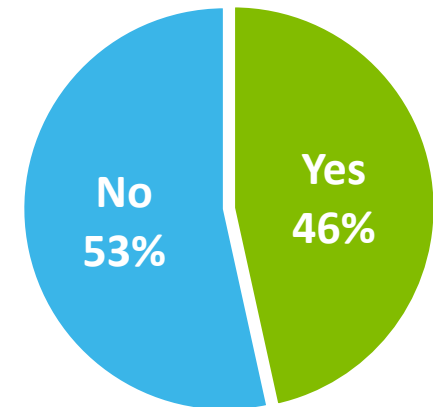
# Evaluation Survey Results

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## Reason for attending:

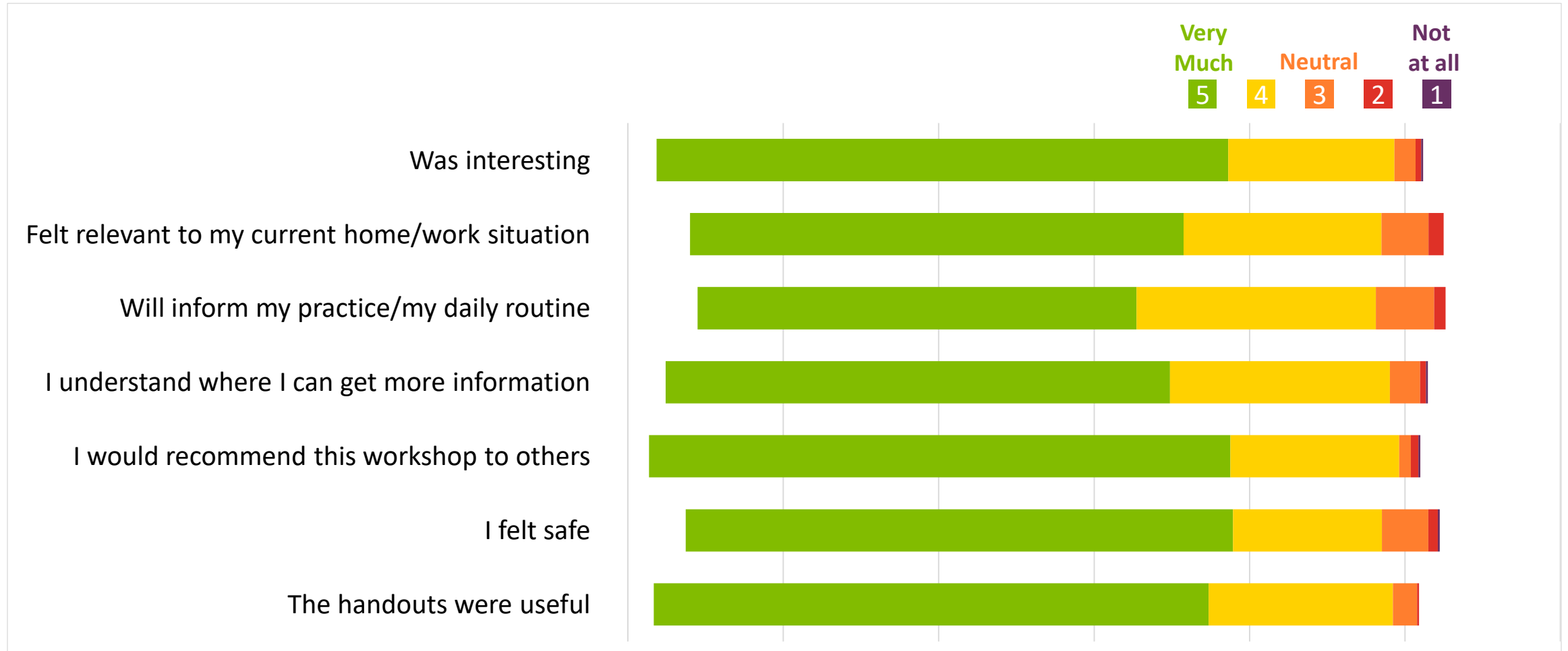
- “ To help my daughter cope with trauma and myself. ”
- “ Recommended by our adoption social worker. ”
- “ To better be able to support students with trauma who are in school. ”

## Have you had prior training on this topic?



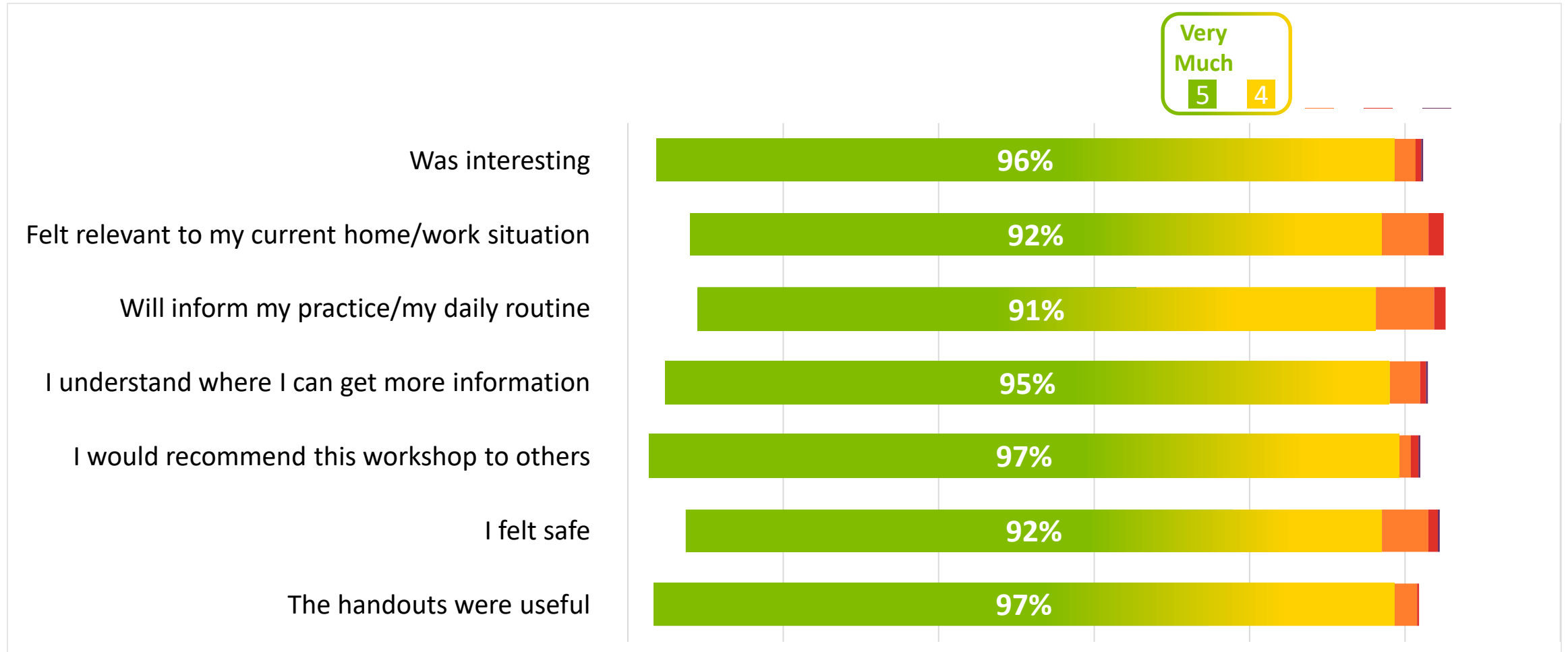
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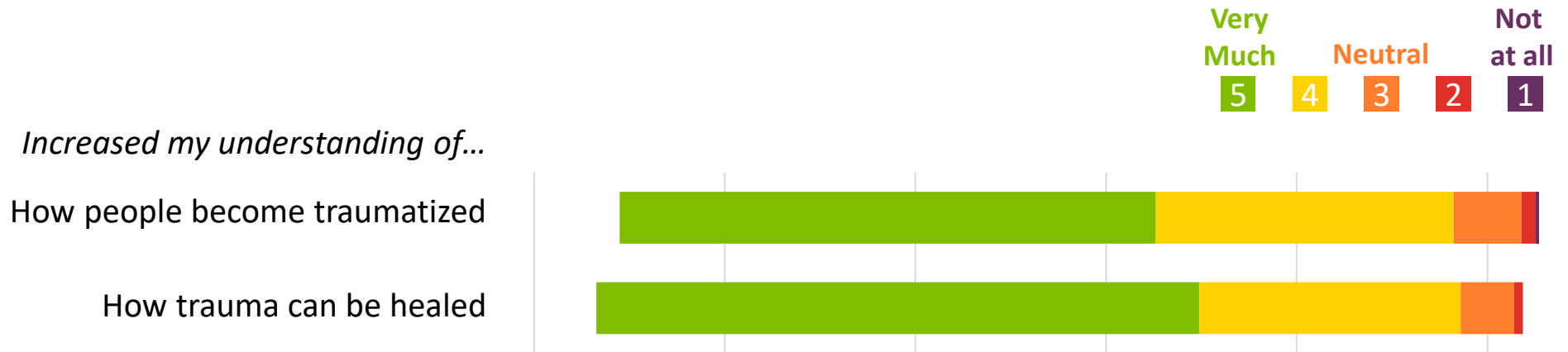
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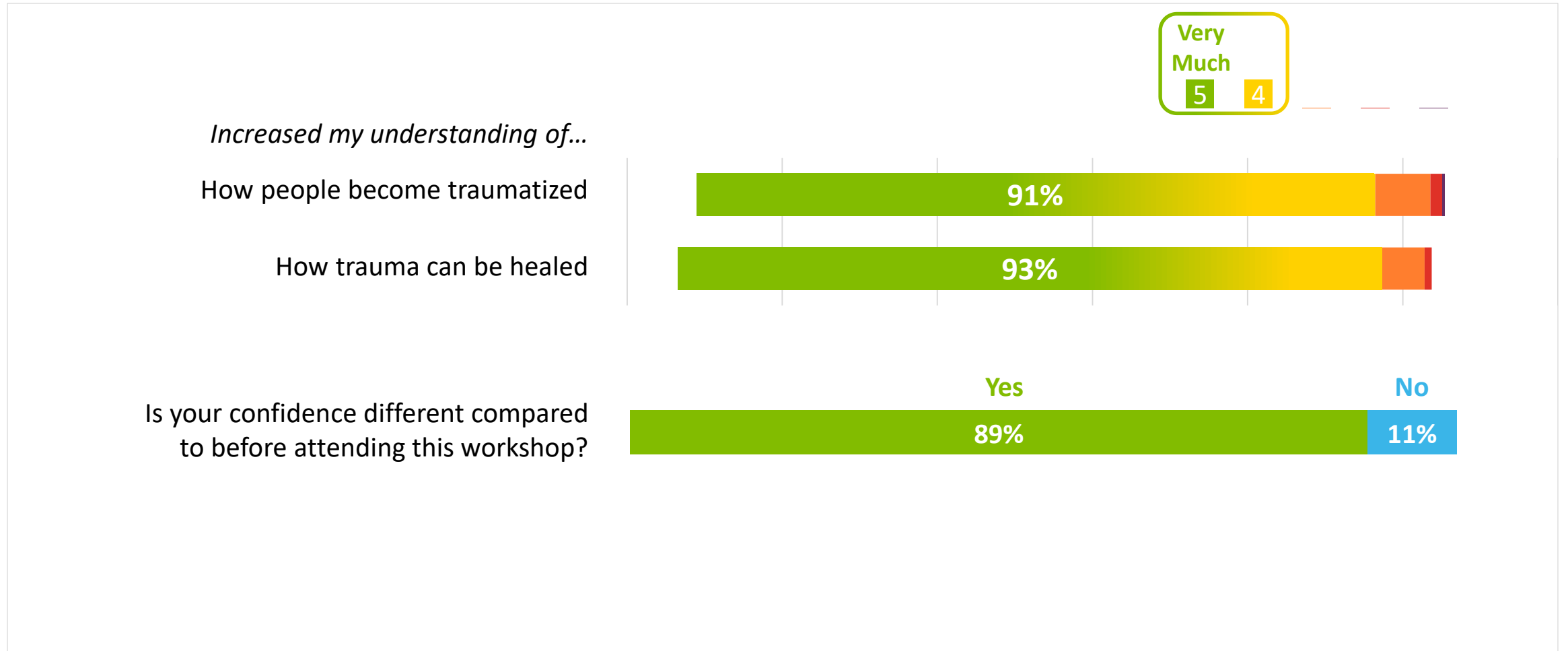
# Understanding Trauma

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# Understanding Trauma

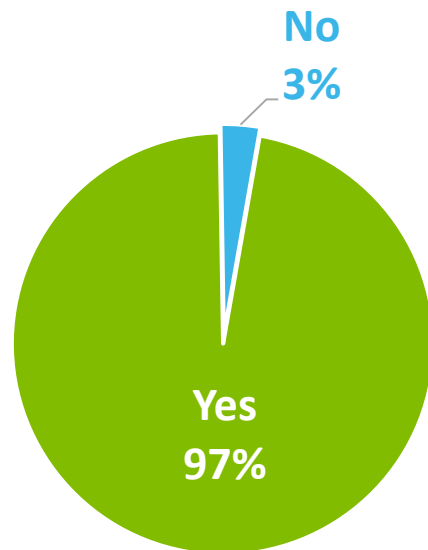
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# Evaluation Survey Results

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**Would you attend a workshop again?**



**What will you do with knowledge gained?**

- “ Try and support my kids (and myself as it turns out) with some previous trauma. ”
- “ Continue building knowledge and recognize triggers in myself and eventually others. ”
- “ Try to recognize my feelings and see them as separate so I can better support my daughter. ”
- “ It will help me to stop and think about how and why a child is acting. ”

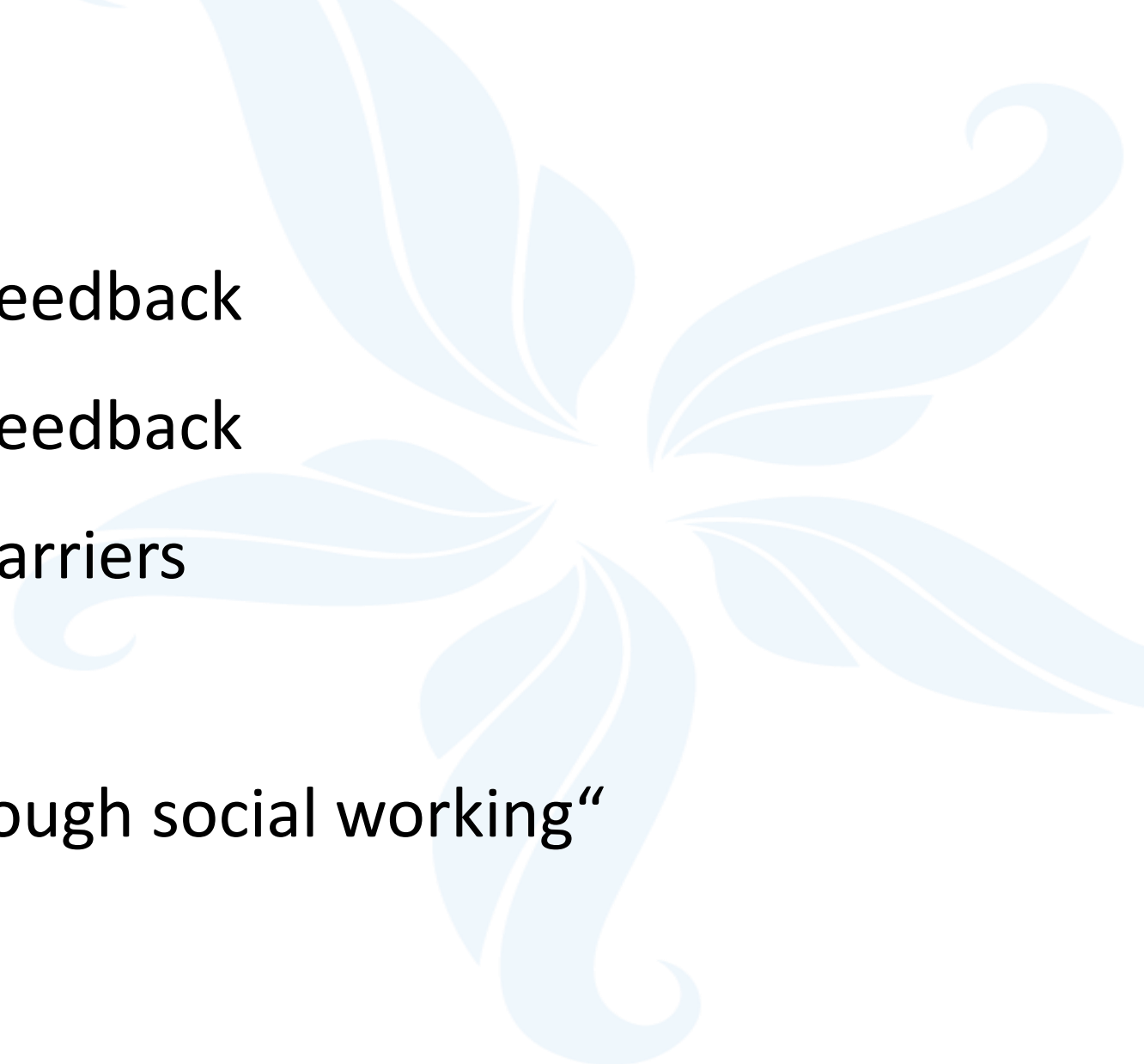
# Lessons Learned

- Start where you are
- Be inspired
- Be creative
- Grow the program you want to offer





# Lessons Learned

- Incorporate opportunity for feedback
  - Make adaptations based on feedback
  - Attempt to address/reduce barriers
  - Know your boundaries
  - Get over yourself – “good enough social working”
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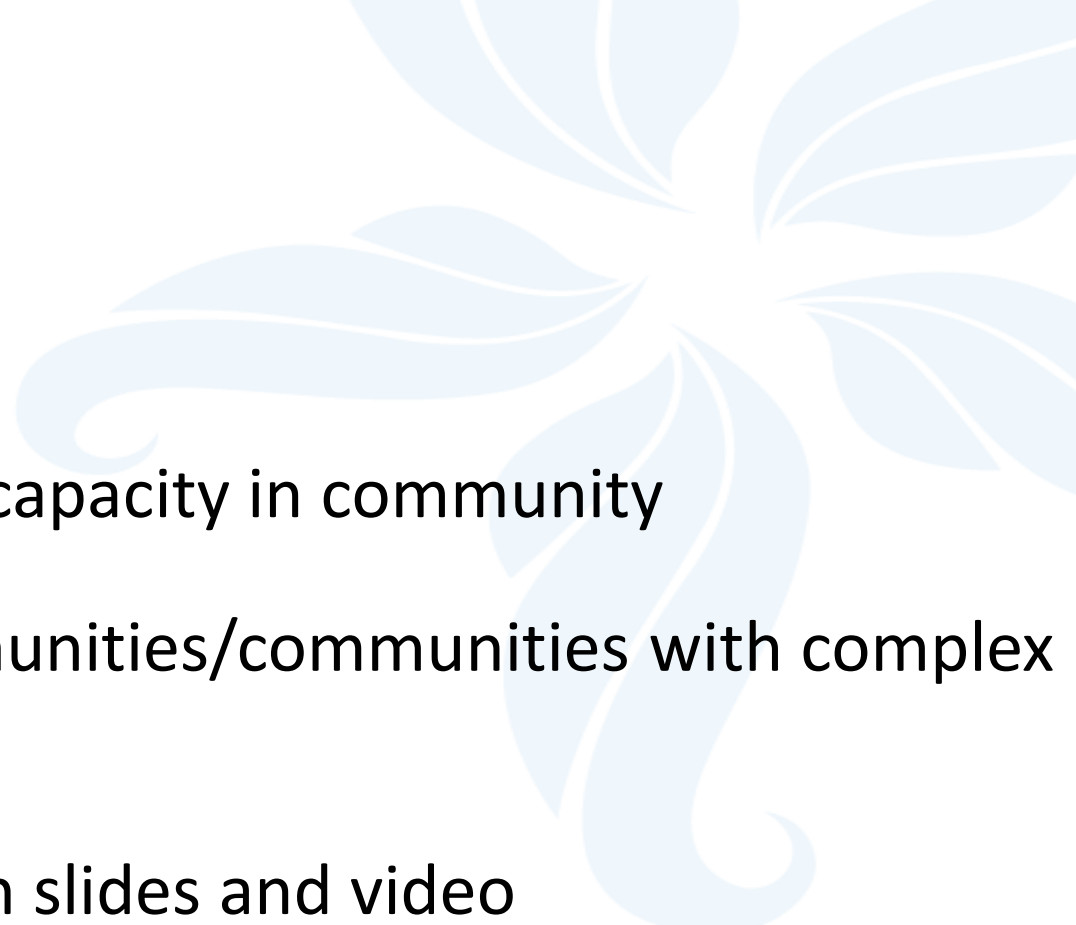
# Lessons Learned

- Deliver content to caregivers, even if it is a mixed group with helping professionals
- No introductions
- No small group exercises and activities to elicit people to tell their story
- Use examples (personal, relatable, but not triggering)
  - Human stories
  - No examples from work experience unless session is offered as a professional training or to students in classroom setting

# Lessons Learned

- Attending the workshops can be an emotionally charged experience for caregivers. Sometimes they can become elevated, or respond more strongly than the situation warrants. Expect this, as many attending have a trauma history.
- The workshop content contains many different ideas, thoughts, suggestions – none are going to be “the easy/one solution” to challenges people are facing.
- There is no “one size fits all.”
- Encourage people to think of it like a food buffet – take what seems to work and leave the rest.
- Caregivers may attend the workshops more than once; they get something different out of the experience each time.

# Where to grow from here?

- More practice workshops
  - Better childcare options
  - Therapy/Support groups
  - Workshops to grow professional capacity in community
  - Workshops offered in rural communities/communities with complex needs (make more accessible)
  - Develop web-based program with slides and video
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# Thank you



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