

## SELF Framework

SELF is an acronym that pertains to Safety, Emotion, Loss and Future. Within the Sanctuary Model SELF enables us by providing a 'non-linear' methodology to solve complex problems in our workplaces, teams and with our clients. SELF helps us to think 'outside of the box' and develop proactive, creative and innovative solutions. SELF also supports us to be more effective and responsive – to be trauma-informed - rather than 'trauma-organised'.

When people have experienced trauma they have experienced a pervasive loss of safety, complex and intense emotions, and multiple losses related to their traumatic experiences. After trauma, many people feel a sense of hopelessness about, or powerlessness to create their future. SELF provides a 'counter-balance' to these typical trauma experiences. As service providers, SELF helps us to focus on domains that support healing and recovery and to maintain a future focus, when our clients are struggling to hold hope for themselves. A key to using the SELF framework is to focus 70% of your time on the future component.

Even when we aren't working with traumatised populations, the SELF Framework provides us with shared knowledge and a shared language, so that when we come together we can more quickly 'get on the same page', and more confidently share our different perspectives to enhance practice, address tensions and conflicts, and shift trajectories in a positive, healthier direction.

### Safety

In the Sanctuary model when we talk about safety, it encompasses not just physical safety but, psychological, cultural, social and moral or ethical safety. When we explore safety concerns we aren't referring to anxieties or discomfort – feeling uncomfortable is part of growth. Safety in the Sanctuary model refers to understanding risks to safety and challenging practices or environments that are racist, bullying, and violent, and behaviours that are coercive, abusive and intimidating. Safety in SELF means we act to protect from harm, to give voice to the powerless and preventing injury – both psychological and physical.

### Emotion

Human beings are inherently emotional – and our emotions influence our thinking, beliefs and decision-making. When we are aware of and in control of our emotions, we can harness them to drive positive change, to connect authentically with others and make integrated decisions. However when our emotions take over - our rational and thinking part of the brain shuts down. Emotions can also be contagious and create parallel processes in teams – this can make teams effective and optimistic or conversely toxic. Understanding how emotions drive negative and positive behaviours is explored in this part of the SELF model. Reflecting on emotions in our SELF problem solving, becoming self-aware, demonstrating emotional intelligence and supporting other to develop emotional intelligence, is a critical part Emotion in the SELF framework.



## Loss

All change involves loss. When reflecting on a problem, this part of the framework helps us recognise the loss that is being experienced by our client, staff or stakeholder. We can use this part of the framework to help them cope with their losses and confront resistance to change. Loss can also support us to identify ways to process emotions, with a view to 'losing' the dysfunctional or unhelpful behaviours, habits and practices that hold us back. Understanding loss and grieving losses, supports us to create positive change, and move to a future focus.

## Future

As mentioned previously, during a SELF Framework discussion we focus 70% of our effort and time on future planning, hope for change and optimistic thinking. This part of the framework highlights the strengths and protective factors when working with clients, and identifying how we can support changes that encourage them to learn, grow and thrive. For many people we work with, particularly those experiencing intergenerational and complex traumas, it is easy to become 'problem-saturated' because the many safety problems they face can feel unsurmountable. Remember don't be disheartened – all big changes in life always start with a series of small steps.

When working with complex or vulnerable clients, focusing on changes that begin to shift trajectories, by identifying modest and achievable goals, is vital. Big changes rarely happen quickly – affirm and celebrate what is going well and identify small changes that can be made to traction toward success. This is what provides the preconditions for creating hopeful and safer futures.

When we use the SELF in our teams internally the framework helps us to 'depersonalise' problems, not get caught up with everything that is 'wrong', but rather to focus where we want to go. It supports systemic thinking – when we use SELF we invite 'radical' thinking. The Future focus encourages us to be innovative, creative and to think outside the box and to trial new solutions. Most importantly the framework encourages us to work together, collaboratively – this is what creates the traction that shifts entrenched problems. When we get on the same page, and work in the same direction, we can build the momentum that brings big, positive changes to fruition.

