



# Managing Trauma Reminders

## Discussion Guide

This discussion guide is intended to be used in tandem with the Managing Trauma Reminders recording in unit-level discussions, community conversations, or individual learning. An effective method is to pause the video at the end of each SPR Skill (Problem Solving Skills; Positive Activities; Managing Reactions; Helpful Thinking; Social Connections) and having the corresponding discussion.

### Considerations for using this discussion guide:

- The objectives of this training are educational, not therapeutic.
- Content may bring up thoughts and feelings.
- This is not intended to be a therapeutic environment or a space for sharing individual trauma stories or deeply personal information. Sharing personal stories can increase others' trauma exposure.
- Take care of yourself (and encourage your team to do the same)
  - Take a break – for a drink/snack, restroom or any other reason.
  - Be mindful of your feelings and what you need to be successful today

## Problem Solving Skills

\*Note, you may not always know if, or what, trauma experience someone has when they come seeking help\*

**Case Discussion:** A student comes to you, stating the following: Academics were my initial focus, but lately, it's been a constant uphill battle. Concepts that were once manageable now feel like trying to decipher a foreign language. I've sought assistance from professors during office hours, but it hasn't been enough. Extracurricular commitments have always been my passion, but they've turned into a source of stress. Balancing leadership roles and responsibilities alongside my coursework has become overwhelming. I've contemplated stepping down from some positions, but I fear letting my team down. With the demands of university and extracurriculars, there's little room for self-care or time with friends and family. I know this imbalance isn't sustainable. With the holidays coming up, all I can do is think about my courseload next semester while feeling guilty I am not 'present' with my family at home.

Define the problem: This student has described a lot of problems. Determine amongst your group what some of the problems may be.

Examples: Struggling academically; overwhelmed by extracurricular activity obligations and responsibilities; little school-life balance.

Set a realistic goal: Brainstorm realistic goals that the student could reasonably achieve, that also addresses their problem.



Examples: I want to really get my GPA up; I want to enjoy extracurriculars again; I want to improve my school-extracurricular-life balance

Brainstorm: Help this student brainstorm possible solutions. How could they go about meeting their goal?

Examples: The student determines they need to spend more time studying with a tutor and less time (just for now) in their extracurriculars; They reach out to the rest of the board of their primary club, asking for some assistance managing the club for the rest of the semester; they schedule out time each week dedicated to 'fun' family or friend activities away from academics and extracurricular responsibilities.

Evaluate and choose best solution: This is up to the student, how could you encourage them?

## Promoting Positive Activities

**Case Discussion:** A student is struggling to be on campus after a violent incident occurred in their residence neighborhood on campus. They are temporarily staying on a friend's couch off campus but are missing classes and they'll need to leave the friend's house soon but feel uncomfortable returning to their on-campus housing.

- How might you go about promoting positive activities for this student in your role? If you are not student facing, what types of activities or initiatives might you propose for the community that might serve a similar purpose/for a population struggling to be on campus?
- What resources might you use to brainstorm activities?

## Managing Reactions

**Case Discussion:** A mentee that is normally engaged and positive in your 8 am meeting seems to be distracted, anxious, and distant during your recent meetings, which is unlike them. You know they took some unexpected time off recently, but don't know the details of why they were gone. When you ask if they are doing OK, they tell you they are having a hard time focusing and experience a racing heart for an hour or so after they arrive at work.

- What signs do you notice that *could be* trauma responses?
- How might you go about exploring this person's trauma reminder in this situation, while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and roles?
- What exercises might you suggest and teach your mentee to alleviate some of the symptoms they are experiencing? What else might you do or suggest?

You did not know that your mentee was involved in a car accident and consequently took some time off to recover. They are experiencing extreme stress and trauma reminders by operating their car to come to work. Because your meeting is first thing in the morning, you are present for their heightened state and may notice these symptoms and difference in demeanor more than others or than later in the day.



## Helpful Thinking

### Discussion Questions:

- What are some situations that reframing a negative thought positively changed your outlook?
- How might you prompt another person to change a negative thought to a positive one?
- How can peer support or collaboration assist in helpful thinking?
- What role do mentors or advisors play in helping students navigate and reframe negative thoughts related to academic challenges?

### Examples of unhelpful thoughts: Can you change them to a helpful one?

- This mistake will be the end of my career. → *My performance today disappointed me and I think tomorrow will be better.*
- I just know that I am disappointing my supervisor. → *I'd like to learn about what my supervisor believes are areas for improvement in my performance.*
- I'm never going to excel in my program like I should. → *I am proud of myself for \_\_\_\_\_ in my program / I can, and do, excel in many things, like \_\_\_\_\_.*
- I bombed that presentation. I always mess up public speaking. → *That may not have been my best presentation, but I did \_\_\_\_\_ well and know I can do better the next chance I get to present.*
- My group members didn't like my idea; it's my fault the project isn't going well. → *I bet I can get our group together to collaborate on the project and brainstorm, so we can improve the direction of the project as a team.*

## Healthy Social Connections

### Discussion Questions:

- What are common challenges MSU community members face in forming social connections on campus?
- How can universities foster inclusive environments that encourage social connections among diverse student groups?
- How can your unit/department utilize technology and virtual formats to develop health social connections for its members and/or others?
- How might social connection activities differ after a community trauma? What considerations might be kept in mind when developing social connection opportunities?
- How can cultural differences and individual coping mechanisms be respected and accommodated in providing social connections post-trauma?
- What are opportunities for development that would provide health social connection opportunities for faculty and staff?



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