

Trauma-Informed De-escalation

Integrating Compassionate Care into
Conflict Resolution

By: Eric Davis, Allen-Davis Consulting



"A GLIMPSE INTO MY PATH"

I have gained experience in Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) through both training and practical application.

I currently operate as the Director of Programs at Crossroads Campus, an ESE in Nashville, TN.

With nearly a decade of experience, I specialize in Trauma-Informed Principles and Practices, utilizing this approach to educate and inspire others.

My passion for healing and self-regulation drives my work.

I believe in creating environments where individuals can rise above their past experiences and define and create their own story.



ERIC DAVIS, ALLEN-DAVIS CONSULTING



Overview & Key Takeaways

This session will explore the critical connection between Trauma-Informed Care and de-escalation. You'll learn how understanding and applying TIC principles can transform the way you manage conflict, particularly with those who have experienced trauma.

- **Recognizing Trauma Responses:** Identifying behavioral and emotional signs of trauma during conflicts.
- **Empathy as a De-escalation Tool:** Understanding how TIC principles are essential for de-escalation.
- **Applying TIC in Real-Time:** Using TIC principles to guide your responses during escalation, focusing on tone, language, and actions.



Part I: Recognizing Conflict & Escalation

What is Conflict?

“any workplace disagreement that disrupts the flow of work.”

“a struggle that results when one individual’s concerns are different from another person’s.”

Conflict does not occur in isolation. People bring with them their past experiences, emotions and perceptions, which all play a role in how they engage with conflict.





Recognizing Trauma Responses in Conflict

What is a Trauma Response?

- An emotional or behavioral reaction

Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn Responses:

Trauma can trigger survival instincts leading to aggressive responses (fight), avoidance (flight), shutting down (freeze) or people-pleasing (fawn)

Emotional Dysregulation

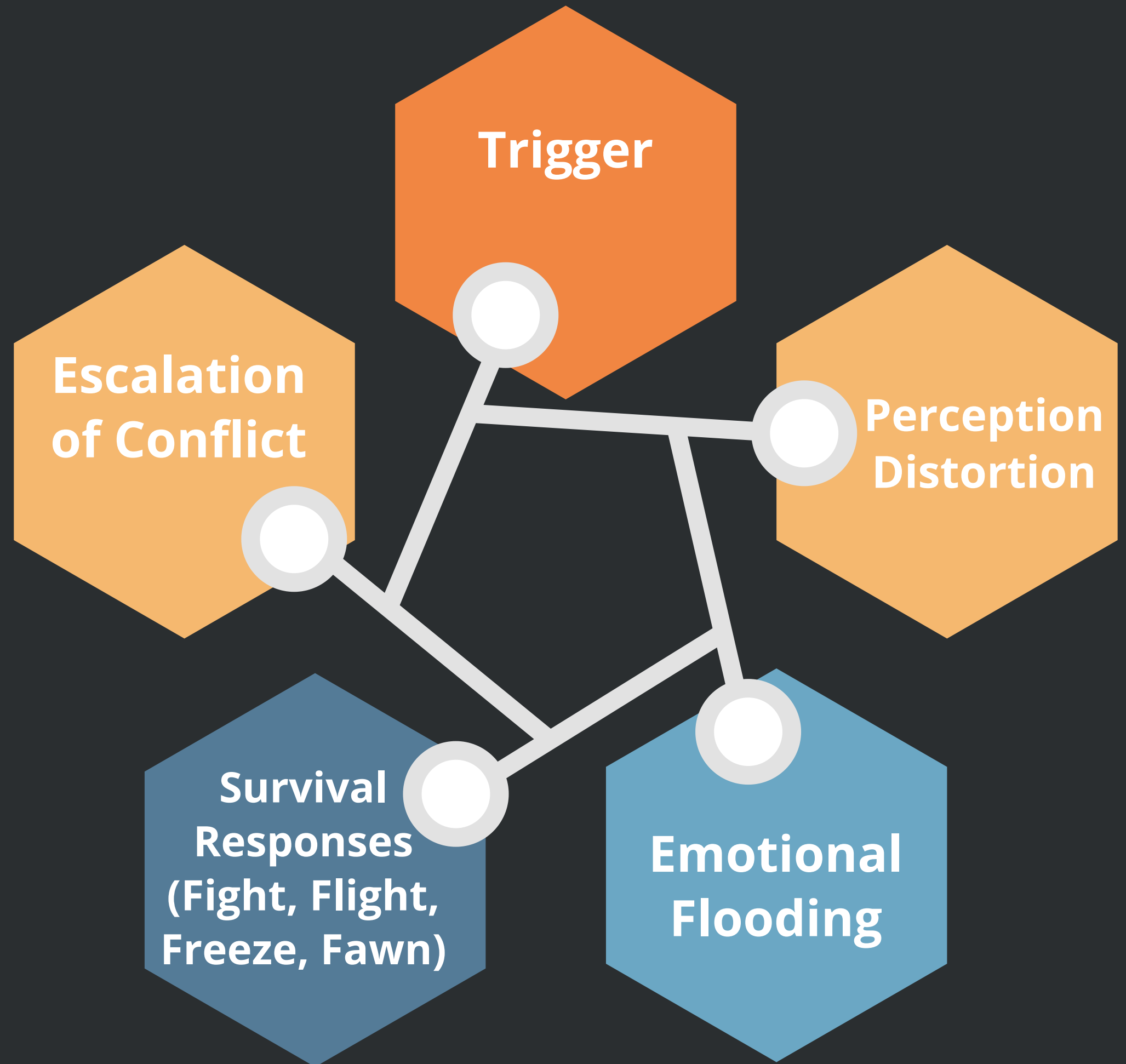
Heightened emotional reactions such as anger, fear or sadness that are often disproportionate to the situation

Hypervigilance

Individuals may be on alert, perceiving threats, even where there are none, increasing stress levels



The Escalation Process



A trigger is an event, situation or stimulus that unconsciously reminds the individual of a past traumatic experience.

↑
Trigger

**Perception
Distortion**



Once triggered, the individual's perception of the situation becomes skewed.

Occurs when the individual's emotions become overwhelming and intense, surpassing their ability to regulate or think rationally.

**Emotional
Flooding**

**Survival
Responses**



When emotions escalate and the individual feels threatened, their body automatically shifts into a survival response: fight, flight, freeze or fawn.

As the individual engages in one of the survival responses (fight, flight, freeze or Fawn), the situation often escalates into conflict.

↑
**Escalation
Conflict**

**Which part of
the escalation
process would
you find most
challenging to
manage in
real time?**

**Trigger?
Perception Distortion?
Emotional Flooding?
Survival Responses?**

Part II: Empathy as a Core De-escalation Tool



De-escalation Techniques Using Empathy

Non-verbal Communication

Using open, non-threatening body language to signal empathy and calmness.

Validating Emotions

Acknowledging what the person is feeling without minimizing or dismissing it.

Active Listening

Paying full attention to the speaker without interrupting or planning your response.

Offering Choices

Giving the person some control over the conversation by offering choices about how to proceed.

Slowing Down the Conversation

Allows the person to process their emotions and think more clearly before responding.

Overview of TIC and Its Importance in De- escalation

01

Trauma-Informed Care

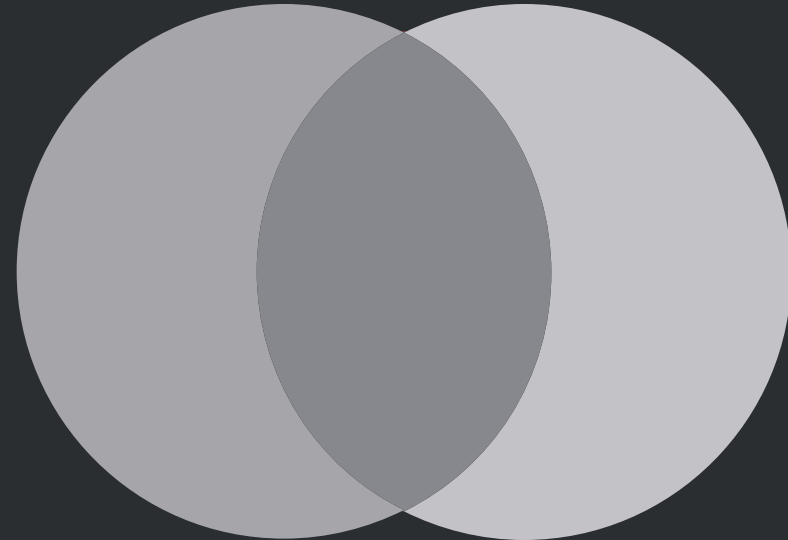
TIC is an approach that acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma and recognizes the signs and symptoms in those involved.

02

De-escalation

De-escalation refers to methods used to prevent conflicts from becoming more intense or violent.

How They Intersect



Shared Goals

Both TIC and de-escalation emphasize safety, trust-building and emotional regulation.

Empathy & Understanding

Both approaches require a deep understanding of the individual's emotional state and triggers, aiming to avoid retraumatization.

Communicating Techniques

De-escalation methods, such as active listening and non-confrontational language, are core to TIC in maintaining a respectful and safe environment.

Six Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Care





Applying Safety in De-escalation

Safety is the first TIC principle and the foundation of de-escalation. It means both physical and emotional safety.

De-escalation Technique: When someone is upset, acknowledge their feelings and offer them time to gather themselves before continuing.

Trust is built when we are transparent and consistent. Trustworthiness reduces fear and uncertainty.

De-escalation Technique: Use clear, non-threatening language. Always explain why you're taking certain actions.



Trustworthiness & Transparency in De-escalation

Peer Support & De-escalation



Peers who have similar experiences can offer support that staff might not be able to.

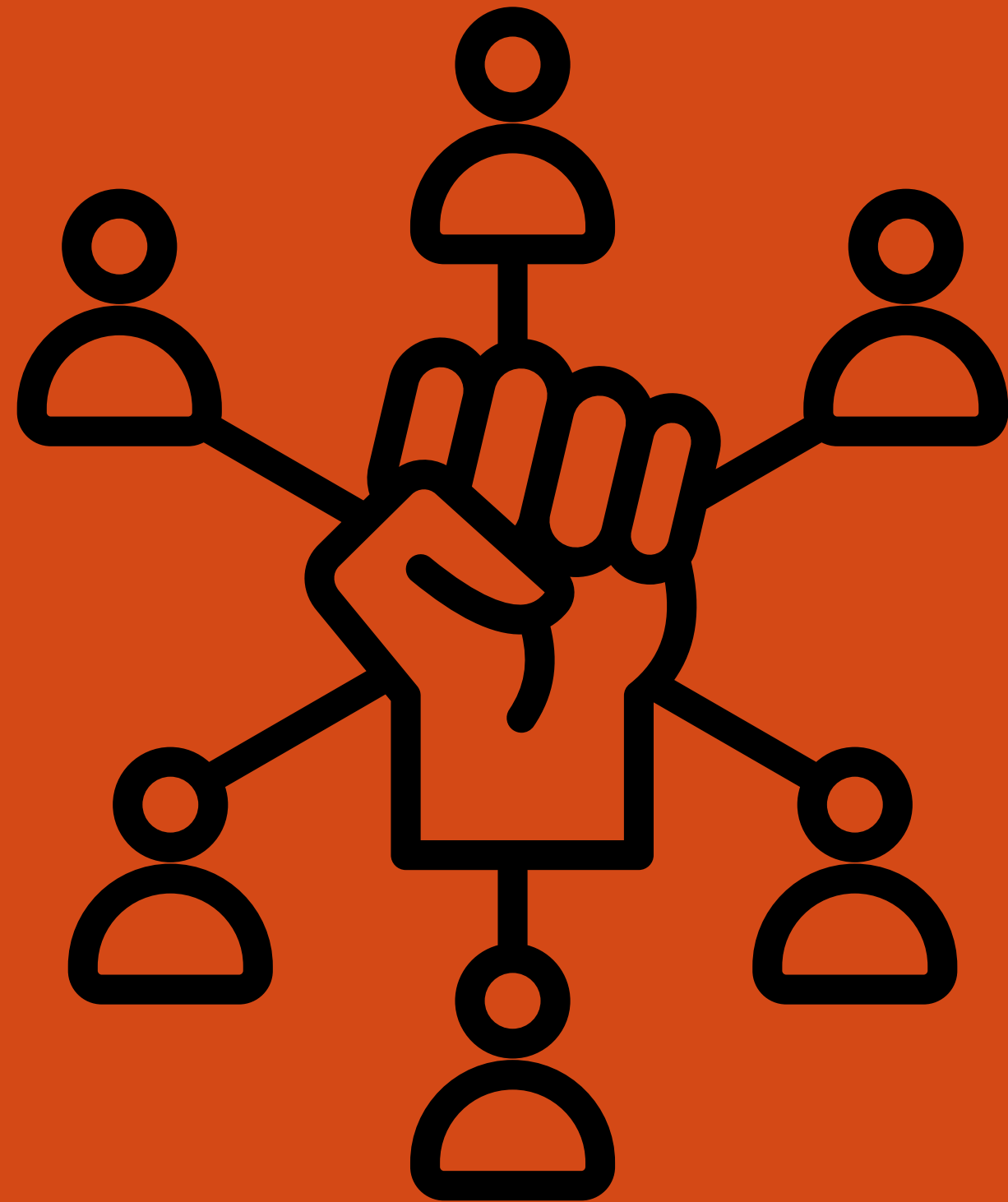
De-escalation Technique: Encourage a peer to mediate or provide emotional support if appropriate.

Collaboration & Mutuality in De-escalation

Working together creates a shared sense of ownership in resolving the issue.

De-escalation Technique: Invite the person to share their perspective and collaborate on the resolution.

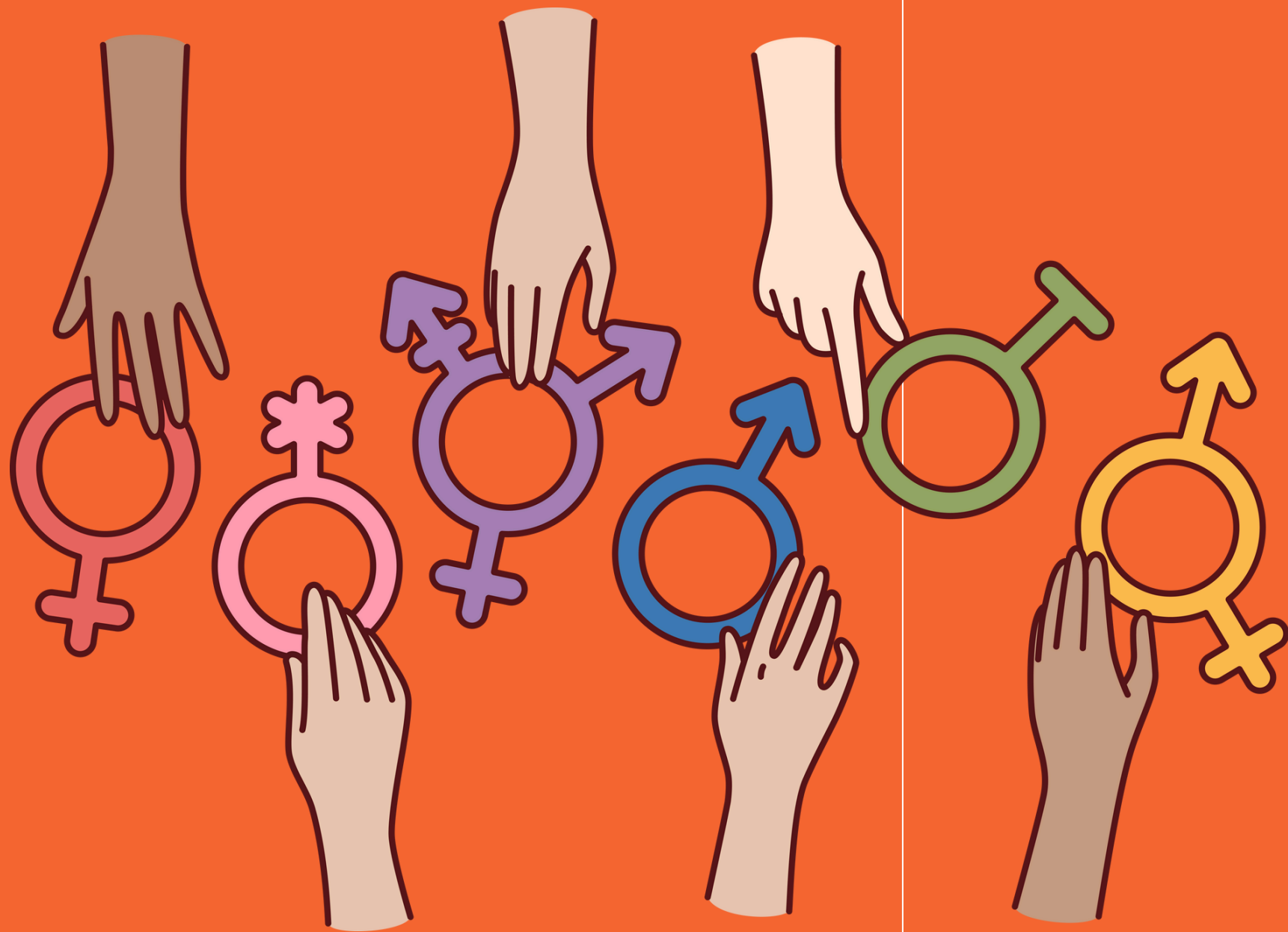




Empowerment, Voice & Choice in De-escalation

Empowering people by giving them voice and choice can de-escalate conflicts by making them feel more in control.

De-escalation Technique: Instead of dictating terms, ask for their input on the solution.



Cultural sensitivity helps us avoid misunderstandings that might escalate into conflicts.

De-escalation Technique: Acknowledge cultural differences and avoid assuming that your perspective is the same as theirs.

Cultural, Historical & Gender Sensitivity in De-escalation

Part III: Case Study - Understanding the Escalation Process through a Trauma-Informed Lens

1

*Join Your Breakout
Rooms*

2

Review Case Study

3

*Complete
Worksheet*

Case Study: Jordan's Workplace Conflict

Jordan is a new employee in a social enterprise program that helps individuals who have experienced homelessness transition into the workforce. Jordan has a history of trauma related to unstable housing and authority figures, which makes it difficult for them to trust supervisors.

Recently, Jordan missed several important deadlines, delaying a critical project. Their supervisor, Alex, calls Jordan into a performance review to discuss the issue. During the meeting, Alex gives feedback about Jordan's missed deadlines. Jordan immediately becomes defensive, raising their voice and saying, "You don't care about what I'm going through! I'm doing the best I can, but you're just here to criticize me." Jordan begins to tear up, and the conversation becomes tense.

Key Takeaways from Today's Session



Key Reflections

Conflict Does Not Happen in a Vacuum!

People's past experiences, emotions and perceptions influence their engagement with conflict.

Trauma Responses are Emotional or Behavioral reactions.

Emotional Dysregulation, Fight, Flight, Freeze or Fawn and Hypervigilance



Key Reflections

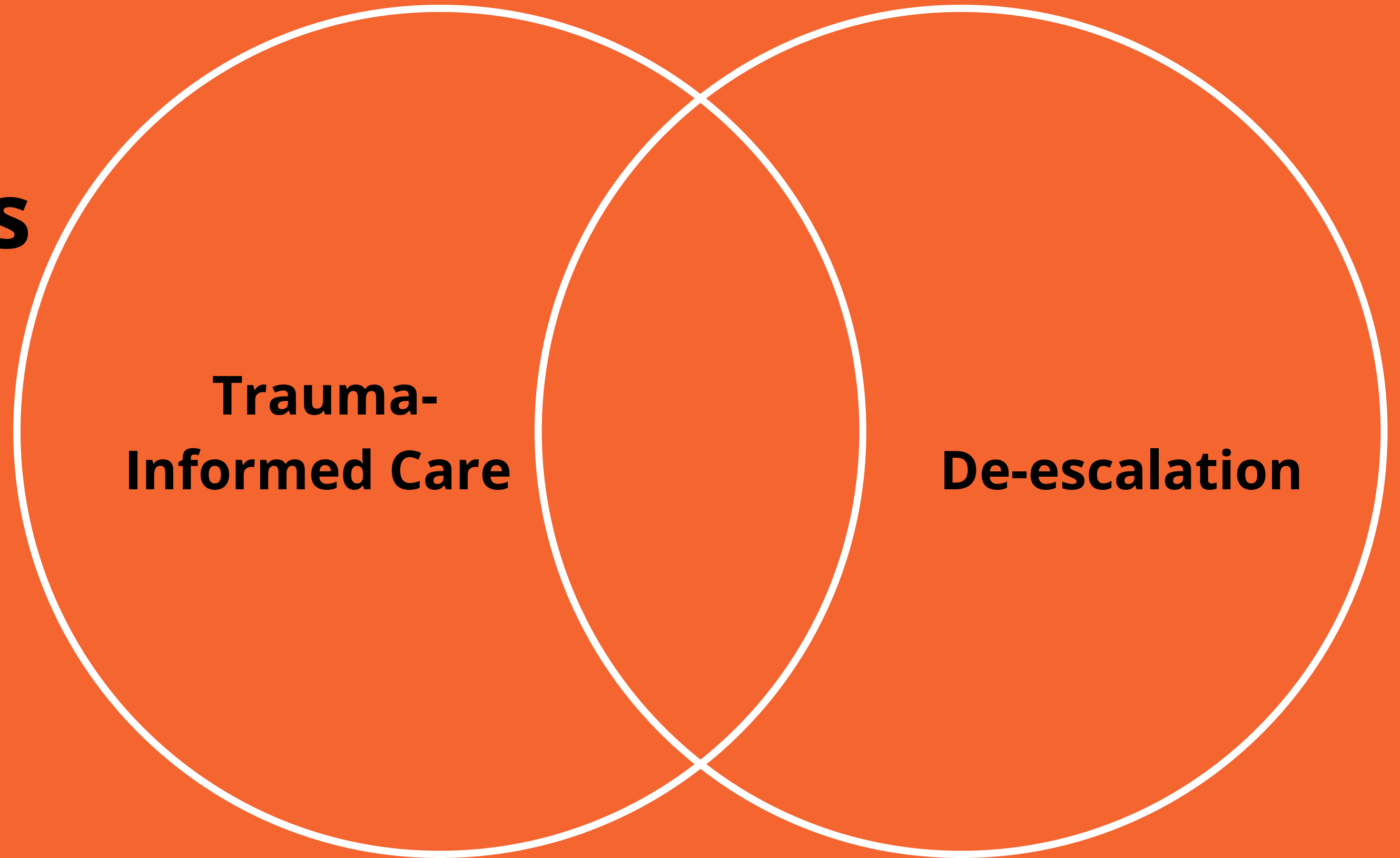
Predictable Path from a Trigger to a Reaction

Trigger, Perception Distortion,
Emotional Flooding, Survival
Responses and Escalation Conflict

Empathy Drives Connection

Applied Empathy as a Core
De-escalation Tool

Key Reflections



**"What is one
takeaway from
today's session
that you can
start applying
right away in
your role?"**

Final Reflection: Applying What
You've Learned & Questions

"Empathy is simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'You're not alone.'"

Brene Brown

Eric Davis

Thank You!

Allen-Davis Consulting,
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OUR SERVICES

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