

**Providing  
Trauma-  
Informed  
Support as a  
Title IX Advisor**



# Introduction

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- Licensed Psychologist
- Research & Clinical Experience:
  - Impact of trauma in college students, positive psychology & post-traumatic growth
  - Young adult development, working with survivors of sexual abuse and intimate partner violence, LGBTQ issues, relationship concerns & anxiety

# Session Overview

## Why is trauma-informed support important for Title IX Advisors to understand?

- Others participating in the Title IX process are to remain neutral, impartial
- You will be there during the most stressful and potentially re-traumatizing steps of the process
- You may be the only person who knows the details of the case other than the Title IX personnel

### Topics

- Trauma & Trauma- Informed Approaches
- Recognizing Personal Bias
- Empathy
- Active Listening
- Validation
- Trust
- De-escalation
- Empowerment

# Introduction to Trauma



# What is Trauma?

## Definition of Trauma

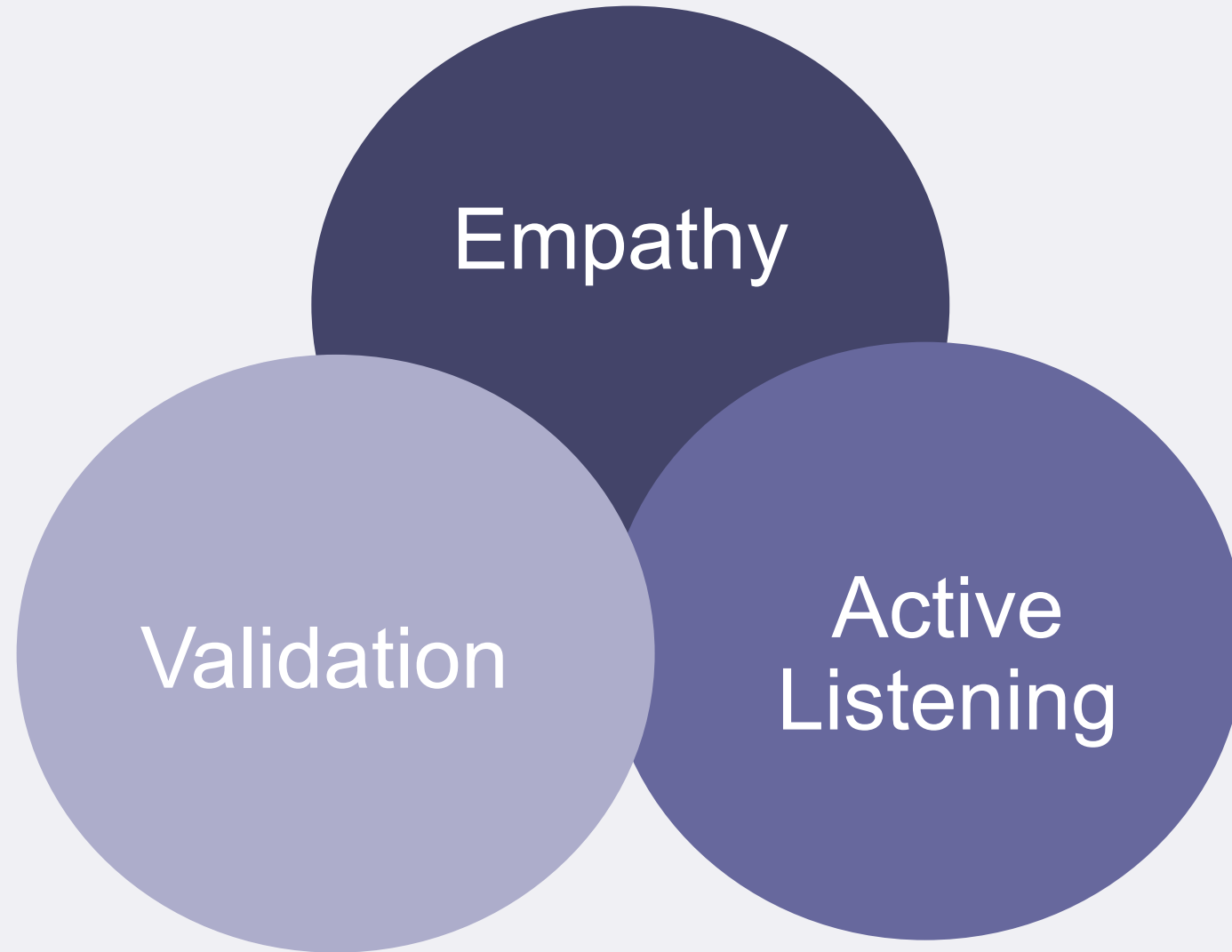
- Subjective; real or perceived threat; manifests differently in each person

## Consider your Party's Experiences

- One or both parties may have already experienced trauma
  - Prior to the incident (childhood experiences, family history, collective memory, etc.);
  - During the incident;
  - As a result of being accused of the alleged incident; or
  - Through a combination of these experiences.
- One or both parties may be currently experiencing trauma during the Title IX grievance process

## Healing Comes from Empowerment

# Foundations of a Trauma Informed Approach

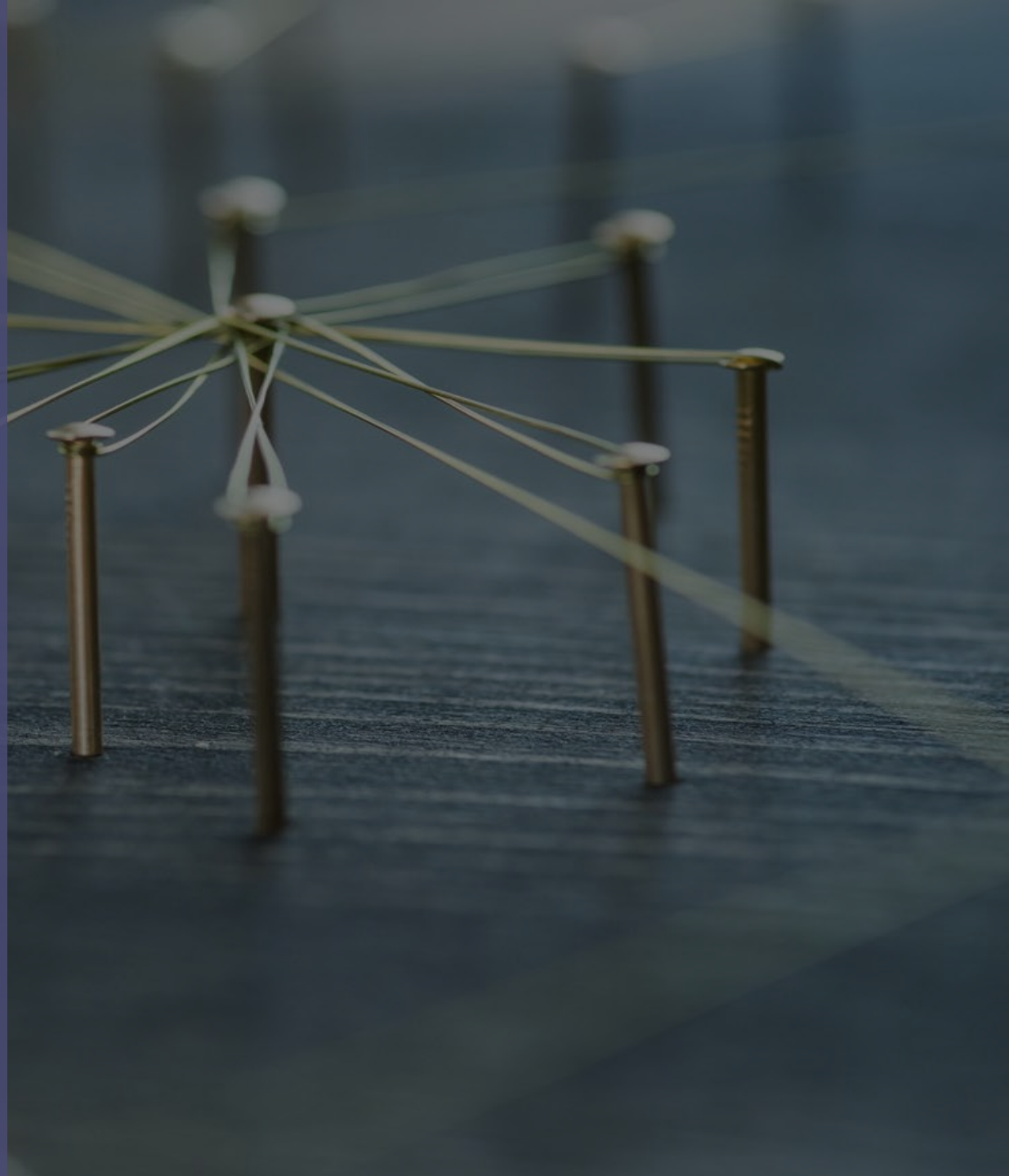


# Recognizing Personal Bias

## Is personal bias affecting your ability to connect with your party?

- Bias versus Conflict of Interest
- Introspection (Implicit Bias Tests)
- Having implicit bias does **not** make you a bad person. However, managing it will make you a better advisor.
  - When should you recuse yourself from a case because you are unable to overcome personal bias?
- What does the information at hand cause you to believe about those involved? Why?

# Trauma Informed Communication





# Empathy

## What is Empathy?

- Empathy versus Sympathy

## Focus on the Party & their Needs

- Refrain from sharing own stories & experiences
- Create an open space for them to talk (no judgement)
- Aim to understand your party's perspective

## Keep a Healthy Emotional Distance

- Self-care is important
- Boundaries are okay
- Direct your party to campus resources that can also provide support

# Active Listening

## What is Active Listening?

- *A way of listening & responding to another person that improves mutual understanding (U.S. Institute of Peace)*
- Genuine interest in understanding the party's perspective

## Strategies to Consider

- Pay attention & Avoid Distractions (no phones, knocks on door, etc.)
- Practice patience & Let them share their story, concerns, questions
  - Ask open-ended questions (“Can you tell me more...”)
  - Allow plenty of time for answers
  - Provide feedback & request clarification when the party is finished speaking

# Active Listening

## Non-Verbal Communication

- Comfortable, open & calm demeanor
  - Your demeanor & body language will affect their demeanor
- Calm, reassuring tones
- Consider the meeting environment & their comfort
  - If in-person consider comfortable seating, tissues, water, etc.
  - If virtual, ask if they would be more comfortable with a phone or video call

## Be Careful

- Avoid starting the conversation with the intention of “solving a problem”
  - Listening is critical
- Avoid providing unsolicited advice
  - Encourage them to ask for what they need & provide them with the opportunity to do so

# Validation

## What is Validation?

- Acknowledging that a person's emotions, thoughts & behaviors have causes and are understandable
- Communicate understanding
- Listen without judgement

## After the party is finished speaking:

- Repeat or summarize the information they have shared
- Ask clarifying questions, if necessary
  - “Would you mind clarifying for me...”
- Validation does not have to be synonymous with agreement

# Trust

## Establishing trust with your party

- Validation, empathy & active listening have the potential to help advisors create a trusting, collaborative relationship with your party

## Benefits of establishing trust may:

- Minimize the trauma experienced during the Title IX process
- Assist your party in staying calm during Title IX proceedings
- Help your party participate more confidently in Title IX interviews or hearings



# De-Escalation

## Confrontation is Possible

- Title IX processes may be intense, and emotions may run high
- Confrontation may occur between your party & the other party, the other party's advisor, you, or any combination thereof.

## Strategies for De-escalation

- Keep personal emotions in check
- Create physical space
- Allow for silence & patience for decisions
- Practice validation, active listening & empathy

# Promoting Empowerment



# Empowerment

**What could empowerment look like for your party?**

**Why & how does empowerment help heal trauma?**

- Importance of choice

**How can you, as a Title IX Advisor, identify resources to help empower your party?**

**What may your party consider to be possible obstacles to empowerment? How may you address them?**



# Tools for Empowering a Party



## Ask the party:

- How are you feeling?
- Do you feel safe?
- How can I help you feel safer?
- What do you need right now?
- What do you need throughout the duration of the Title IX process?
- How do you feel about participating in the Title IX process?
- What steps of the Title IX process concern you?



## As the advisor, remember:

- Validation
- Active Listening
- How can you best support your party & address their needs?

# Decrease Dependence



## Importance of Choice

- Provide your party with choices & the space to make their own decisions
- Be consistent with allowing them to make decisions
- Allow for silences & be patient
- Step in to provide guidance or clarify choices, if asked

**Up Next**

**Scenarios & Commonly  
Asked Questions**