

Essential Tools for Support and Stability

Worker Resource Kit



AIDS Bereavement and Resiliency Program of Ontario
Presence. Compassion. Change.

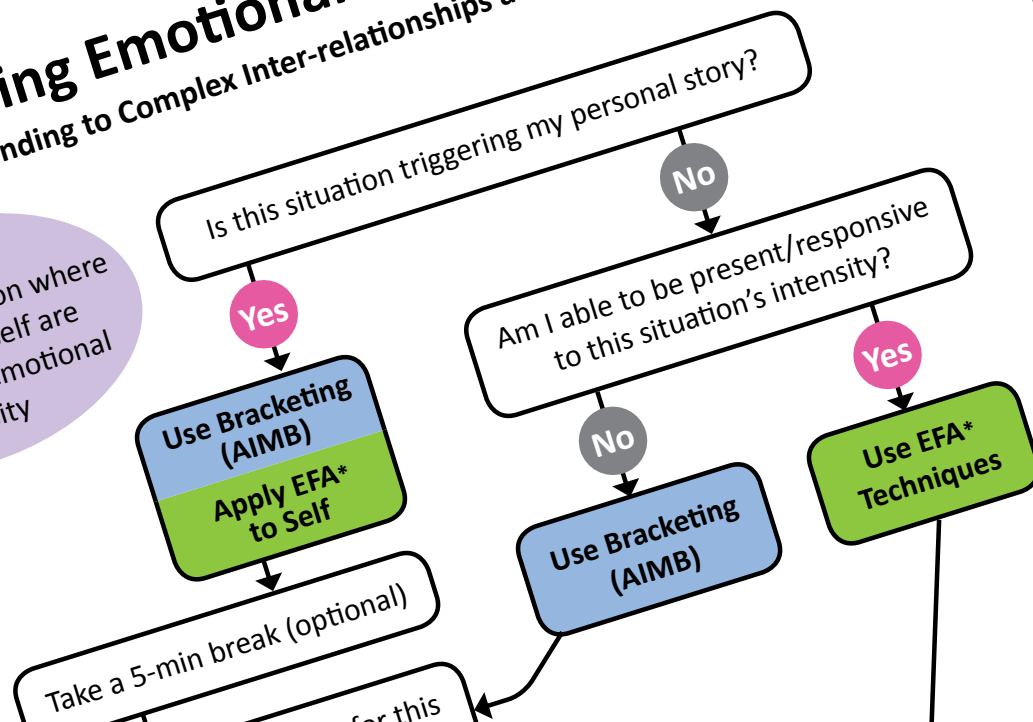
Emotional Wheel



Navigating Emotional Triggers at Work

Responding to Complex Inter-relationships and Situations

Situation:
Event or interaction where others or myself are experiencing emotional intensity





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Introduction

The original resource, *Essential Tools for Support and Stability*, was created by the AIDS Bereavement and Resiliency Program of Ontario (ABRPO) as part of its Turning to One Another (TTOA) project. Initiated in 2009, TTOA aims to enhance the capacity of AIDS service organizations to build effective working relationships between their staff and people living with HIV/AIDS fulfilling multiple roles. The ‘Essential Tools’ were identified based on the peer facilitation manual called Presence: Self-awareness and the Emotional Dimension.

This *Worker Resource Kit, Essential Tools for Support and Stability*, is an expansion of the ABRPO’s document, and includes a visual overview tool, Navigating Emotional Triggers at Work.

The original Navigating Emotional Triggers (NET) visual tool was co-created by ABRPO, and the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO) and the MSAFIRI Post-Migration Health Study¹. Materials and practices which are contained in the ABRPO Peer Engagement Training Part A Manual (<http://abrpo.org/program/turn-to-one-another/>) were identified by MSAFIRI Study Peer Researchers² as too difficult to remember in the pressure of an emotionally charged situation. They suggested that a more concise and user-friendly resource be created to support the direct application of the practices.

The *Worker Resource Kit* can be used by people in paid or unpaid roles where they share an aspect of identity with those whom they work, including in peer worker, peer support, and/or group facilitation roles.

It can be downloaded from ABRPO (www.abrpo.org), ACCHO (www.accho.ca) or SAGE (www.sagecollection.ca).

May, 2016

¹“Understanding HIV infection among African, Caribbean and Black people after arrival in Canada” is a research project initiated by the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and Women’s Health in Women’s Hands Community Health Centre.”

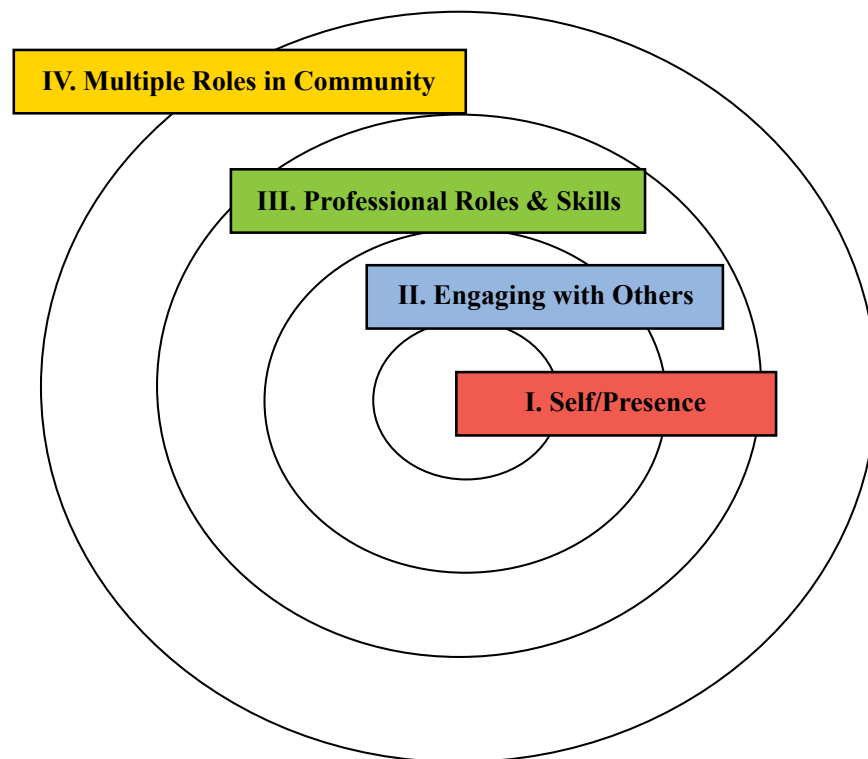
²MSAFIRI Peer Researchers Training, January, 2015

Relating to Myself at Multiple Levels

Expanded roles in community often mean that through employment or volunteer work, a person is regularly relating with people who share their challenging, and sometimes, painful stories.

This can impact a person's sense of well-being because these relationships can:

- Open a person to other people's stories which include loss, trauma and ongoing changes.
- Expand their human community to include these individuals in some way.
- Create ripples and/or triggers through a person's own life story.



Assessing the Levels of Impact

Level I: Self/Presence – Noticing what impacts my core sense of self-worth and confidence.

Level II: Engaging with Others – Noticing the quality of my relationships through the presence of honesty, mutual respect, empathy, problem-solving and capacity to manage clearing and conflict resolution.

Level III: Professional Roles & Skills – Noticing my own and others' perception of my role and the various skills that I use to respond to interactions and achieve objectives.

Level IV: Multiple Roles in Community – Noticing what helps me to respond appropriately to acknowledge and affirm my multiple roles in community.

Essential Tool: Self-awareness

Which emotions are impacting me? Impacting others?

The image below was developed as a companion to the Peer Facilitator Training Manual Part B: Presence, where Susan Aaron's principles of psycho-dramatic bodywork are summarized on pages 25-36.

By increasing people's self-awareness of how they experience the primary emotional states, their capacity to identify and articulate the emotion(s) they are feeling is strengthened. The main categories of emotion are Joy, Anger, Sadness and Fear. The range of emotional states, such as from mildly anxious to panicked, communicate the message of a particular emotion. The goal of maintaining stability is to be in healthy dialogue with the messages that our emotions communicate, rather than suppressing them.

Emotional Wheel



Essential Tool: Bracketing

Bracketing is a process where a person notices an issue that is contributing to feelings of sadness, fear or anger, and they temporarily put aside the issue, so that they can pay attention to the present situation.

It is important that we recognize and take care of these 'emotional triggers'. We must have the intention of returning to remove the brackets (unbracket), which means that we then experience our own feelings and reactions at a time that is more suitable, convenient or appropriate. The stages below describe the behaviours, which are abbreviated to help to remember them: Acknowledge, Identify/Internal, Make, Breathe (AIMB).

1. **A**cknowledge that there is an issue that needs bracketing. "I am feeling sad/angry/etc. at what I am hearing..."
2. **I**dentify what part of your own story is being triggered. "This is reminding me about..."
3. Continue **I**nternal Dialogue – "I am not going to relate to this experience right now; I will remain focused on the person in front of me."
4. **M**ake a contract with yourself to later remove the brackets and access personal supports (informal or formal). "When can I look at these feelings and what or who will support me to do that?"
5. **B**reathe, bend your knees, look around!

Practices that I might use to help me bracket (i.e., remove a piece of jewelry):

Essential Tool: Emotional First Aid

Emotional First Aid (EFA) is a series of supportive techniques for being with someone who is experiencing the spontaneous release of sadness, anger or fear.

These techniques enable us to support someone through the natural release of their emotions. The techniques come from Sean Haldane's book, *Emotional First Aid*, and are natural and intuitive responses to care for another human being. Unfortunately, we have often been socialized away from these instinctive responses and need to be reminded of their usefulness.

1. Supportive techniques include reassuring people:
 - that the **emotional expression they are experiencing is natural and normal**,
 - that we are comfortable being with them through this process.
2. The condition of support is this: **do not try to help a person to express an emotion that you yourself are not able to express comfortably.**
3. Basically we have a short-term contract with the person: **we want to support them through this emotional expression process** without deepening the experience.
4. It is non-judgmental peer support. **We offer acceptance and permission with our words, gestures, facial expressions and touch (with permission).**
5. The peer providing the support has responsibility to both the person receiving the aid, and to the environment, **keeping both the person and those around feeling safe.**
6. **There is no attempt in Emotional First Aid to deepen the emotions, to give advice or to direct someone.**

There is a major difference between EFA and therapeutic facilitation (which works on a clear and defined contract, either short- or long-term, which involves a mandate to redirect, deepen, initiate, prohibit, facilitate or give advice). Therapists and facilitators have education, training, personal therapy and supervision that enables them to work with someone else's issues and stay grounded and clear.

7. **Bracketing is a crucial skill to develop** before administering Emotional First Aid. Being close to someone who is having big emotions can often be triggering.
8. **Get support** for yourself to **unbracket and debrief** the experience, either informally or formally.

Essential Tool :

Communication Core Competency

The skill of self-awareness is applied in communication by the following four steps which are 'nested', meaning that each builds on the previous. Each step promotes authenticity in our words in order to support competent communication of personal experience into relating with others. This creates greater visibility of our whole self as we relate with others and strengthens the integrity of relating within groups. Each step is based in taking ownership for our own experience and perception of a situation by using *I-statements*.

1. One's capacity to be aware of one's own inner experiences as they relate to reality beyond oneself.

"I am aware of what is going on for me – at all levels – as I relate to this situation."

2. One's willingness to risk expressing one's awareness to others.

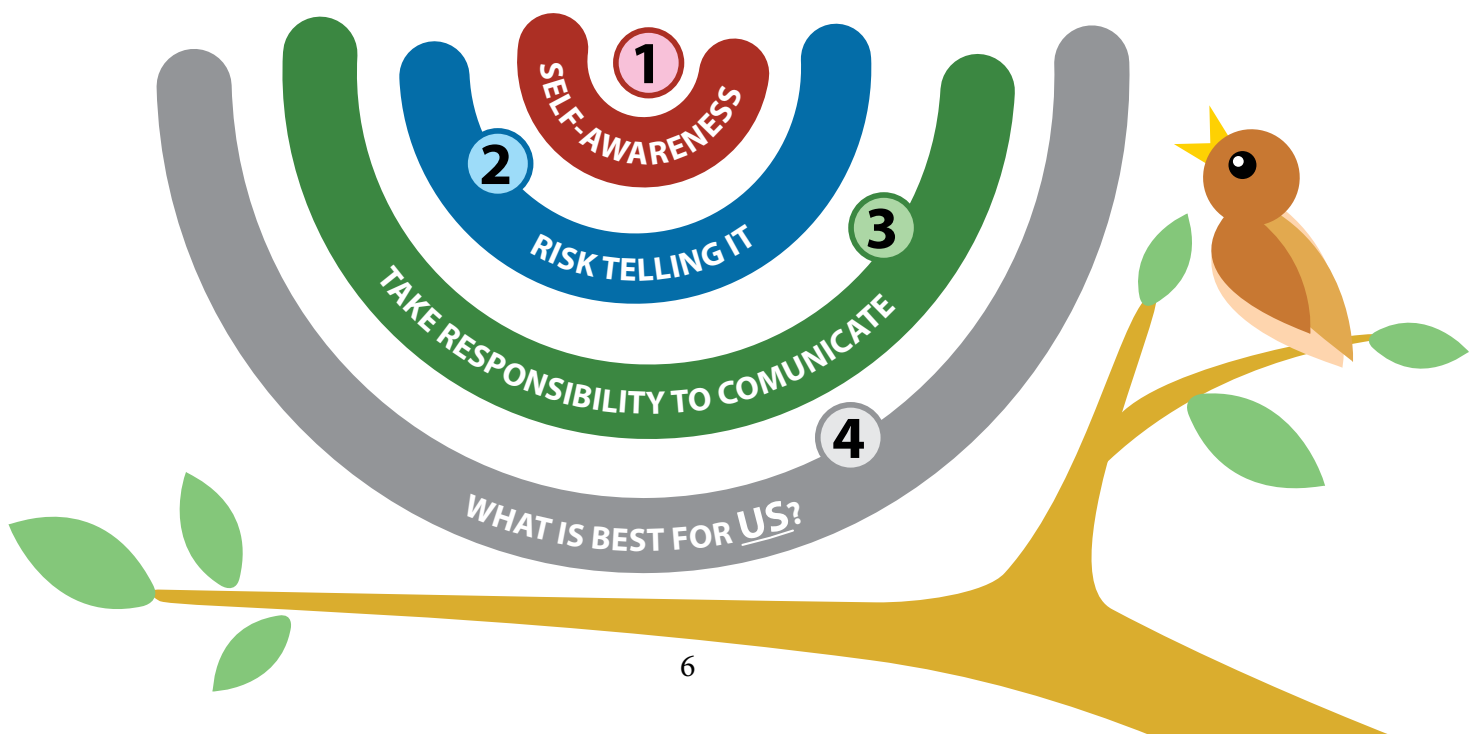
"I am able to risk telling it like it is."

3. The skill to express oneself without discounting the other person, blocking communication or harming the relationships.

"I have solid communication skills that enable me to speak with deep honesty AND remain connected to others."

4. A willingness to use one's voice to help the group interpret the meaning of events in a way that creates alignment on objectives and strategies, and helps build mutual trust and cooperation.

"I can see how the various elements in this conversation can be linked to the overall work we are doing as an agency. The differences can help us be stronger and more effective."

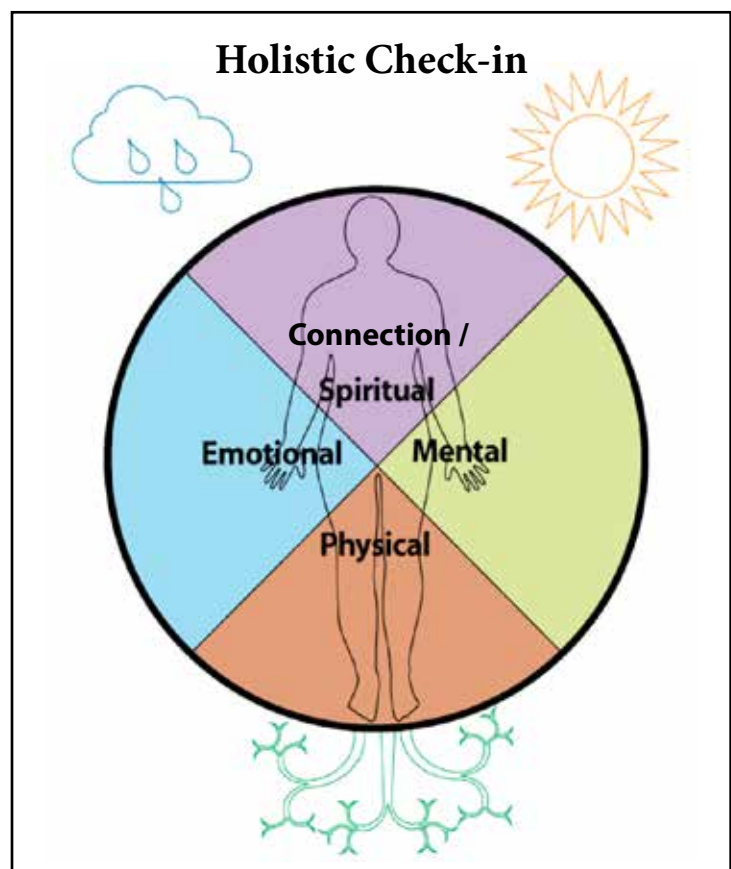


Essential Tool: Debriefing

Debriefing is a process when a person is supported to reflect on what has happened for them in relation to a particular situation or period of time. It is a safe container where a person can experience their own feelings and reactions, without judgement, in order to make sense of current challenges.

Two essential tasks:

1. Build your individual capacity for **noticing and responding to the personal impact of your work from a holistic perspective**. This means checking in with yourself about what you are experiencing in your physical, mental, emotional, connection/spiritual.
 - How am I doing?
 - Am I noticing any changes in any quadrant?
2. Establish options for two levels of debriefing, where you speak in advance with someone about the role you would like them to play and you develop a mutual understanding with that person about a process that works for both of you, such as 30 minutes on the phone or 1 hour in person.
 - a) **Informal Debriefing** is when you want to talk about a situation and have someone doing active listening and support. It can be with peers or friends.
 - b) **Formal Debriefing** is when you want to explore your current experiences more deeply, with someone who can support you in your emotions and difficult questions. It can be with a supervisor, counsellor or mentor.



Debriefing Guide:

Looking out for ourselves and each other

1 Assessment - It is important to listen carefully and to notice:

a) When do you need to debrief?

- After workplace interactions (group or one-on-one), notice any impact on you personally, triggers and/or to update your own story.
- Repeating or replaying situations in your mind.
- Anxious feelings, feeling ungrounded or not present.

b) When does another person need debriefing?

- Telling big stories, seems emotionally charged.
- Not paying attention or seems distracted.
- Seems not themselves or high tone of voice.

2 Structure for Debriefing:

- Find a quiet setting for a committed amount of time for debriefing.
- Remember to help someone to use *I-statements* to describe their own direct experience rather than getting lost in the details of situations.
- Help the person to connect to and express what they are feeling (such as sadness, anger, fear).
- Apply the practices of Emotional First Aid.

- Use reflective listening (“I hear a lot of frustration in your voice”) to make sure that the person feels validated and that you are understanding them clearly.
- Stay clear in offering support for the person to increase their own awareness of how a situation is impacting them, not problem solving or going into your own debriefing process.

Questions to ask in debriefing time:

a) Can we start with getting grounded?

Take at least three deep breaths with long exhales and have feet on the floor.

b) How are you doing in relation to recent events? (Holistic Check-in)

- Physically
- Emotionally (Use reflective listening & EFA to acknowledge distinct emotions)
- Mentally
- Spiritually / Sense of Connection

c) How do you/have you taken care of yourself in this type of situation?

d) Does this remind of any similar situations in your past?

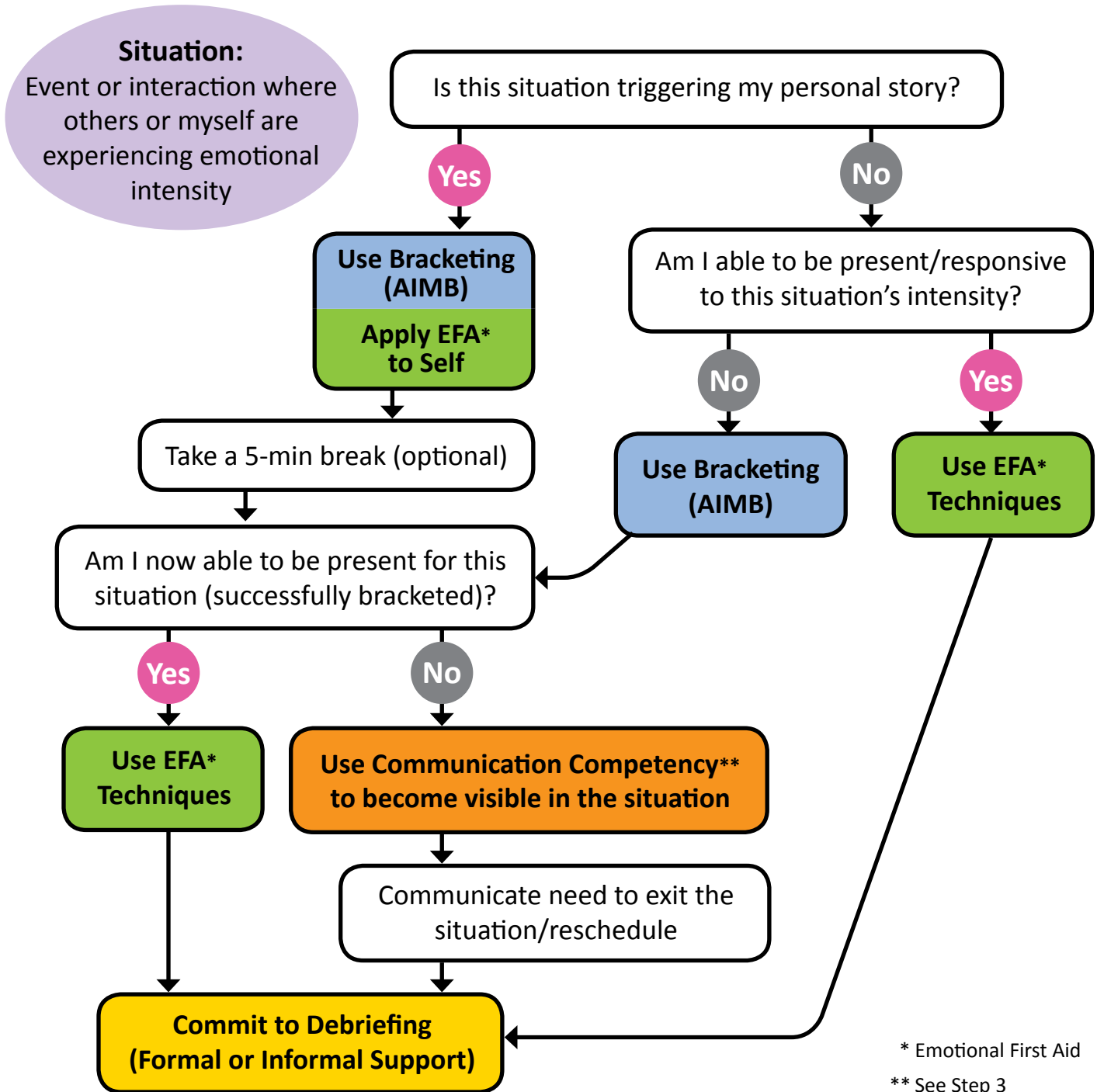
e) Is there any other support you might need?

Any next steps?

Further informal or formal debriefing support?

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Adapted from the original Navigating Emotional Triggers visual tool, co-created with MSAFIRI Post-Migration Health Study partners.

Steps of Bracketing - Bookmark (Front side)

STEPS OF BRACKETING

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Identify what part of your own story is being triggered.

Make a contract with yourself to later remove the brackets and access personal (formal) of informal support.

Breathe, bend your knees, look around!

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