

**ACWS**

Alberta Council of  
Women's Shelters



**Level 1:  
Foundations**

**Case Management  
Foundations Workbook  
Module 3**

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## Introduction

Welcome to Case Management Foundations Module 3.

Use this Workbook to capture your thoughts, reflections, ideas, or insights as you go through the eLearning module.

## Acknowledgements

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) wishes to acknowledge the traditional territories on which we live, work and play. We recognize that all Albertans are Treaty people and have a responsibility to understand our history so that we can honour the past, be aware of the present, and create a just and caring future.

We honour the courage and strength of Indigenous women. We honour them as life givers and caregivers as we honour and learn from their continuing achievements, their consistent strength, and their remarkable endurance.

We acknowledge that this course, Case Management Foundations, was created on Treaty 6, 7, and 8 lands, as well as the six Métis regions of Alberta. We dedicate this education to all the women and families who inspire us with their courage, strength, resilience, and kindness. We thank the many individuals whose work, input, and expertise have contributed to its development.

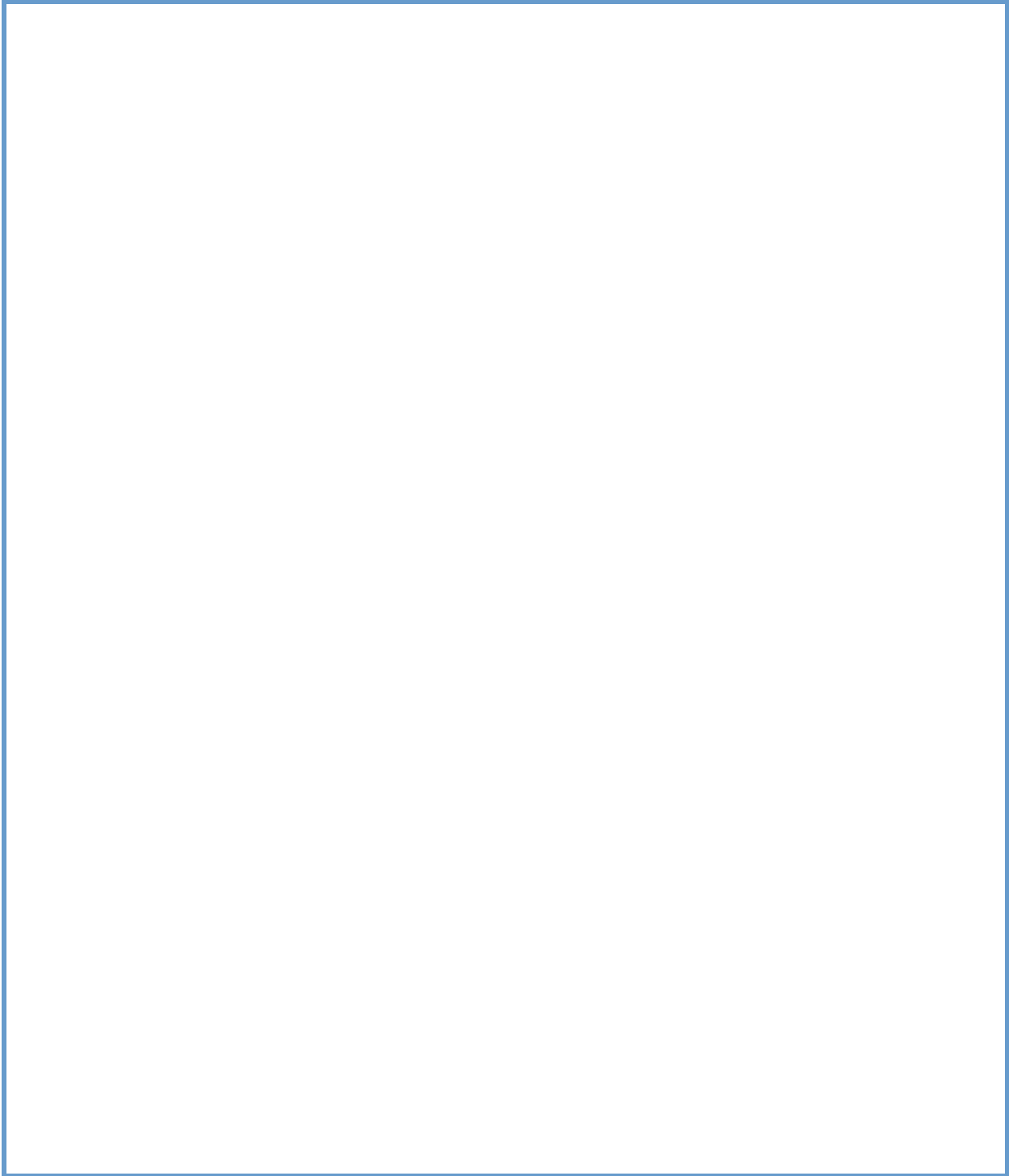
ACWS benefits from the wisdom, expertise, and innovation of our members across Alberta, who provide front-line support to individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse. This project could not be completed without their generous support and knowledge-sharing. Case Management is an evolving practice and the ongoing input and feedback from ACWS members, both individually and collectively, has made and will continue to make this course relevant for, reflective of, and responsive to the Alberta context of domestic abuse shelter practice. Special thanks to Stepping Stones Crisis Society for providing specific exercise content for this course.

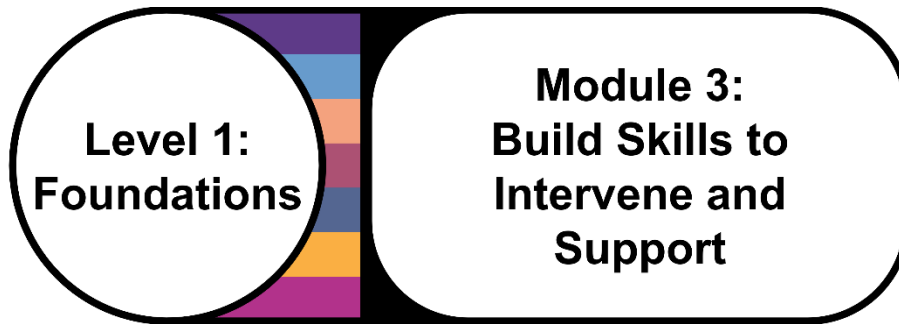
We would also like to acknowledge that this educational offering is made possible with funding and partnership from the Government of Canada under the Community Services Recovery Fund, and from the Ministry of Children and Family Services.



Questions, ideas or suggestions? Contact [learning@acws.ca](mailto:learning@acws.ca)

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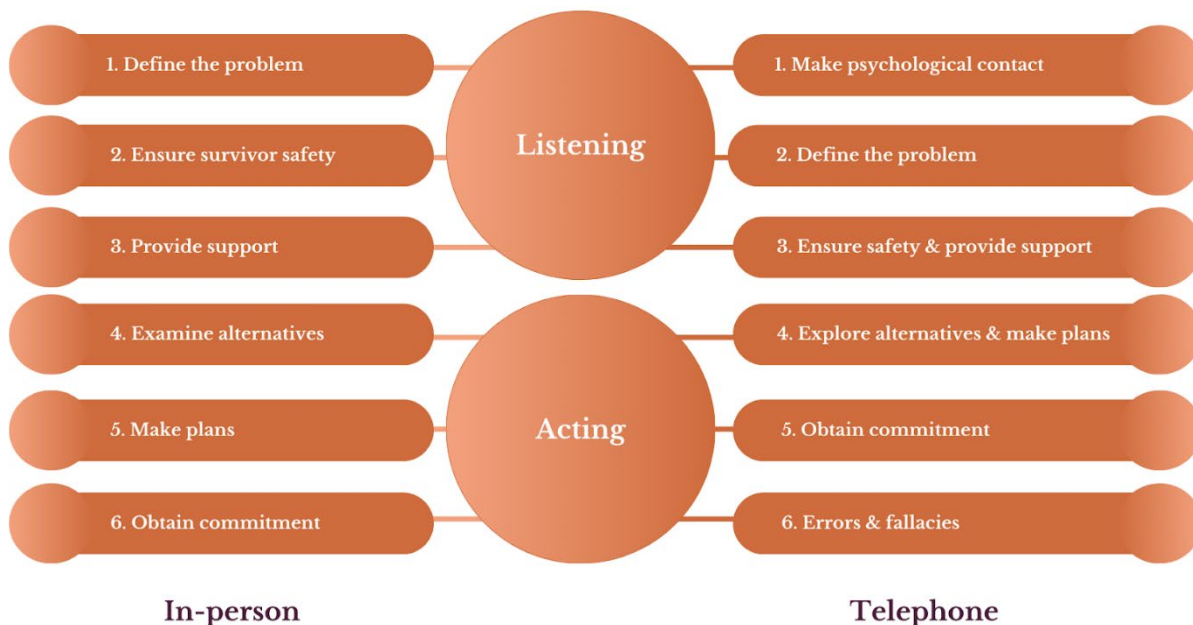


## Module 3: Build Skills to Intervene and Support

### Lesson 1: Frame your learning

#### James's six-step model of crisis intervention

Dr. Richard James of the University of Memphis has developed a validated, highly effective six-step model of crisis intervention (2008). It is widely recognized for its practicality, comprehensiveness, and ability to empower both individuals in distress and the support workers.



Although the model is linear, survivors move forward and back as you work with them. Keep in mind what stage the survivor is demonstrating a willingness to adapt so you can respond appropriately.

As a Case Manager, it's critical that you allow for flexibility within this process. You must also remain attuned to the survivor to ensure she is leading and afforded the opportunity to identify relevant supports. Offer all available resources and let her choose.



**Crisis Intervention** is a term used commonly within the gender-based violence sector; however, it can be stigmatizing as it implies that the survivor is “out of control” or not managing or coping well.

While you may utilize a model of crisis intervention to guide your practice, it's important to avoid labelling survivors as "in crisis." Instead, consider saying "working to regulate emotions" or "navigating significant stressors".

This approach validates the responses and reinforces that they are natural reactions to unnatural situations or experiences. This intentional language helps shift the focus from the survivor to the abuser and holds the abuser accountable for the violence and abuse. Acknowledge that whatever the survivor has done to cope or manage has been adaptive and necessary for survival. Reinforce her strength at every opportunity.

## Lesson 2: Assessment

Assessment is **primary, intentional, fluid, and ongoing**.

When we conduct assessments in crisis intervention, we gather a variety of information:

1. Severity of the situation
2. Survivor's current emotions
3. Survivor's ability to cope
4. Survivor's available support systems
5. Survivor's level of danger from the abuser
6. Survivor's level of danger to herself and others

**Safety** is our number one priority.

- If there is a **risk of lethality** or an **immediate safety concern**, you may need to collaborate with other professionals such as the police or Child and Family Services.
- You also need to assess the survivor for **physical injuries** and ensure she receives appropriate treatment and care.
- Don't forget to watch for **signs of injury that may not be physical**. For example, cognitive or behavioural symptoms of head injury or strangulation.



It is equally critical to monitor yourself to maintain professionalism and operate within the scope of your role as a Case Manager.



## The ABCs of assessment

Throughout the six steps of intervention, we evaluate how survivors **feel, behave, and think** so we can provide appropriate support and assistance to them.

### *Affective state*

Common signs for survivors in crisis include heightened anxiety, fear, sadness, confusion, and feelings of helplessness.

You can support them to regain control and emotional regulation by encouraging them to notice any physical sensations and express their feelings. Validate whatever the survivor is feeling as there is no right or wrong, negative or positive emotion.

### *Behavioural functioning*

Observe the survivor's actions and ask about what she is doing. Do not make assumptions about her behaviours; invite her to tell you about her behaviours and feelings. You may indicate what you are noticing and seek confirmation from the survivor.

Encourage accessible, positive actions to help the survivor regain a sense of control and stability. Walking while talking or taking breaks to engage in a grounding activity can be helpful. Remember to draw on the survivor's past experiences and build on her strengths. Ask how she has navigated difficult situations in the past.

### *Cognitive state*

Pay attention to the survivor's thought patterns. Is she focused on the present? Can she express her feelings and needs? Is she able to remember details, process information, and make decisions?

## Additional strategies to expand your toolkit

### *Increase expansion*

**Purpose:** Engage the survivors in activities to broaden their perspective on the situation. This is an opportunity for you as a Case Manager to validate her perspective and also share the experiences of others you have encountered within your work. Often survivors will blame themselves for the violence and abuse and it is critical to reinforce that the abuser is accountable for his actions.

**Tip:** Most effective when survivors are overwhelmed and focused on one perspective. Relevant for all steps of the model.

*Provide support*

**Purpose:** Offer information and referrals to provide choice and empower the survivors to make informed decisions.

**Tip:** Primarily used in Steps 4: Examine Alternatives and 5: Make Plans, but also useful in Steps 2: Ensure Client Safety and 3: Provide Support when survivors lack access to support systems or are engaged in behaviours they have identified as harmful or unsafe. And abstain from judgment. Remember supports can be formal or informal and can include pets.

*Promote mobilization*

**Purpose:** Activate internal and external resources to enhance coping skills and problem-solving abilities.

**Tip:** Encourages survivors to take action when they express confidence in making changes. Small shifts and incremental changes support long term sustainable change.

Remember, survivors have internal and external resources in place already as they have navigated the relationship to date. Seek opportunities to identify and highlight these as the foundation for moving forward.

## Lesson 3: Listening



### Write it out

When listening to survivors who are dysregulated...

- How do you demonstrate empathy?
- How do you ensure that survivors feel heard and validated?
- What strategies do you use to convey genuine understanding, acceptance, and support?
- How do you monitor your own biases, trauma reminders, and emotions to maintain a neutral and supportive environment for survivors?

Effective listening requires our **full attention, genuine interest,** and **respect for the survivor.**

## Specific strategies

Advise the survivor on an ongoing basis of their right to pass or to decline answering any questions. Explain that your priority as a Case Manager is to ensure that the survivor feels safe physically and emotionally. When survivors feel heard, validated, and supported, it can enhance their emotional regulation and contribute to a sense of empowerment.

### 1. *Open-ended questions*

**Purpose:** To encourage deeper exploration of thoughts, feelings, and experiences. To invite survivors to express themselves more fully. To glean insights into their perspectives.

**Tip:** Open-ended questions are particularly useful in Step 1: Define the Problem.

### 2. *Closed-ended questions*

**Purpose:** To gather specific information or facts quickly. To guide the conversation toward a particular direction or topic.

**Tip:** Closed-ended questions are particularly useful in Step 2: Ensure Client Safety to request specific information, as well as when collaborating with survivors to determine next steps. Check in frequently to verify the survivor feels comfortable with proceeding and ask if she is feeling safe.

### 3. *Restatement and summary clarification*

**Purpose:** To help focus the survivor. To reflect back what the survivor has communicated and provide clarity or confirmation. This is an opportunity for you to build rapport by highlighting the strengths you have noticed within your dialogue. Whenever possible, mirror the language of the survivor.

**Tip:** Restatement and summary clarification are crucial in Step 4: Explore Alternatives and Step 5: Make Plans to ensure an accurate, shared understanding between you and the survivor.

### 4. *"I" statements*

**Purpose:** To cultivate empathy, promote understanding, and maintain respectful communication.

**Tip:** "I" statements are especially useful when engaging with survivors who may feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.

### 5. *Facilitative listening*

**Purpose:** To create a supportive environment where the survivor feels heard, understood, and empowered to explore her feelings and options. To fully focus on the survivor's experience while being transparent and maintaining healthy boundaries.

**Tip:** You can convey empathy, genuine care, and acceptance. All of these are crucial to supporting survivors and to creating an environment in which survivors can begin to experience progress in emotional regulation, decision making, and planning.

The most basic of all human needs is **the need to understand and be understood**.  
The best way to understand people is to listen to them.

— Ralph G. Nichols

### Additional strategies to expand your toolkit

Strategies that are especially useful when “applying the psychological Band-Aid” (Myer and James, 2005).

#### *Create awareness*

**Purpose:** Help the survivor to identify feelings, thoughts, and behaviours they may have not felt safe enough to explore while in the relationship

**Tip:** This is especially important in Step 1: Define the Problem.

#### *Allow catharsis*

**Purpose:** Provide a safe environment for the survivor to express her feelings and thoughts freely.

**Tip:** This approach is beneficial during Step 1: Define the Problem and Step 3: Provide Support. Expressing anger is expected and healthy. To avoid escalation, address these in small tolerable doses and reinforce that emotional safety is a priority. If anger intensifies, shift focus and rely on the survivor to guide you through what has been helpful in regulating emotions in the past.

#### *Provide support*

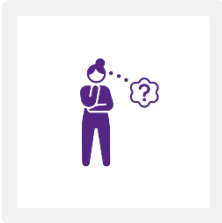
**Purpose:** Validate the survivor's responses and provide reassurance that her reactions are natural given the abuse and violence they have experienced. Emphasize that symptoms are often a result of the trauma endured and be sure to reinforce that the abuser is accountable for his actions.

**Tip:** This is central to Step 3: Provide Support; however, it's relevant throughout all steps of the six-step model.

**IMPORTANT:** When intervening, you may need to make difficult decisions without the consent of the survivor. Clarify your role and assert professional boundaries. Involve others for additional support. This can help maintain transparency and reduce ruptures in the relationship with the survivor.

## Lesson 4: Acting

Each situation you encounter will be unique. It will require you to be flexible and adaptable in how you respond to each survivor in distress.



### Stop & think

What factors influence your decision-making process when you're choosing how to support a survivor to explore alternatives and make and commit to plans?



Remember, **small incremental shifts** or changes **provide the foundation** for longer term and larger goals and **support sustainability** long term.

## Tailor approaches to evolving needs

1. **Non-directive:** When a survivor is capable of initiating and executing her own action steps, we take this approach to promote self-sufficiency and self-efficacy.
2. **Collaborative:** Preferred when establishing a partnership with a survivor to evaluate problems, generate alternatives, and take action steps together. This fosters empowerment and mutual trust. Even in collaborative approaches, it is important to ensure the survivor is leading and you are seeking and supporting opportunities to give her power.
3. **Directive:** Most suitable in situations where a survivor's immobility or the severity of the situation necessitates clear guidance and instruction to ensure immediate safety and symptom alleviation. Examples might include a medical emergency or when imminent risk to self or others has been identified. Transition toward a collaborative approach as soon as possible for long-term support and empowerment.



Avoid adopting a directive approach **unless there's an imminent safety risk or danger** to self or others, as this can **mirror and perpetuate abusive dynamics**. Acknowledge the **imbalance of power** that exists within **all interactions with survivors**.

## Additional strategies to expand your toolkit

These active strategies can provide structure when supporting survivors (Myer and James, 2005).

### *Emphasize focus*

**Purpose:** To help survivors narrow down their overwhelming interpretation of the situation to specific, realistic, and manageable options.

**Tip:** All six steps of the crisis intervention model. This requires more active involvement and support from the Case Manager.

### *Implement order*

**Purpose:** To help survivors categorize and prioritize problems to systematically address challenges in a logical manner.

**Tip:** All six steps of the model. This requires more active involvement and support from the Case Manager.



*Provide protection*

**Purpose:** To safeguard survivors from engaging in behaviours or thinking patterns they have identified as harmful to themselves that could jeopardize their safety or the safety of others.

**Tip:** All six steps of the model. This necessitates a more collaborative or directive approach, depending on the identified risk.



**Talk to your team**

How do you effectively transition between the different counselling approaches – nondirective, collaborative, and directive – during the acting phase based on the evolving needs and responses of survivors?

Reach out to your team to explore how you can shift between these approaches to best support survivors in crisis.

## Lesson 5: Put it all together



### Write it out

What are your biggest takeaways from this module?

What is ONE thing you'll implement in your practice right away?

Crisis contains the seeds of **growth AND impetus for change.**

— Richard James

*Notes*



## References

### Module 3

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