

ACWS

Alberta Council of
Women's Shelters



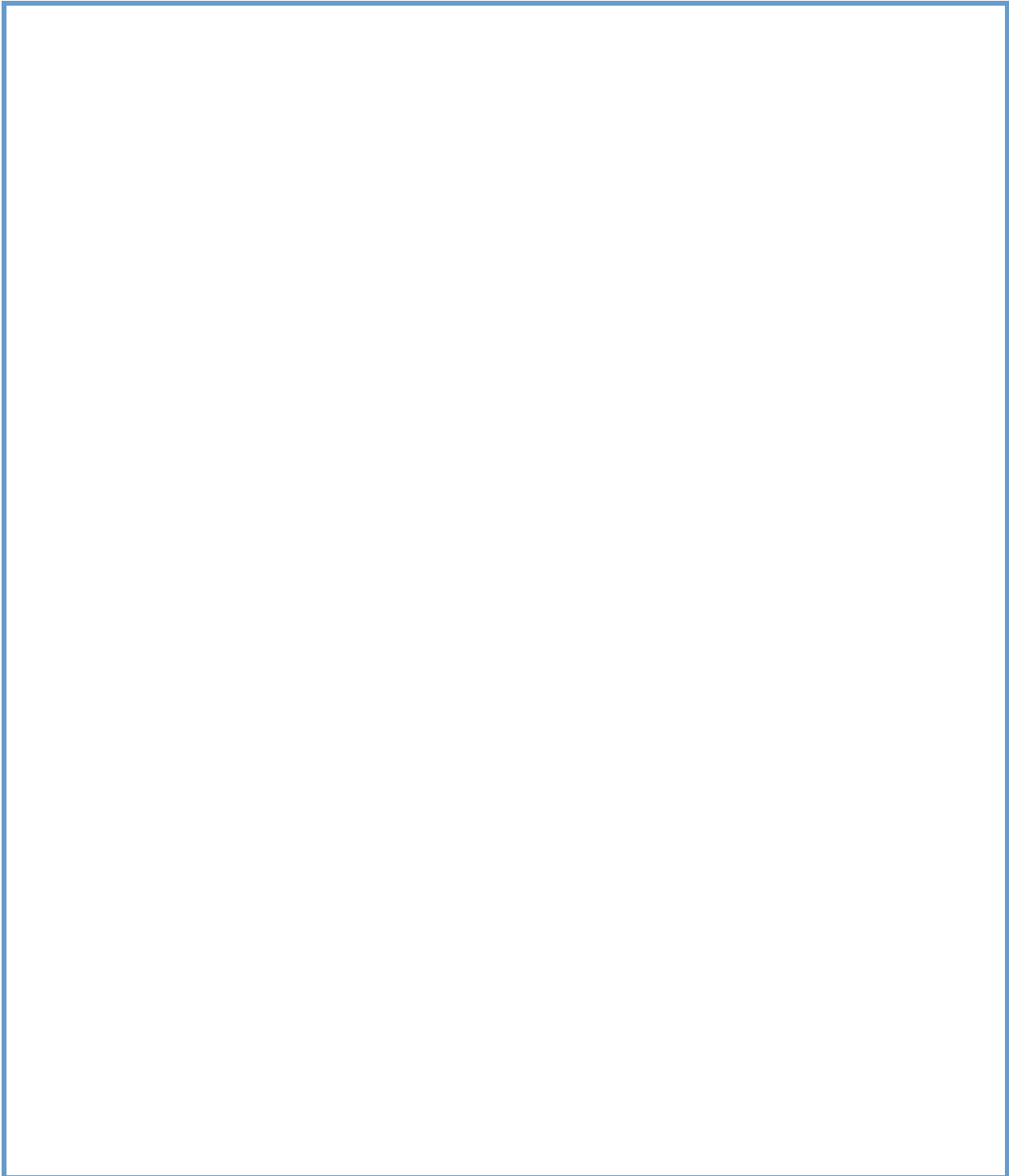
**Level 1:
Foundations**

**Case Management
Foundations Workbook
Module 4**

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Introduction

Welcome to Case Management Foundations Module 4.

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.

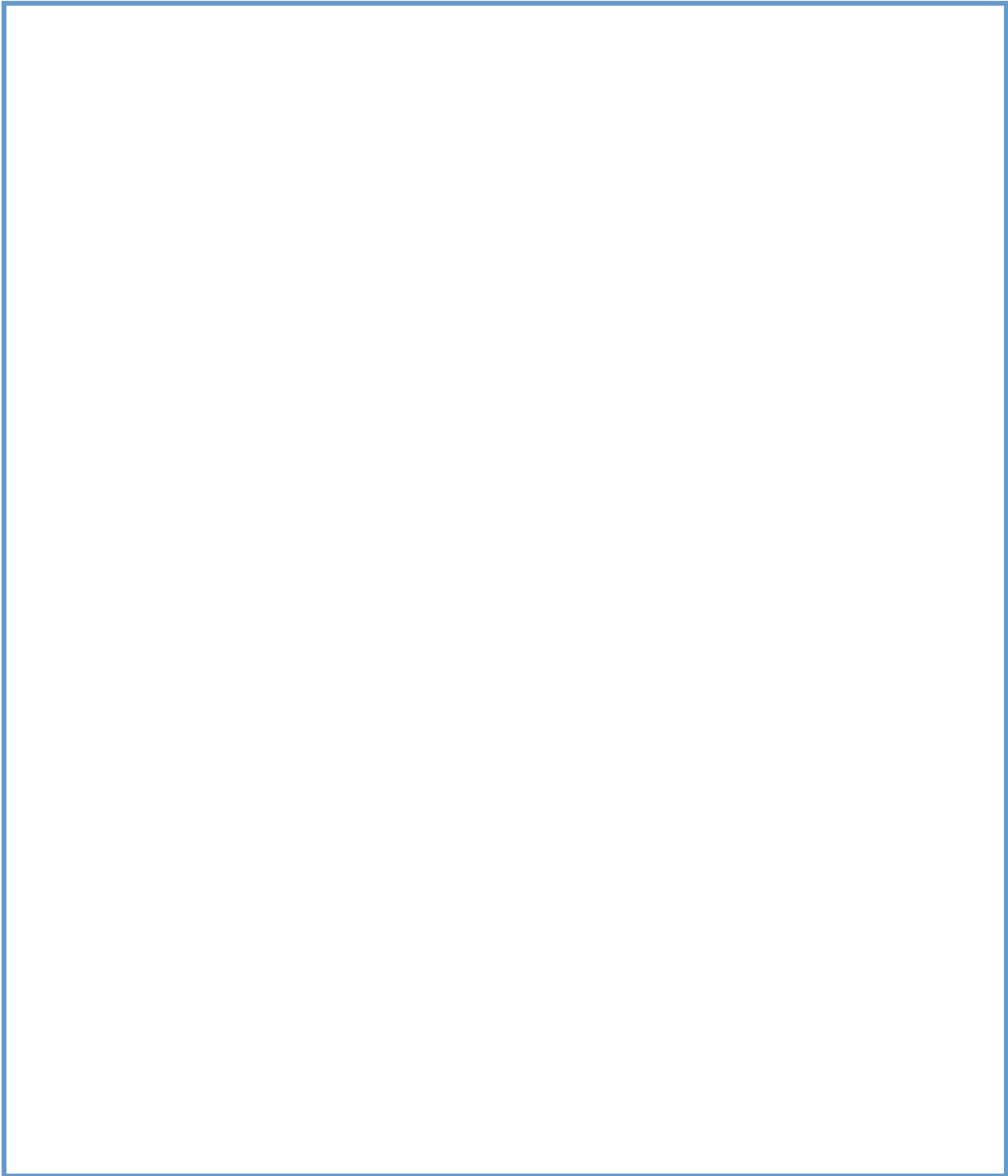
ACWS benefits from the wisdom, expertise, and innovation of our members across Alberta, who provide front-line support to individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse. This project could not be completed without their generous support and knowledge-sharing. Case Management is an evolving practice 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

Notes





Module 4: Operationalize Risk Assessment

Lesson 1: Frame your learning

Identifying risks involves **systematically listening for and exploring various factors** that may threaten survivors' safety or well-being.

Risk assessment inherently involves uncertainty. We need to consistently re-evaluate risk based on the survivors' input. This allows us to:

- Identify potential and emerging risks.
- Adjust our support to changing situations.
- Ensure interventions are always aligned with survivors' needs.

This process isn't rigid or straightforward. It's dynamic, iterative, and collaborative.

Lesson 2: Risk of lethality

We must consider two definitions of lethality when supporting survivors of gender-based violence.

Definition	Approach and scope of risk assessment
“of, relating to, or causing death; capable of causing death.” (Merriam Webster, n.d.)	Pay attention to the behaviours of the abusive party within the relationship who could cause further harm or loss of life.
“the degree of dangerousness or likelihood of death associated with a particular course of action.” (American Psychological Association, 2018)	Prioritize the evaluation of the survivor’s suicide risk or self-harm behaviours that could lead to loss of life.

By incorporating both definitions of lethality, we can:

1. Effectively address immediate concerns regarding the survivor’s risk to self.
2. Identify potential dangers stemming from the abuser.

1. Assess suicide risk and self-harm behaviours

Your organization may provide specific training or have policy and practice in place. Check in with your team members and your supervisor for clarity.



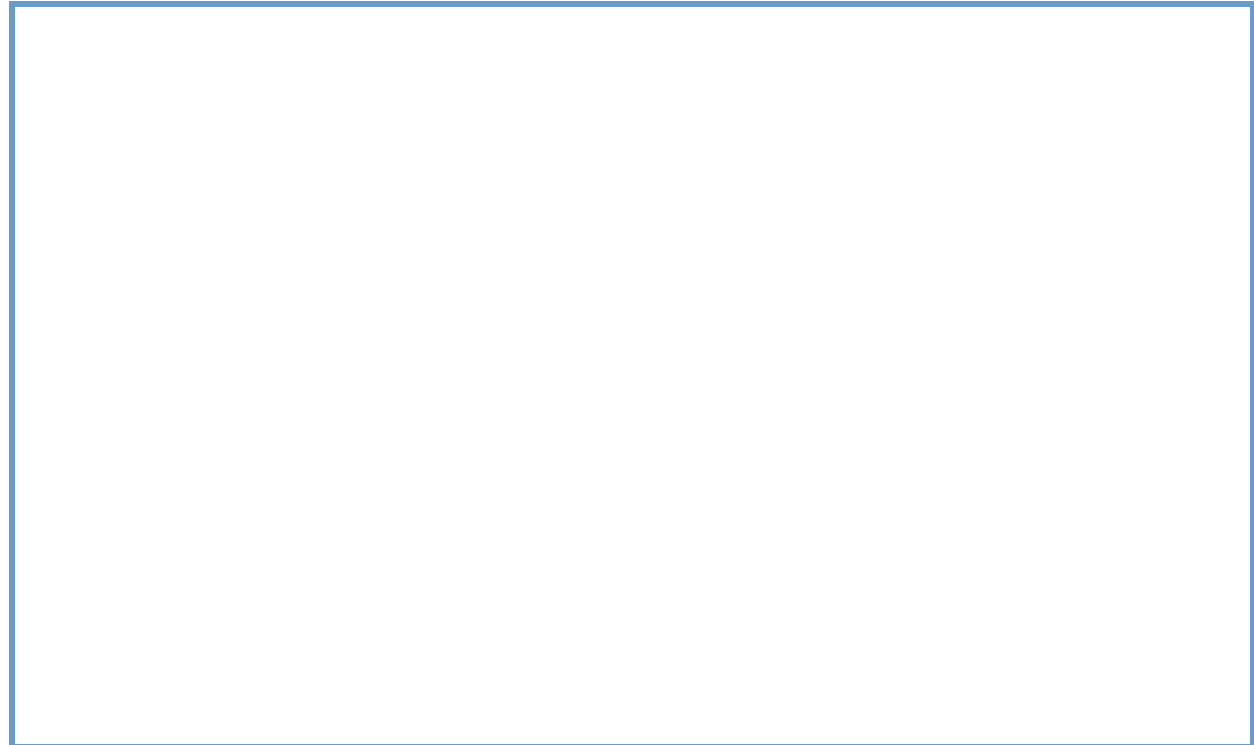
Remember the **survivor is the best source of this information**. Ask her to identify patterns in her behaviour and the abuser’s behaviour to support accurate assessment of risk.



Talk to your team

Reach out to your colleagues or supervisor! Ask questions to clarify any uncertainties. Seek guidance on how to effectively assess survivors' suicide risk and self-harm behaviours.

Make sure you know how best to align with organizational policies and practices, so that survivors will receive consistent support.



2. Explore lethal risks stemming from the abuser

The following risk factors may present individually or in combination within an abusive relationship. Strong predictors of lethal risk are highlighted in bold.

Physical

- Use of weapons, particularly guns
- **Attempted strangulation**
- Forced sexual acts and sexual abuse:
 - Note: Both victims and abusers are known to underreport sexual abuse.
- Violence during pregnancy

Economic

- **Abuser unemployment**
 - Avoidance of support obligation, including spousal and child support, is a form of continuing harassment and control, as well as a form of economic child abuse.
 - Social stressors are known to increase risk.
- Significant changes in the abuser's life or circumstances

Relationship

- **Pending or actual separation** (for female survivors)
- Presence of children in the home, particularly when children are not biologically related to the abuser
- Age disparity
- Common law relationship and young age of the target adult (under 25)

Psychological

- **Abuser's threat of, consideration of, or attempted suicide**
- Survivor's fear of being killed
- Controlling, obsessive forms of psychological terrorism (e.g., high levels of possessive jealousy)
- Abuser's antisocial behaviours and statements
- Abuser's depression
- Access to weapons, particularly guns

Behavioural

- Prior domestic violence, escalating in severity or frequency:
 - Note: The absence of a record of police involvement or physical violence does not indicate safety.
- Death threats:
 - Note: The absence of a death threat may not indicate safety when other risk factors are present.
- Threat(s) with weapons
- Threats to harm children
- Stalking, monitoring
- Restricting or monitoring activities
- Sleep deprivation
- Hostage taking (child abduction)
- Animal cruelty

- Substance use
- Violent criminal behaviour other than domestic violence

Legal

- Prior police involvement or arrest
- Violation of protection orders and conditions of release
- Parenting time and child access dispute(s)
- Relocation of the targeted parent with children across jurisdictional lines

Language is powerful. Be deliberate in your choice of words. This will demonstrate respect, foster trust, and avoid re-traumatization.

Lesson 3: Danger Assessment Tool

What is the Danger Assessment Tool?

The Danger Assessment is a clinical tool used to assess a woman's risk of being killed by a current or former partner. The objective of the tool is to reduce the likelihood of further exposure to risk of femicide by empowering women with information that increases their understanding of risk factors and reduces minimization or denial of the severity and frequency of these risk factors.

Why use the Danger Assessment Tool?

The Danger Assessment is a **validated actuarial instrument** that uses data and statistical methods to assess the level of danger and **predict the risk of future violence or femicide** based on specific indicators. The tool is reflective of the breadth of violence that can occur in contexts of coercive control. It provides information that enables us to better support women to develop safety plans for themselves and their children.

Using the DA helps survivors stay safer by:

- Identifying the risk of lethality
- Identifying risk contributing factors that increase the level of danger
- Reducing minimization and denial of danger
- Providing information about the level of risk that can be communicated to others, possibly including larger systems (such as justice, health, and education) as appropriate to implement an effective safety plan.
- Providing information that enables staff to support survivors develop safety plans for themselves and their children
- Building supportive relationships with us

How to use the Danger Assessment Tool

The Danger Assessment Tool consists of a calendar to assist in recall and 20 weighted questions designed to measure risk in an abusive relationship.

1. Calendar

<p>Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess abuse severity and frequency. • Raise awareness of survivors. • Reduce the denial and minimization of the abuse that they experienced.
<p>What the survivor does</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a calendar of the past year that documents: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incidents of physical abuse: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Approximate days when it occurred. b. Ranking of the severity of the abuse on a 1–5 scale (5 being the most severe). 2. Incidents of emotional, economic, sexual, and spiritual abuse.
<p>What you do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the different types of abuse. • Encourage the survivor to think about special occasions, and what was happening in her relationships around these times. • Stay with the survivor and review the calendar with the survivor once it is completed • Check in with the survivor frequently to monitor her level of distress using a Subjective Unit of Distress (SUD) scale (0 = no distress and 100 = extremely distressed). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If a survivor indicates a SUD of 50 or more, support her to return to a calm state. ○ This may require taking a break, going for a walk or engaging in an alternative activity. ○ The goal within every interaction is to remain within the window of tolerance for the survivor.

2. Twenty weighted questions	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify risk factors associated with intimate partner homicide. • Gather information about the level of risk to facilitate communication and safety planning. • Identify the survivor's specific level of risk of lethality using the score.
What the survivor does	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer each question with a yes or no response.
What you do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the survivor that many of the Danger Assessment questions are difficult and may bring up painful emotions for her. • Develop a cue or code word for the survivor to signal when she is overwhelmed or the process becomes too emotionally intense. • Monitor for physiological pain, which is also common when discussing incidents of violence. • Check in with the survivor frequently to monitor her level of distress. • Be aware of the survivor's body language. • Score and interpret the result to reveal a woman's specific lethality risk level. • Review the total score with the survivor and explain what the score indicates. • Answer any questions that the survivor may have. • Plan for next steps based on the score.

The overriding intent of the Danger Assessment Tool is to **empower** survivors at risk with information that reduces the likelihood of further exposure to risk of femicide.

Lesson 4: Put it all together

Risk assessment serves as a cornerstone in our **collective efforts to break the cycle of violence**, empower survivors with knowledge about potential dangers, and help them make informed decisions to protect themselves and their families.

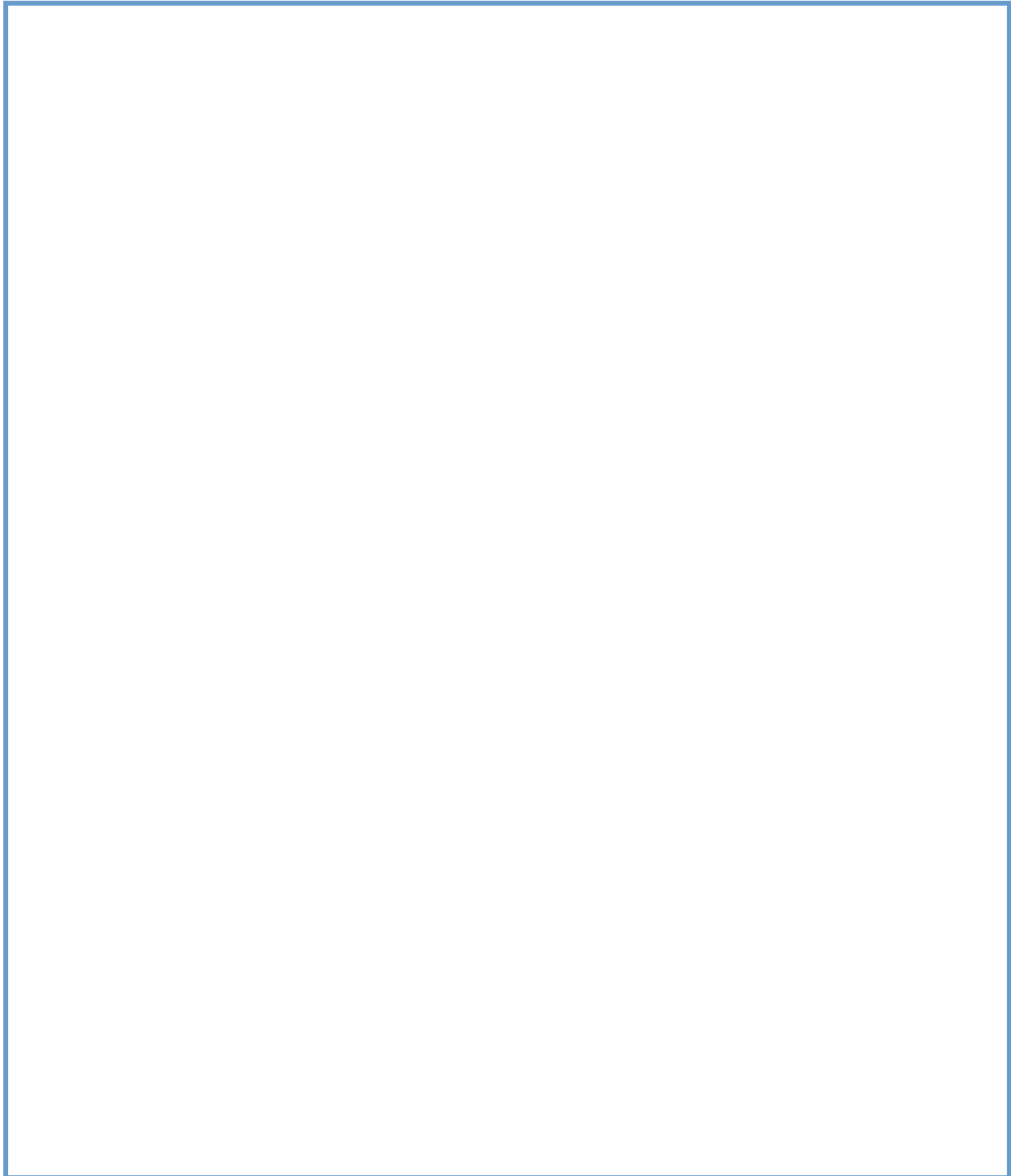


Write it out

What are your biggest takeaways from this module?

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

Notes



References

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