

# Topic 7

## Diversity and inclusivity of safety



The National Child Safety Training aims to enhance safety for children and strengthen child-safe culture across the education and care sector by introducing shared language, responsibilities, and understanding. The training was developed in partnership between Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) and the Queensland Government on behalf of Australian governments.

The first level of training, Foundations of Child Safety, includes two eLearning courses:

- **Course 1:** Understanding Child Safety
- **Course 2:** Understanding and Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

To complement the mandatory eLearning courses, a suite of non-mandatory Community of Practice resources has been developed to extend learning and support the application of knowledge in education and care settings. Whilst the Community of Practice are a voluntary component of the National Child Safety Training, they provide structured opportunities for discussion, reflection, and shared learning over time, helping staff build confidence and consistency in practice.

These resources contain prompts and suggested activities aligned with each course topic. They are designed to be flexible and may be selected, adapted, shortened, or revisited to suit different service types, team sizes, and meeting formats. The intention is to support practical conversations, not to prescribe a fixed program. There is no expectation that all topics and activities will be used and it is at your discretion how you use these resources.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility in places where children learn and grow. Harm can affect a child's wellbeing, learning, and development throughout childhood, and its impacts can continue into adulthood. When child safe practices are not in place, children are more at risk of harm.

By completing the mandatory eLearning training alongside some non-mandatory Community of Practice activities, you can strengthen your understanding of your role in protecting children, responding to concerns, and supporting a child safe environment in your service.



## Diversity and inclusivity of safety

Every child feels safe in different ways. Safety is not only about policies and procedures. It is also about relationships, culture, inclusion, and understanding how children experience the world. What helps one child feel safe and secure may be different for another.

Children's experiences of safety can be shaped by:

- Culture and identity
- Family values and community expectations
- Disability (visible or invisible)
- Trauma or difficult life events
- Language and communication differences

Inclusive child safe practice means recognising these differences and responding thoughtfully. It requires curiosity, flexibility, and reflection. It also requires us to consider how our own assumptions may influence what we see as "normal" or "appropriate."

This topic supports participants to explore how inclusive practice strengthens safety and wellbeing.





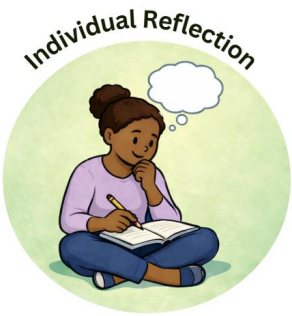
### Reminder

You **do not** need to run all three activities.

Select, adapt, shorten, or spread activities across sessions to suit your group and available time.

Activities can also be adapted for one-on-one supervision, mentoring conversations, or team meetings. You may choose to use a single scenario, question, or reflective prompt to guide discussion.

These activities are designed to be flexible and responsive to your service context.

<b>Activity 1: What helps me feel safe?</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	To explore how culture, disability, trauma, and individual differences influence what helps a child feel safe.
<b>Time</b>	40-50 minutes
<b>Format</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Small Group Activity</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Whole Group Activity</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Individual Reflection</i></p>  </div> </div>
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenario cards</li> <li>• What helps me feel safe worksheet</li> <li>• Pens</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator preamble

*“Safety is not one-size-fits-all. In this activity, we explore how different children might experience the same environment in different ways.”*

### Remind participants

- We are not making assumptions about or labelling children
- We are focusing on inclusive practice and what helps children to feel safe and supported
- Curiosity is more important than certainty

### Step 1: Scenario exploration (20 minutes)

- Ask participants to break into small groups (2-3 participants).
- Provide each group with one scenario card.
- Before groups begin, remind participants:
  - *“These scenarios are not about labelling a child or investigating what has happened. They are about slowing down and considering what might influence a child’s sense of safety, and how we can respond in inclusive ways.”*
- Ask groups to read the scenario together and work through worksheet and the following discussion prompts:
  - Understanding the child’s experience
    - *What might be influencing this child’s sense of safety or belonging?*
    - *What might this child be communicating through their behaviour, words, or body language?*
    - *Could things like culture, living with a disability, or experiences of trauma, influence how this child understands safety, relationships, and belonging?*
  - Challenging assumptions
    - *What assumptions or biases might adults make in this situation?*

- *In what ways might bias or past experience shape our response?*
- Strengthening safety
  - *What could help this child feel more safe and secure, included, or understood?*
  - *What small, practical adjustments could be made in the environment, routine, or interaction?*
  - *How could adults adjust their response to support this child's inclusion, safety, and wellbeing?*
  - *How might we involve the family in a respectful and curious way?*
- Encourage groups to focus on reflective and respectful actions in everyday practice.
- If groups become stuck, prompt them with: *"What would help this child feel seen and understood tomorrow?"*

### **Step 2: Mapping diversity and inclusivity (10 minutes)**

- Once discussion is underway, ask groups to identify which lens (or lenses) are most visible in their scenario:
  - Culture
  - Disability
  - Trauma
- Invite groups to consider:
  - *Which lens feels most central to this situation?*
  - *Could more than one lens be influencing the child's experience?*
  - *How might these lenses overlap?*
- Ask each group to write down:
  - One key insight about the lens they identified (e.g., culture, disability, or trauma)
  - One action that strengthens safety and inclusivity under that lens
- Encourage specificity. For example, adjusting communication style, creating a quiet space, learning key words in a child's first language, consulting with family.

**Step 3: Whole-group reflection (10 minutes)**

- Bring the whole group back together.
- Invite each group to briefly share:
  - *One practical action that could help the child feel safer and included*
  - *One assumption or bias they realised might need challenging*
- As facilitator, listen for themes and reflect them back to the group.
- Reinforce key message: Child safety grows through understanding, not assumption.
- Inclusive practice means asking for and being open to feedback, listening, responding with empathy, taking time to understand, and adapting through planned actions.

**Step 4: Optional closing reflection (2 minutes)**

- Invite participants to reflect and complete silently: *“One way I can strengthen my inclusive practice is...”*

**Facilitator tips**

- Normalise that everyone has biases and assumptions.
- If discussion becomes personal or defensive in tone, gently bring the focus back to practice by asking: *“What might this look like from the child’s perspective?”* or *“In what ways can we respond to help the child feel seen, heard, and valued?”*.



## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, shared worksheets, chat reflections, and optional polls. The purpose remains the same: to slow down, consider your interpretations, strengthen reflection and inclusive practice, and focus on what helps children feel safe and supported.

### Platform preparation (before the session)

- Upload scenario cards and the “What Helps Me Feel Safe” worksheet to a shared folder or provide access via link.
- Prepare breakout rooms for pairs or small groups.
- Set up a shared document or whiteboard space for groups to capture key insights.
- Optional: prepare a quick poll listing the different factors and lenses that can shape what helps a child feel safe (culture, disability, trauma)

Have all links ready before the session begins.

### Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that sharing is optional and reflections can remain general and de-identified.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Remind participants that support pathways are available if needed (e.g., EAP, supervision)

## Step 2: Scenario exploration in breakout pairs

- Place participants into breakout rooms in small groups (2-3 participants).
- Share one scenario card with each group via chat, screen share, or shared document.
- Before they begin, restate:
  - *“These scenarios are not about labelling a child or investigating what has happened. They are about slowing down and considering what might influence a child’s sense of safety, and how we can respond in inclusive ways.”*
- Ask groups to read the scenario together and work through the discussion prompts on the worksheet.
- Understanding the child’s experience
  - *What might be influencing this child’s sense of safety or belonging?*
  - *What might this child be communicating through their behaviour, words, or body language?*
  - *Could things like culture, living with a disability, or experiences of trauma, influence how this child understands safety, relationships, and belonging?*
- Challenging assumptions
  - *What assumptions might adults make in this situation?*
  - *In what ways might bias or past experience shape our response?*
- Strengthening safety
  - *What could help this child feel more secure, included, or understood?*
  - *What small, practical adjustments could be made in the environment, routine, or interaction?*
  - *How might we involve the family in a respectful and curious way?*
- Encourage groups to focus on reflective and respectful actions in everyday practice.
- If needed, visit breakout rooms briefly to support discussion.
- If groups become stuck, prompt them with: *“What would help this child feel seen and understood tomorrow?”*

### Step 3: Mapping diversity and inclusivity

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Launch a quick poll asking: *Which lens feels most central to your scenario?*
  - Culture.
  - Disability.
  - Trauma.
- After polling, invite participants to reflect in small groups or via chat:
  - *Could more than one lens be influencing the child's experience?*
  - *How might these lenses overlap?*
- Ask each pair to write in the chat or shared document:
  - *One key insight about the lens they identified (e.g., culture, disability, or trauma).*
  - *One action that strengthens safety and inclusivity under that lens.*
- Encourage specificity, such as adjusting communication style, creating a quiet space, learning key words in a child's first language, or consulting with family.



#### Step 4: Whole-group reflection

- Invite a few small groups to briefly share:
  - One practical action that could help the child feel safer and included.
  - One assumption or bias they realised might need challenging.
  - As facilitator, listen for themes and reflect them back to the group.
- Reinforce key message:
  - Child safety grows through understanding, not assumption.
  - Inclusive practice means asking for and being open to feedback, listening, responding with empathy, taking time to understand, and adapting through planned actions.

#### Step 5: Optional closing reflection

Invite participants to type in the chat or reflect privately: *“One way I can strengthen my inclusive practice is...”*



## Scenario cards: What helps me feel safe?

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For printing. These scenario cards are intentionally brief. Participants are not expected to determine what is happening or make conclusions with certainty. The focus is on noticing needs, reflecting on assumptions, and exploring inclusive ways to support children's safety and wellbeing through different lenses.

Facilitators are encouraged to adapt or create additional scenarios that reflect the specific context, community, and experiences of their service.

### Scenario 1:

Anna recently started at the service. She speaks very little English and often stands or sits close to the wall during group activities. She rarely joins in play and looks down when spoken to. Some staff are concerned she is "not settling in."

### Scenario 2:

Luca becomes very upset during transitions. When asked to pack away, he sometimes throws toys or yells. One educator describes him as "defiant," while another wonders if something else is happening for Luca.

### Scenario 3:

Sandra is quiet and compliant. She always agrees with adults and quickly says "sorry," even when situations are not her fault. She often gives up toys she's playing with immediately if another child asks.

**Scenario 4:** A parent seems reluctant to engage in conversations at pick-up time. They rarely make eye contact and politely decline invitations to family events. Staff wonder if the family is "uninterested."

**Scenario 5:**

Noah finds it difficult to sit still during group time. He fidgets, rocks, or moves around the room. Some staff feel he is “disrupting” learning.

**Scenario 6:**

Ella was once outgoing and talkative. Over the past month, she has become withdrawn and easily startled by loud noises. She asks repeatedly when her parent will return.

**Scenario 7:**

A grandparent drops off a child and stays for an extended period each morning. Some staff feel this disrupts the routine and wonder if boundaries should be reinforced.

**Scenario 8:**

Zayn covers his ears during music time and refuses to join in. He cries when the group becomes loud and seeks a quiet corner.

**Scenario 9:**

Archer engages in rough, physical play and often acts out “fighting” scenes. Some educators are concerned about aggressive behaviour.

**Scenario 10:**

Lily rarely makes eye contact when spoken to and sometimes turns away when adults approach her directly.



## Worksheet: What helps me feel safe?

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### Inclusive safety worksheet

**Scenario Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What might be influencing this child's sense of safety or belonging?

2. What could this child be communicating through their behaviour, body language or interaction style?

3. Could things like culture, living with a disability, or experiences of trauma, influence how this child understands safety, relationships, and belonging?

### Challenging Assumptions

4. What assumptions or biases might adults make in this situation?

5. In what ways might bias or past experiences shape our response?

### Strengthening Safety

6. What small, practical actions could help this child feel more safe and secure, included, or understood?

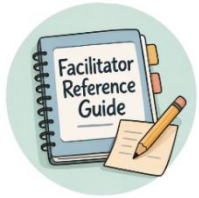
7. What small, practical adjustments could be made in the environment, routine, or interaction?

8. How could adults adjust their response to support this child's inclusion, safety, and wellbeing?

9. How might we involve the family in a respectful and curious way?

**Final Reflection**

10. One insight about inclusive practice from this discussion:



## Facilitator reference guide: Inclusive safety scenarios

This reference guide is designed to support facilitators in preparing for discussion and building confidence in leading reflective conversations. It is not intended to provide the only “correct” answers or interpretations. Participants will bring their own professional experience, knowledge, and insights to each scenario, and these contributions should be welcomed and explored. Often, the richness of the discussion comes from the diversity of perspectives in the room.

Facilitators are encouraged to use this guide as a support tool while remaining open to different ideas and insights, and context-specific approaches that strengthen child-safe environments and inclusive practice.

Reflection Area	Facilitator Guidance
<b>Scenario 1</b>	
Understanding the child’s experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things like language barriers, cultural transition, novelty of environment, separation anxiety, and unfamiliar routines.</li> <li>• The child may be experiencing and attempting to communicate feelings of overwhelm and uncertainty, low confidence, and a need for connection.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety - culture and possible experiences of trauma.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include, “not settling, “shy,” or “not social.”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be expectations that the child should participate verbally, and being confident may be more valued and be seen as “normal.”</li> </ul>
Strengthening safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include learning key words in child’s main language, using visual supports, creating a ‘buddy’ system, and establishing predictable routines.</li> <li>• Environmental adjustments may include creating a quiet space and facilitating small group interactions.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can be warm, patient, and create an environment that reduces pressure and goes at the child’s pace.</li> <li>• Involving the family might include asking about routines, communication styles, and coping strategies within the home environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Scenario 2</b>	
Understanding the child’s experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things like transitions and routines, differences in developmental stage or age, challenges with emotional regulation, or survival responses (e.g., fight response).</li> <li>• The child may be struggling with transitions, unpredictability, feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, and have difficulties with emotional regulation.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affective how this child understands safety – possible experience of trauma and disability.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include that they are “defiant,” “difficult”, or “attention seeking,” and that all children should manage transitions in the same way.</li> </ul>

<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include establishing clear and predictable transitions and routines, giving scaffolded instructions and breaking transitions into smaller steps, and using visual cues.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can maintain a calm and gentle approach, focus on support and guidance, acknowledge and validate feelings, and support emotional regulation.</li> <li>• Involving families might include sharing observations, exploring whether the behaviours occur at home, and work together to discuss support strategies that can be put in place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 3</b></p>	
<p>Understanding the child’s experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things cultural dynamics and expectations, avoidance or fear of conflict, and survival responses (e.g., fawn).</li> <li>• The child may be attempting to avoid conflict, people please, or be overly compliant.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety - experiences of trauma and culture.</li> </ul>
<p>Challenging assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include that they are “well behaved” or an “easy child.”</li> <li>• There may be risks such as rewarding or reinforcing compliance, without noticing possible signs of anxiety, distress, or survival responses.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include supporting and encouraging the child’s voice, modelling boundaries and assertive communication, and teaching concepts related to body autonomy and saying “no.”</li> <li>• Education and care staff can provide validation, reinforce the child’s sense of choice and control, and respect her right to space.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involving the family might include being curious and asking questions respectfully about communication norms and styles within the home environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Scenario 4</b>	
Understanding the child's experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider things like cultural norms and communication styles, language barriers, and mistrust of systems.</li> <li>The child may be experiencing and attempting to communicate possible discomfort or uncertainty.</li> <li>Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety - culture.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include that they are "uninterested," "not engaged," and expectations may be made about particular or "preferred" ways of engaging.</li> </ul>
Strengthening safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways to strengthen safety include using flexible communication methods, translated materials, and alternative ways to communicate and connect (e.g., email, informal conversations).</li> <li>Education and care staff can be curious and non-judgemental in their approach.</li> <li>Involving the family might include having open conversations and asking about their preferred communication styles.</li> </ul>
<b>Scenario 5</b>	
Understanding the child's experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider things like neurodivergence, diverse sensory needs, and differences in developmental age and stage.</li> <li>The child may be needing or seeking movement and attempting to self-regulate.</li> </ul>


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – disability.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include that they are “disruptive,” “not listening,” and being able to sit still may be valued, reinforced, and seen as “compliant.”</li> <li>The risk is that the child is labelled as disruptive rather than being curious about their needs.</li> </ul>
Strengthening safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways to strengthen safety include providing opportunity for movement breaks, flexible seating, and adjustment environment and routines by implementing shorter group activities and sensory supports.</li> <li>Education and care staff can use a strengths-based approach, be curious about behaviour, acknowledge that children engage in diverse ways that meet their needs, and support regulation.</li> <li>Involving family might include sharing observations in an objective and respectful way, being open and asking about adaptive strategies within the home environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Scenario 6</b>	
Understanding the child’s experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider things like anxiety, possible survival responses, and familial stress.</li> <li>The child may be experiencing fear and insecurity.</li> <li>Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – possible experience of trauma.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child include that they are “attention seeking,” which may lead to subtle changes in behaviour being dismissed.</li> </ul>

<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include creating spaces that are predictable, provide reassurance, and offer gentle check-ins.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can create quiet spaces, model emotional expression and provide validation. A calm, supportive, and consistent presence can help to build trust within the relationship.</li> <li>• Involving family might include sharing observations of behaviour changes, and having a gentle and open conversation about concerns, without judgement or accusation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 7</b></p>	
<p>Understanding the child’s experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider differences in cultures (e.g., individualist vs collectivist cultures), values, and ways of relating to others.</li> <li>• The child may be receiving comfort and support from an extended family member.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – culture.</li> </ul>
<p>Challenging assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made relate to maintaining boundaries and viewing extended family involvement as interference.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include having a clear and collaborative plan that supports the needs to the child and their family as well as the routines of the service.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can increase awareness of different cultures and values and respecting cultural diversity.</li> <li>• Involving family might include having an open and collaborative conversation to negotiate routines and plan supports for the child and their family.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 8</b></p>	

<p>Understanding the child’s experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things like diverse sensory needs and processing.</li> <li>• The child may be attempting to communicate that they feel discomfort or are overstimulated by the environment.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – disability.</li> </ul>
<p>Challenging assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child are that they are “not cooperative” and place expectations on them that they need to participate in the same way as other children.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include offering alternative engagement options to support sensory needs and processing (e.g., headphones, quiet space, volume control, optional participation).</li> <li>• Education and care staff can validate the child’s discomfort and experience, provide alternative options, and reinforce their sense of choice and control.</li> <li>• Involving the family might include discussing the child’s sensory processing, needs, and adjustments and supports that can be made.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 9</b></p>	
<p>Understanding the child’s experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things like exposure to media and other content, re-enacting behaviour that has been modelled, need for movement, attempts to self-regulate, or survival responses.</li> <li>• The child may be attempting to communicate their experiences or process their experiences through their behaviour and play.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – possible experience of trauma.</li> </ul>

<p>Challenging assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child are that they are “aggressive” or “violent and assuming intent to harm. This can lead to labelling the child in a negative way, instead of separating the behaviour from the child and seeing behaviour as a form of communication.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include providing supervision during play, teaching concepts related to boundaries and safe touch, and support development of emotional and social skills.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can explore this with curiosity and a calm and non-judgemental approach, taking time to notice and consider what the behaviour might be communicating and supporting redirection.</li> <li>• Involving the family might include sharing observations, ask about the child’s interests, play, or exposure to media and other content, and work together on consistent messages about boundaries and safe play.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 10</b></p>	
<p>Understanding the child’s experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider things like cultural values related to respect and those in positions of authority, sensory needs and processing styles, and neurodivergence.</li> <li>• The child may be feeling shy, anxious, unsure, or overwhelmed by direct attention. In some cultures, avoiding eye contact with adults is a sign of respect.</li> <li>• Consider the lens that may be affecting how this child understands safety – culture and disability.</li> </ul>

<p>Challenging assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some examples of assumptions and biases that might be made about the child are that they are “rude,” “disrespectful,” “not listening,” and assuming that eye contact is the only sign of attention and focus or valuing it as a sign of respect.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to strengthen safety include accepting different communication styles, allowing other forms of communication (e.g., gestures, play, drawing), and providing alternative engagement methods.</li> <li>• Education and care staff can avoid forced eye contact, reduce pressure and give them time and space to respond, and approach the child at their level and consider engaging side-by-side rather than face-to-face.</li> <li>• Involving family might include asking about communication styles and norms within the home environment and whether there are any cultural norms around eye contact.</li> </ul>

<b>Activity 2: Creating culturally safe spaces</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<p>This activity supports participants explore how culture shapes children’s understanding and experiences of safety, relationships, communication and belonging.</p> <p>It helps participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the many elements that shape a person’s culture.</li> <li>• Reflect on how culture influences what safety feels like for a child.</li> <li>• Identify practical ways to strengthen culturally responsive practice.</li> <li>• Understand how a lack of cultural safety can impact child safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	40–50 minutes
<b>Format</b>	
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building culturally safe spaces worksheet</li> <li>• Culturally safe spaces prompt sheet</li> <li>• Large sheets of paper (butcher’s paper)</li> <li>• Markers</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator preamble

*“Culture influences how children communicate, express emotions, build relationships, and understand what safety and belonging feel like. Because culture is complex and is different for every individual, what helps one child feel safe may not be the same for another. This activity invites us to think beyond assumptions and stereotypes and explore the layers that shape culture and consider what this means for our everyday practice.”*

### Remind participants

- Keep discussion general and practice-focused.
- Do not refer to individual children or families. Keep discussion de-identified.
- Avoid stereotypes or assumptions about any culture.
- Approach the discussion with curiosity and respect.
- There is no single or “right” way culture is experienced.

### Step 1: Build the cultural map (10-15 minutes)

- Ask participants to pair up.
- Ask pairs to draw a large circle in the centre of their paper and label it:
  - “All the parts that shape a person’s culture.”
- Explain that culture is shaped by different parts.
- Ask pairs to brainstorm and visually map the elements or parts that shape a person’s culture around the circle. Encourage drawing, symbols, and keywords rather than long sentences.
- If pairs need prompts, offer broad questions such as:
  - *What influences how someone communicates?*
  - *What shapes how a person expresses emotions?*
  - *What contributes to identity and belonging?*

- *What shapes ideas about family roles or relationships?*
- *What influences what feels respectful, comfortable or safe?*
- If needed, offer examples such as language, food, music, faith, traditions, community, storytelling, Country, migration history, family structure, values and beliefs, worldview, ways of learning, customs, celebrations.

### **Step 2: Connect culture to safety (10-15 minutes)**

- For each element identified, ask pairs to reflect on and note:
  - *How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?*
  - *How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?*
  - *How might this influence the way a child communicates or asks for help?*
  - *Could this influence how a child responds to rules, authority or boundaries?*
- Encourage practical thinking. Consider, for example:
  - Eye contact.
  - Physical proximity.
  - Independence vs shared decision-making.
  - Emotional expression.
  - Comfort with speaking up.
- Reinforce a strengths-based approach that recognises and values cultural diversity and different lived experiences.

### **Step 3: Creating culturally safe spaces (10-12 minutes)**

- Ask each pair to discuss and record:
  - *What might happen if a space does not feel culturally safe for children and families?*
  - *How might children respond if they do not feel culturally safe or see their culture is represented or valued?*

- *What is one practical action you can take to strengthen cultural safety and show children and families that their culture is valued in everyday practice?*
- Encourage small, realistic actions rather than broad statements. For example:
  - Asking families about preferred communication styles.
  - Learning correct pronunciation of names.
  - Using activities and resources that reflect a range of cultures and identities.
  - Engaging in reflection and understanding how your own assumptions and biases may influence your responses and interpretations of behaviour.
  - Providing multiple ways for children to participate.
  - Seeking cultural consultation and advice for additional support or when unsure.
- Ask each pair to nominate a spokesperson.

#### **Step 4: Whole-group reflection (10 minutes)**

- Invite each spokesperson to share:
  - One element or part of culture they hadn't previously considered.
  - One practical action that strengthens culturally safe practice.
- As facilitator, highlight and reflect common themes.
- Reinforce:
  - Creating culturally safe spaces is not just learning about and knowing everything about every culture.
  - Culturally safe practice is an ongoing process, which involves being reflective, responsive, and recognising the influence education and care staff have on children's sense of belonging and protection.
- Remind participants that a space is only culturally safe if children and families experience it as safe, inclusive, and respectful.



### Facilitator tips

- Reinforce the importance of recognising cultural diversity, involving different languages, traditions, family structures, and ways of communicating and relating to others.
- Emphasise that when education and care staff understand and respect cultural diversity, children are more likely to feel safe, included and confident to seek help.



## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, a shared whiteboard or collaborative document, chat reflections, and optional visual tools. The purpose remains the same: to explore the different parts that shape culture and to connect cultural understanding to children’s safety and belonging in everyday practice.

### Platform preparation (before the session)

- Set up breakout rooms for pairs.
- Prepare a shared whiteboard (e.g., Zoom Whiteboard) or collaborative slide where each pair can work on their own “mosaic.”
- Alternatively, create a shared document with one page or section per pair.
- Have prompts ready to paste into the chat.

### Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that culture is complex, diverse, and personal.
- Encourage respectful listening and curiosity.
- Remind participants that sharing is voluntary and examples should remain general and de-identified.

### Step 2: Mapping culturally safe spaces

- Place participants into breakout rooms in pairs.
- Direct each pair to their allocated whiteboard space or document section.
- Ask them to create a large circle in the centre of their page and label it: “All the parts that shape a person’s culture.”
- Explain that culture is shaped by different parts.

- Ask pairs to brainstorm and visually map the elements that shape a person's culture around the circle.
- Encourage them to use keywords, short phrases, symbols, or simple drawings rather than long sentences.
- If needed, paste prompts into the chat before opening breakout rooms:
  - *What influences how someone communicates?*
  - *What shapes how a person expresses emotions?*
  - *What contributes to identity and belonging?*
  - *What shapes ideas about family roles or relationships?*
  - *What influences what feels respectful, comfortable or safe?*
- If pairs need further prompts, offer examples such as language, food, music, faith, traditions, community, storytelling, Country, migration history, disability, family structure, values and beliefs, worldview, ways of learning, customs, or celebrations.

### Step 3: Connect culture to safety

- While still in breakout rooms, ask pairs to look at each cultural element or part they identified and reflect on the following questions.
- They can add short notes next to each element on the whiteboard or document.
  - *How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?*
  - *How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?*
  - *How might this influence the way a child communicates or asks for help?*
  - *Could this influence how a child responds to rules, authority, or boundaries?*
- Encourage practical thinking, considering things such as eye contact, physical proximity, independence versus shared decision-making, emotional expression, or comfort with speaking up.
- Reinforce a strengths-based approach that recognises and values cultural diversity and different lived experiences.

#### Step 4: Creating culturally safe spaces

- Ask each pair to add two short responses to their page:
  - *What might happen if a space does not feel culturally safe for children and families?*
  - *How might children respond if they do not feel culturally safe or see their culture is represented and valued:*
  - *What is one practical action you can take to strengthen cultural safety and show children and families that their culture is valued in everyday practice?*
- Encourage small, realistic actions rather than broad statements. For example:
  - Asking families about preferred communication styles.
  - Learning correct pronunciation of names.
  - Using activities and resources that reflect a range of cultures and identities.
  - Engaging in reflection and understanding how your own assumptions and biases may influence your responses and interpretations of behaviour.
  - Providing multiple ways for children to participate.
  - Seeking cultural consultation and advice for additional support or when unsure.
  - Ask each pair to nominate a spokesperson before returning to the main room.

#### Step 5: Whole-group reflection

- Bring participants back to the main room and screen-share the whiteboard or document.
- Invite each spokesperson to briefly share:
  - One element or part of culture they hadn't previously considered.
  - One practical action that strengthens culturally safe practice.
- As facilitator, highlight and reflect common themes across the mosaics.
- Reinforce:

- Creating culturally safe spaces is not just learning about and knowing everything about every culture.
- Culturally safe practice is an ongoing process, which involves being reflective, responsive, and recognising the influence education and care staff have on children's sense of belonging and protection.
- Remind participants that space is only culturally safe if children and families experience it as safe, inclusive, and respectful.

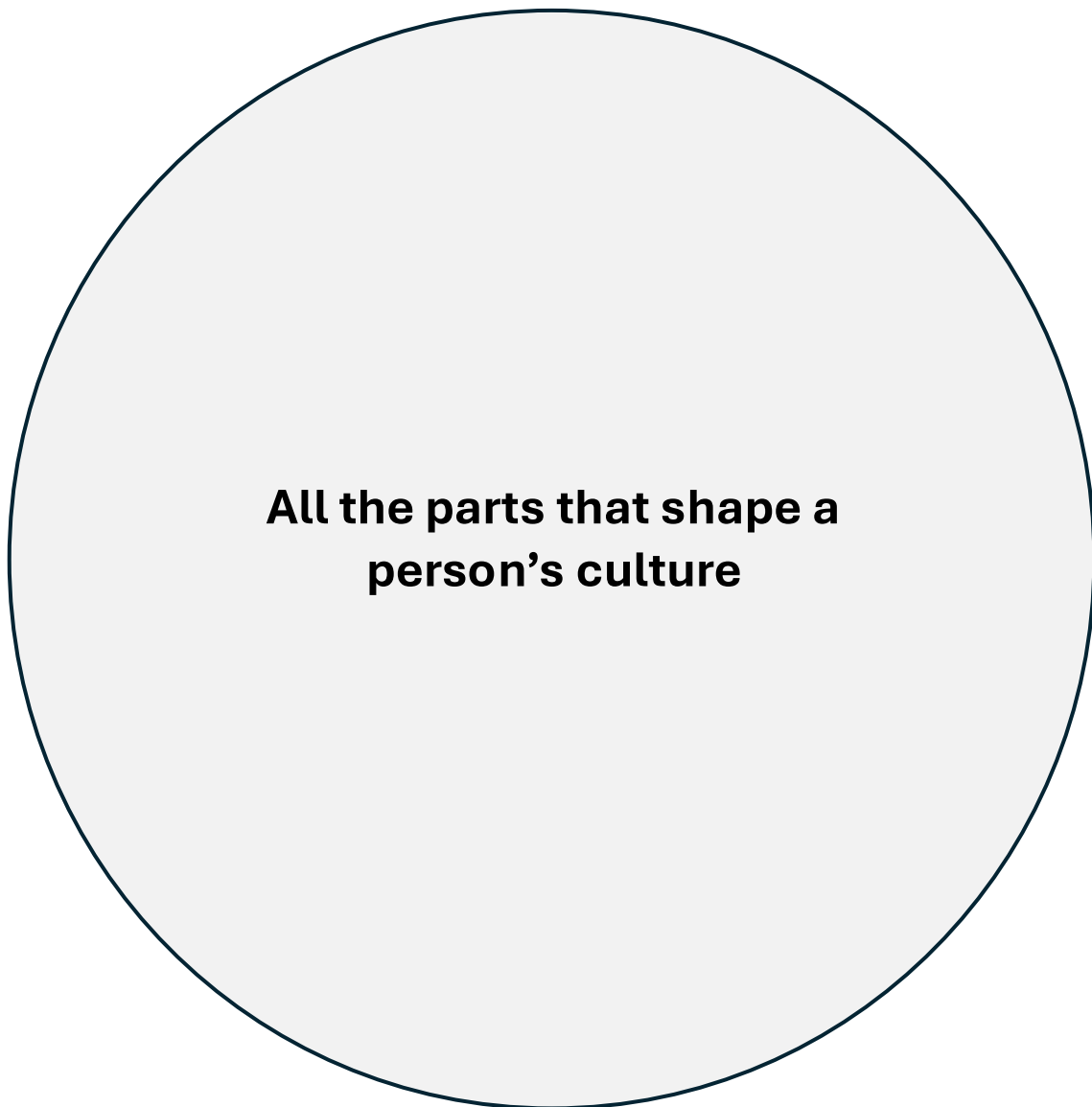


## Worksheet: Creating culturally safe spaces

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### Mapping culture

Culture is complex and made up of many different parts. In your group, brainstorm and map all the different parts that shape a person's culture. Draw or write words around the circle below.



**All the parts that shape a  
person's culture**

## Connecting culture to safety

For 3-4 of the elements you identified, discuss and respond below:

**Element 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?

How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?

**Element 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?

How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?

**Element 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?

How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?

**Element 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

How might this influence what safety feels like for a child?

How might this influence how a child builds relationships with education and care staff and peers?

## Cultural safety in practice

What might happen if a space does not feel culturally safe for children and families?

How might children respond if they do not feel culturally safe or see their culture is represented or valued?

Think about:

- Group time and activities.
- Transitions.
- Behaviour guidance.
- Family communication.
- Participation expectations.

Example situation:

What is one practical action education and care staff can take to strengthen cultural safety and show children and families that their culture is valued in everyday practice?

This action should be:

- Realistic
- Everyday
- Within your influence

Action:

**Remember that a space is only culturally safe if children and families experience it as safe, inclusive, and respectful.**

### Reflection

One reminder I will carry into my practice is:



## Prompt sheet: Creating culturally safe spaces


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The prompts below are designed to support discussion during the Culture mosaic activity. Facilitators are encouraged to print and provide the box below to participants after initial brainstorming has begun. Allowing groups to first generate their own ideas helps surface existing understanding and avoids limiting thinking and creativity too early.

These prompts are not an exhaustive list. Culture is complex and experienced differently by every individual and family. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt or add prompts that reflect their service and the local community, context, and diversity of the group.

### **Around the circle, consider:**

- Language(s) spoken
- Family structure
- Traditions and celebrations
- Faith or spirituality
- Community connections
- Food and daily routines
- Ways of communicating
- Views about children and parenting
- Ideas about respect and authority
- Migration or settlement history
- Connection to Country or land
- Socioeconomic background
- Experiences of discrimination or privilege
- Education experiences
- Gender roles or expectations
- Storytelling, music, art

<b>Activity 3: Every child feels safe in different ways</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	To help participants recognise that safety is experienced differently by each child and to practise responding with curiosity rather than assumption.
<b>Time</b>	25-30 minutes
<b>Format</b>	
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open space for circle discussion</li> <li>• Optional: Talking object (e.g., soft toy, stone, small ball)</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator Preamble

*“When talking about keeping children safe, we need to keep in mind that every child is different and feels safe in different ways. Culture, living with a disability, and experiences of trauma, all influence what safety feels like. This activity helps us slow down and think about safety from the child’s perspective and what might help them feel safe.”*

### Remind participants

- This is a reflective activity.
- Speak generally and keep examples de-identified.
- Listen respectfully.
- Participation is encouraged but voluntary.

### Step 1: Set the frame (5 minutes)

- Invite participants to sit in a circle.
- Explain that this is a reflective activity, about exploring perspectives with curiosity and learning from each other.

### Step 2: Reflection round (10-15 minutes)

- Ask the group the following prompts, one at a time:
  - Prompt 1: *“Think of a child who may experience safety differently from others. What might help that child feel safe and secure? How might we know when a child feels safe?”*
  - Prompt 2: *“How might a child’s cultural background influence how they express emotions, communicate, or participate in activities and relate to staff and peers?”*
  - Prompt 3: *“Considering their strengths and needs, what adjustments can be made to support children living with a disability?”*

- *Prompt 4: “How might children who have experienced trauma show survival responses such as fight, flight, freeze or fawn?”*
  - *Prompt 5: “What behaviour might adults misinterpret if we do not consider things like culture, disability, trauma or communication differences?”*
  - *Prompt 6: “What is one small thing adults can do to increase a child’s sense of belonging, trust, and connection?”*
- Allow participants to briefly share one idea each.
  - Encourage short, practical responses.



### **Facilitator tips**

- If discussion becomes abstract, gently ask: *“What would that look like tomorrow in your room or service?”*
- Reinforce that inclusive safety is built through small, planned, and consistent actions.

### Step 3: Reframing practice (5-10 minutes)

- Ask: *“When we see behaviour that feels challenging, what question could we ask ourselves before reacting?”*
- Examples participants may suggest:
  - *“What might this child need right now?”*
  - *“What might this behaviour be communicating?”*
  - *“What does safety look and feel like for this child?”*

### Step 4: Closing reflection (2 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete silently or aloud: *“One way I can support inclusive safety in my everyday practice is ...”*





## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using gallery view, chat responses, and optional breakout rooms. The purpose remains the same: to create a reflective space where participants recognise that safety is experienced differently by each child, and to consider inclusive safety and how everyday actions and responses shape children's sense of belonging and safety.

### Platform preparation (before the session)

- Ensure participants can use gallery view so they can see one another.
- Prepare the reflection prompts on a slide or ready to paste into the chat.
- Decide whether you will use whole-group sharing or small breakout groups, depending on group size.

### Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that this is a reflective activity.
- Reinforce that sharing is voluntary and responses can remain general and de-identified.
- Encourage participants to keep cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Remind participants that support pathways are available if needed (e.g., EAP, supervision)

## Step 2: Set the frame

- Invite participants to turn on gallery view so everyone can see each other, creating a “virtual circle.”
- Explain that this will be a structured reflection round.
- Explain that this is a reflective activity, about exploring perspectives with curiosity and learning from each other
- Let participants know you will share one prompt at a time, and they may respond verbally, type in the chat, or simply listen.

## Step 3: Reflection round

- Share the first prompt on screen or in the chat. After each prompt, pause and invite short and brief responses and contributions.
- Participants may unmute briefly, raise a virtual hand, or type a short response in the chat. Encourage one idea per participant to keep a steady pace.
  - Prompt 1: *“Think of a child who may experience safety differently from others. What might help that child feel safe and secure? How might we know when a child feels safe?”*
  - Prompt 2: *“How might a child’s cultural background influence how they express emotions, communicate, or participate in activities and related to staff and peers?”*
  - Prompt 3: *“Considering their strengths and needs, what adjustments can be made to support children living with a disability?”*
  - Prompt 4: *“How might children who have experienced trauma show survival responses such as fight, flight, freeze, or fawn?”*
  - Prompt 5: *“What behaviour might adults misinterpret if we do not consider things like culture, disability, trauma or communication differences?”*
  - Prompt 6: *“What is one small thing adults can do to increase a child’s sense of belonging, trust, and connection?”*

#### Step 4: Reframing practice

- Bring the group back together if using breakout rooms.
- Ask the whole group: *“When we see behaviour that feels challenging, what question could we ask ourselves before reacting?”*
- Invite participants to type responses and possible reframing questions into the chat.
- You may read several aloud and highlight common themes.
- Examples may include:
  - *“What might this child need right now?”*
  - *“What might this behaviour be communicating?”*
  - *“What does safety look and feel like for this child?”*
- Optionally, use a quick poll to ask participants which reframing question they are most likely to use in practice.

#### Step 5: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to complete the sentence in the chat or silently: *“One way I can support inclusive safety in my everyday practice is ...”*
- Allow a brief pause before closing the session.