

## Supporting culturally reflective practice

### LEADERS SERIES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this resource may contain images, audio or names of people who have passed away.

### Module 4: Understanding your role

Welcome to the fourth module of Emerging Minds' series for leaders focusing on culturally reflective practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. This module will explore how to understand your role in engaging in culturally reflective practice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live their culture; they experience the world as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person and know their communities best. Therefore, a good ally appreciates their need to make decisions about the things impacting them. An example of this could be asking parents if you are the right person to support them, rather than making this decision yourself.<sup>1,2</sup>

On a deeper level, non-Indigenous practitioners are part of a system that has left significant, lasting scars on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, causing many to feel wary of contact with government and community services. The resulting barrier is complex, difficult to navigate, and takes time to overcome.

Non-Indigenous practitioners providing care or support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families need to engage in a continuous process of self-reflection. They can engage in this process through learning, listening and building relationships, and by considering the role they play as an ally for



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Allyship requires non-Indigenous practitioners to constantly cast a critical eye on themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Self-awareness is an essential element of providing safety in a service, program or practice setting.

Self-reflective practice is vital to help practitioners understand how they might be perceived by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This involves querying your role and relationship with the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person you are working with, as well as the way you view your own and others' expertise.

The use of 'expertise' can be an obstacle when it comes to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. It can reinforce a history of marginalisation and can deny Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the opportunity to tell their stories. Without an understanding of the ways expertise can create barriers, it may not be possible for you to develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

## Reflective questions

- Have you considered whether you are the right person to work with this Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander person? Is there someone more suitable with whom they have an existing relationship that they might find it easier to open up to? Have you asked the person who they feel would best be able to support them?
- How do you consider the roles that both clinical and non-clinical care can provide to this person?
- Do you value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers as equal knowledge holders to non-Indigenous practitioners? How could an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker offer support to the person you are working with?

## Strategies to support learning

- Know what space you are taking up and when to step back. Always remember that you are in community as a guest, in a supportive role.
- Always remember these histories come from hundreds of years of ongoing trauma and discrimination, so be mindful in your enquiry.
- When supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents or families, think of it like an ongoing self-check-in about the purpose and context for engagements.

## References

1. Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2022). [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making](#). In *Child Safety Practice Manual*. Queensland Government.
2. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). [Program guidelines for Aboriginal family-led decision making \(AFLDM\)](#). In the *Child Protection Manual*. Victorian Government.
3. Smith, J., Puckett, C., & Simon, W. (2015). [Indigenous allyship: An overview](#). Office of Aboriginal Initiatives, Wilfrid Laurier University.

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