

## TIPS FOR TRAINING ICWA CORE 3.0 COMPASSION ACTIVITY

### [Click here for training tips for the Compassion Activity.](#)

The following are suggestions for how to guide the compassion activity and discussion in a way that will evoke the emotions and help connect the compassion activity to historic trauma and social work practice.

Compassion Activity (40 minutes: 5 minute set up; 20 minute group activity; 5 minute report out; 10 minute processing and lecture). This activity (and other activities in the curriculum) work best when the tables are arranged in groups to accommodate no more than six people in a group. This arrangement encourages engagement and collaboration.

1. **Set the context for the activity.** The most effective way to achieve understanding of ICWA and the importance of ICWA compliance is to evoke deep emotion. The intent of this activity is to enhance a trauma informed practice and encourage compassion and understanding for those experiencing historic trauma.

2. **Trainer(s) will model the activity by sharing a time that they did not belong** and by sharing how they felt using single words to describe. The trainer should ensure to convey the emotions they felt in their experience.

3. **Allow participants to spend 20 minutes briefly sharing** a time when they felt as though they did not belong or fit in. The trainer may let participants know that they do not have to share a memory, but are otherwise encouraged to participate. Ask that at each table, one person keep a list of single words that describe the strong emotions that were experienced (examples: anger, loneliness, humiliation, etc.). While the participants are sharing, the trainer will draw what looks like a road on the white pad or white board as described in the trainer's guide.

4. **Trainer should change the slide** from the "Compassion Activity" slide to the "Historic Trauma" slide. Trainer reconvenes the group. Ask the group "how was that exercise?" to get a sense of the emotions in the room. Participants may offer how the activity was, and their emotional state, saying things such as "that was rough" or "I hadn't thought about that for a long time" to "that was hard." Acknowledge and validate participant's experience.

Trainer asks each table group what words they came up with to describe how it felt not to belong and will write each of the words in the road. After all of the tables have contributed and the road is full, Trainer should acknowledge that power of the words, and recognize that it may be difficult to cope with those feelings. Trainer may ask participants whether they feel they have gotten over or resolved their feelings about the event they shared. Participants may respond no, or may share how it continues to impact them.

Trainer may ask how someone would cope with these strong emotions going unresolved.

5. **Trainer asks the class to imagine a child who is placed outside the home.** The child doesn't really understand why they are not at home with their family. The child does not know how long he/she will be away from her family and has no contact with their biological family. The trainer asks the class to imagine that the child has been moved away from their neighborhood and school. The child is with a family that is completely different from their own: maybe the new family goes to church(or does not);

they eat different foods; maybe they are strict, maybe they have a house schedule, maybe they have lots of money and nice (or not), etc.

- Trainer may ask “do you think these words may reflect what that child is feeling?”

**6. Trainer asks the class to imagine the child is adopted grows up in with the new family.** While the child is treated well and is included as though that was their biological family, the child always has a sense that he does not belong. Imagine the child has a sense that these are not “his people” and there is somewhere else he is really supposed to be. Imagine the child lives with an inexplicable longing.

- Trainer may ask, “Do you think these emotions [on the road] may represent how that child is feeling?”

**7. Trainer asks the participants to imagine the child as an adult,** who finds his biological relatives (including possibly siblings) and that he is Native American. Imagine his relatives say to him things like “we’ve been waiting for you to come home” or “my mom told me about you.”

- Trainer may ask the class what that adult would feel like making these connections? What do you think that person would experience emotionally?

**8. Trainer asks participants to imagine they are the child’s parent.** Trainer asks participants to imagine that the parent experienced multiple traumas in their own childhood that remain unresolved. Trainer asks participants to also imagine that parent experiencing a number of What if you experience a number of contemporary traumas.

- Do any of these emotions [on the road] accurately reflect how you would feel if your child was removed and you were not sure when or if you were going to see him again?
- How would this affect your relationships with other children you may still have in your care? With your partner?

**6. Trainer shows the second historic trauma slide** and reviews the characteristics of what unresolved grief and loss look like. Trainer ties together the exercise and the feelings they experienced to what children and families are experiencing. Trainer discusses the losses experienced historically by Native peoples, the prevalence of contemporary traumas and reiterates the feelings described by the participants are the same feelings experienced by their families.

Trainer asks, before moving on to the next slide, How would you cope with these kinds of feelings? What they think they may see as a social worker?

**7. Trainer returns to the first historic trauma slide** and then explains to participants that what we have been talking about is historic cultural trauma and its manifestation across generations. Trainer may also indicate that the social worker needs to navigate the “road” to connect with the family, and offer that active efforts can assist the social worker in that effort.

**8.** Trainer may ask for final questions or comments before transitioning to contributions.