



Trauma Competent Medical Care Preparation

If you are a survivor of trauma, you may find that accessing medical or dental care is a very difficult experience. It may cause you to avoid care in general and it may prevent you from getting essential care you need.

Below is a list of questions that contains things you can ask to seek out trauma-informed medical or dental care, advocate for yourself with care providers, and manage trauma symptoms during an appointment or procedure.

Things you can ask for ahead of time or during the appointment:

1. Request a trauma competent provider and clinical staff (nurses, techs, etc.) before making the appointment. Ask about the trauma competence training and education the providers have received.
2. Trauma competence includes a validating, affirming, empowering, knowledgeable, patient environment that allows for your choice, for pauses, for questions, and for you to practice grounding before, during, and after the appointment as needed.
3. Ask that the first appointment be free of procedures and ask that the provider listen to the concerns you have, what triggers your trauma, and what coping you might need before, during and after the appointment.
4. Request that your therapist/advocate/case manager contact your provider(s) ahead of time and discuss trauma competence and your needs. Sign a release of information so that your therapist/advocate/case manager can do so.
5. Ask for an anti-anxiety medication be prescribed prior to the appointment and/or during the appointment to minimize your acute stress response.
6. Take a friend or companion that you trust with your needs who can also advocate for you and can be present and take notes on the appointment.
7. You can ask for a nurse to be present in the room with the provider.
8. You can specify the gender of your providers.
9. You can request that no students/residents/learners are present.
10. Practice calming/grounding/visualization strategies prior to the appointment so that you feel prepared to do so during your appointment.

11. Know that you can pause or end an appointment with a provider at any time, even during a procedure (pap, dental appointment, physical examination, etc.) especially if you have asked for your needs to be met (going slower, pausing, asking for touch to be gentle, being told exactly what the provider is doing or being distracted if you prefer not to know, etc.). You never have to complete an appointment with a provider who is not listening or treating you with patience and warmth.
12. You can also remind yourself the reasons you are seeking the appointment, use distraction to ground yourself (noting colors in the room, counting, etc.) so that you are not tuned into the experience. You can do breathing exercises. You can practice all these skills ahead of time, so you feel empowered during the appointment.
13. You can give your provider a review of their work with you and ask for improvements as needed if you plan to continue with the provider.
14. You can ask, if you are LGBTQ+, for an LGBTQ+ affirming provider and clinical staff. You can ask about training and experience in these areas.
15. You can ask, if you are Black, Brown, Indigenous, any additional cultural background, speak a language other than the predominant language, that you have an affirming provider who recognizes the multi-layered impact of minority stress on people with sexual trauma. You can ask about training and experience in these areas.
16. You can ask for anything you need that is not incorporated on this list. You are the client, you and/or your insurance are paying for your appointment. You have a right to choice and to trauma competent care.

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References:

- Donachie, L. (2018). Preparing and advocating for medical care as a trauma survivor. [Blog]. PACEs Connection. Retrieved on 12 August 2021 from: <https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/preparing-and-advocating-for-medical-care-as-a-trauma-survivor>.



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