

Reflective Practice

Our team understood from the start that Lived Experts need more than just a quick fix for emotional and trauma support. Knowing that the work of driving change in child welfare comes with unique challenges like secondary trauma, power imbalances, implicit bias, moral injury, feelings of helplessness, and social injustice. We knew that expecting Lived Experts to find all this support on their own was not enough.

To meet this need, we partnered with Dr. Gina Veloni, a Reflective Practice practitioner, to offer monthly group sessions. These sessions provide a safe space where Lived Experts can share their experiences and learn new ways to cope with the pressures of their work. Before starting the sessions, Dr. Veloni met with our co-design team to develop a practice that kept the important parts of reflective practice while addressing the unique needs of Lived Experts in systems change work.

What Is Reflective Practice?

Reflective practice involves contemplating our work and feelings to foster learning and growth. It encourages slowing down, listening to ourselves and others, and identifying areas for improvement. This process enhances self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and reduces stress. Dr. Veloni uses a model called the HOLD Model to guide these reflective practice sessions.

Here's what it means:

- **Hold:** This step is about creating a safe space. It means being present, offering a consistent and trusting container for everyone's feelings, and making sure that everyone feels supported without judgment.
- **Observe:** In this step, we take a moment to really see what is happening, not just the words, but the feelings and nonverbal cues too. This helps us slow down and understand the situation better.
- **Listen:** Finally, we listen deeply. This means paying careful attention to each other's words, tone, and emotions, and using empathy to understand different perspectives.
- **Discover:** Here, we explore our thoughts and feelings to find new ideas and strategies. By discussing and reflecting, we learn and grow together.

The HOLD Model is important because it gives Lived Experts a structured way to talk about their work and emotions. It helps them build skills, find their own answers, and support each other in ways that outside organizations often cannot.

Our monthly reflective practice meetings have become a key resource for our Lived Experts. They value the chance to share their stories, learn new coping strategies, and feel truly supported by peers who understand their challenges.