

Three phases of Cultivate support



As Cultivate has developed over the last two years it has become evident our ways of working with service users generally falls into three phases – all of equal value.

Phase One support

Focused, gentle interactions

These are titrated (this means continuously measuring and adjusting the level of involvement so as not to overwhelm the service user).

The aim is to create a safe, brief and gentle connection with an optional element of participating in a simple activity i.e. having a go on a guitar, playing a drum, potting a plant, drawing, playing chess.

This approach works best for people who have experienced complex trauma and who find it hard to trust. The person may have a current addiction and may be experiencing a high level of chaos. They may be struggling to feel safe and find it challenging to retain focus on anything for more than a brief period of time. Support is “titrated” and responses responded to empathically. Short periods of friendly interaction work best, working towards longer periods of interaction as safety is established and trust built.

Phase Two support

Short commitment

The aim is to create a connection while participating in an activity. It can be of a longer duration and have several steps such as making something like a wreath or plant arrangement, an art activity, learning some chords, or making a song together. Another example would be going on a trip into the community with staff and a few other service users. The task would be completed in one session and last no more than a few hours at most.

This approach works well for those with whom a foundation of safety has been created over time and who can recognise the value of the activity and also feel confident enough to imagine succeeding at the activity.

Phase Three support

Structured engagements

The aim is to complete a goal-focused project or horticultural therapy programme which will involve planning, obtaining materials, and commitment to completing it. It would also have an agreed goal or set of goals and have an imagined outcome that feels achievable and desirable. The achievement will be acknowledged i.e. with a certificate.

Phase 3 support works best for those in a recovery-supported environment such as the Recovery Services, where service users are surrounded by residents who are also in recovery and supportive staff; where accommodation maintenance is relatively stable, and the service user understands how this project/programme may support their recovery. It can also be helpful for those who have moved into more independent accommodation and see the project or programme as something that will help them move in the direction that they wish to move in i.e. employment, education, or a rewarding hobby.

How we use these three phrases

These three approaches may be used progressively with a service user as they move through services and become safer and more tolerant of operating within structure. The phases can be used more generally as deliberate approaches in line with the service's environment and how that reflects where the individual is on their recovery journey.

The Cultivate team is able to employ any of these approaches and will assess which approach is likely to be most effective based on where the person is in their recovery, which service they are currently within, and what the person is ready and able to realistically engage in. Structuring our support in this way helps us to develop realistic expectations of what effective support will look like and is sensitive to the symptoms of complex trauma that we frequently see. The danger of attempting too much rigidity early on is that it can lead to re-traumatisation and negatively impact the forming of a therapeutic, "safe" relationship.

“ We believe titration to be one of the more important parts in trauma healing and to avoid re-traumatization. Think of it this way: titration = slowing. If one of the key characteristics of trauma is having too much, too fast, then titration is the exact opposite of what happened during the traumatic experience. ”

Vern Kehler

For more information about why Cultivate has chosen this three-phase approach, please read:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-trauma/202206/polyvagal-theory-approach-understanding-trauma>