

Lived Experience Advisory Network

*Amplifying lived expertise to improve how we prevent and respond to domestic,
family and sexual violence in South Australia.*

Fostering Safe Group Discussions

Acknowledgement of Country

Embolden acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands across South Australia.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and we are committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the shared effort to end domestic, family and sexual violence.



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Acknowledgement of DFSV Lived Experience

Embolden acknowledges the strength, courage and resilience of people with a lived and/or living experience of domestic, family and/or sexual violence.

We honour those who have not survived and pay our respects to the families, communities and loved ones who continue to carry that loss.

We recognise the importance of lived experience voices and are committed to ensuring that lived expertise meaningfully informs our collective efforts to end domestic, family and/or sexual violence.

Purpose of this guide

This guide has been developed to support safe, respectful and inclusive conversations within the Lived Experience Advisory Network (LEAN).

Discussions in the LEAN will include topics related to domestic, family and sexual violence. The ways in which we interact and the words we use can affect how safe people feel, how experiences are understood, and how others respond.

This guide is intended to support shared understanding and help create a space where everyone feels comfortable and able to participate.

Your voice matters

LEAN members are not required to disclose personal details about their lived experience/s.

Everyone has their own way of describing what they choose to share about their experiences. You are not expected to change how you speak about your own experiences, and there is no requirement to use specific words.

At the same time, the LEAN is a shared space. Some language—particularly graphic descriptions of violence—can be distressing for others. Where possible, we encourage language that supports the wellbeing of everyone in the group.

When participating in any LEAN activity, we ask you to consider using language that;



For example, using “physical violence” instead of describing what you experienced, or “sexual assault/violence” instead of explicit detail will help minimise potential distress to others.

Different words, different preferences

People may use different words to describe their experiences, including:

- victim
- survivor
- victim-survivor
- survivor-advocate
- person with lived/living experience

There is no single correct term. You are encouraged to use the language that feels right for you, while respecting the preferences of others.

Fostering safe and 'safe enough' group discussions

LEAN engagements are a shared space where people bring diverse experiences, identities and perspectives. Feeling "safe" to participate will look different for everyone, so we aim to create a "safe enough" environment where all members can contribute in ways that feel right for them.

We ask members to support respectful and inclusive discussions by:

- remaining mindful of the specific focus and purpose of the engagement
- listening to others without judgement
- respecting different experiences, perspectives and language choices
- using inclusive language, including correct pronouns
- being aware that some topics or language may be distressing for others

LEAN encourages a **"take space, give space"** approach. This means being aware of how much space you are taking in conversations and making room for others to contribute. Everyone's voice is important.

You are not expected to manage or challenge others' behaviour unless you feel comfortable. Facilitators and Embolden representatives are responsible for maintaining a safe and respectful environment. They may:

- guide or reframe discussions
- address issues such as misgendering
- support the group if conversations become challenging

At the beginning of each session, facilitators will work with the group to establish shared expectations ("group norms") to support respectful participation.

People engage in different ways. You are welcome to contribute in ways that feel comfortable to you, including:

- speaking during discussions
- using chat or online tools
- sharing feedback after the session
- speaking with an Embolden team member

At the beginning of each session, facilitators will also let participants know where they can go if they need a quiet moment. This may include a nearby space where you can take a break, catch your breath, and return when you feel ready.

Facilitators are aware that some participants may become overwhelmed at times and are there to respond in supportive way. If you need support or are feeling overwhelmed during a session, you are encouraged to let a facilitator or Embolden team member know, or to step out at any time.

If you do step away, a facilitator will check in with you to see if you need any support and whether you feel ready to return. This will always be done respectfully and in a way that supports your choice.

You are always in control of how you participate, including whether you take a break, step away, or choose not to continue.

We hope your LEAN experiences are positive and supportive. If you have any questions, please contact livedexperience@embolden.org.au.