

Tel-Hai University and BGU

TRAINING EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING IN CRISIS

**Practical Scenario-Based Tools for
Educators in Disrupted Learning
Environments**





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Developed by

Dorit Alt

Tel-Hai University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee (TEL-HAI)

Limor Aharonson-Daniel

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU)

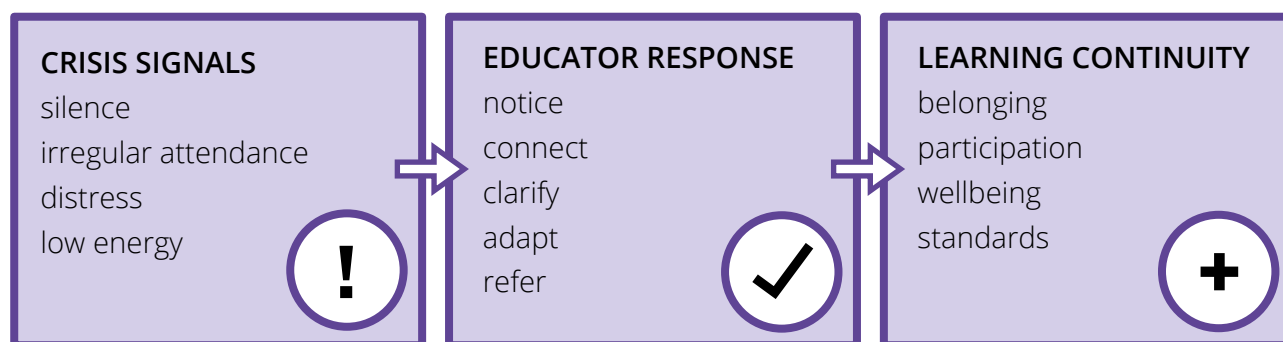
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Training Educators to Support Student Engagement and Wellbeing in Crisis

TRAINING EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING IN CRISIS



PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed primarily for facilitators, faculty developers, teaching-and-learning staff, and academic leaders who plan to deliver professional development activities for educators. It is structured as a practical facilitation guide and training toolkit rather than as a theoretical textbook.

The materials include facilitator guidance, session agendas, module plans, printable scenario cards, worksheets, checklists, and evaluation tools. Facilitators may use the full manual to plan and deliver training sessions, while selected worksheets and scenario cards may also be copied or adapted as participant handouts.

Contents

SECTION	WHAT IT INCLUDES
1. Trainer overview	Purpose, outcomes, audience, learning logic
2. Facilitator preparation	Ground rules, psychological safety, boundaries, and materials
3. Delivery options	90-minute workshop, half-day session, and three-meeting format
4. Module 1	Understanding student engagement and wellbeing in crisis
5. Module 2	Sustaining engagement under uncertainty
6. Module 3	Trauma-informed responses to student distress
7. Hands-on participant materials	Worksheets, templates, checklists, and response scripts
8. Printable scenario-card set	Twelve ready-to-use scenario cards
9. Evaluation package	Pre/post items, reflection form, and facilitator debrief
10. Closing summary	Core messages and implementation suggestions

HOW TO USE THIS FILE

The document is designed as both a facilitator manual and a printable participant workbook. You can keep the full version for trainers and copy selected worksheets or scenario cards into a shorter handout.

1. TRAINER OVERVIEW

Program rationale

Periods of crisis and disruption place significant pressure on students, educators, and academic institutions. In such conditions, maintaining learning continuity requires more than technological solutions or administrative flexibility. It depends on educators' ability to sustain a meaningful connection with students, recognise signs of disengagement or distress, and respond in ways that preserve academic expectations and psychological safety.

This training program supports higher education educators working in crisis-affected or unstable learning environments. It provides practical, low-burden tools for common teaching challenges that arise when students experience uncertainty, emotional strain, interrupted routines, displacement, reduced motivation, or difficulty participating in learning activities.

The program is scenario-based. Rather than asking participants to memorise theory, it develops professional judgment through realistic cases, guided discussion, and response design. The core learning tool is a set of scenario cards that help educators analyse what is happening, what may be within their role, and what response would support connection, wellbeing, and learning continuity. For this reason, the manual is written for those who facilitate educator training and support teaching teams in applying crisis-sensitive, scenario-based practices.

Program aim

AIM

To equip educators with practical, scenario-based strategies for sustaining student engagement, connection, and wellbeing in disrupted learning environments.

Learning objectives

1. Identify common signs of disengagement, reduced participation, and emotional strain during crisis or disruption.
2. Explain how crisis conditions may affect motivation, concentration, attendance, communication, and belonging.
3. Apply trauma-informed educational principles to teaching situations without assuming a therapeutic role.
4. Use flexible pedagogical strategies to support continuity of learning under unstable conditions.
5. Respond to students with empathy while maintaining professional boundaries and academic expectations.
6. Use scenario cards for reflective judgment, collaborative discussion, and practical decision-making.

Target audience

Users of this manual

This manual is intended primarily for facilitators, faculty developers, teaching-and-learning staff, and academic leaders who plan and deliver professional development for educators.

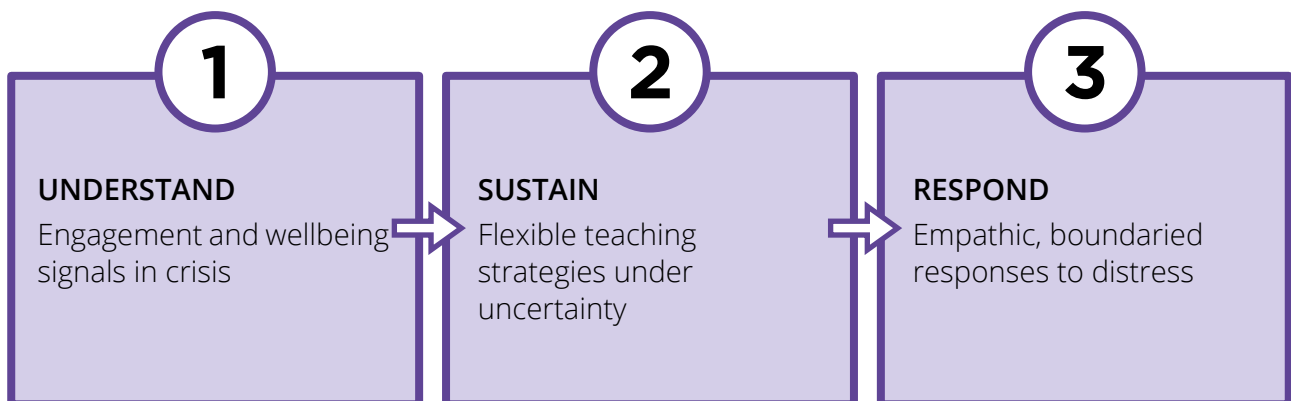
Target audience of the training

The training itself is intended for lecturers, instructors, teaching assistants, program coordinators, and other academic staff involved in teaching and student support. It may be delivered in higher education institutions, teacher education programs, professional development frameworks, and institutional training initiatives.

Core learning questions

1. What is happening in this teaching situation?
2. What might the student or group be experiencing?
3. What are the possible risks for engagement, wellbeing, and learning continuity?
4. What is within the educator's professional role?
5. What response could support connection, psychological safety, and academic progress?
6. How can academic expectations be maintained with flexibility and care?

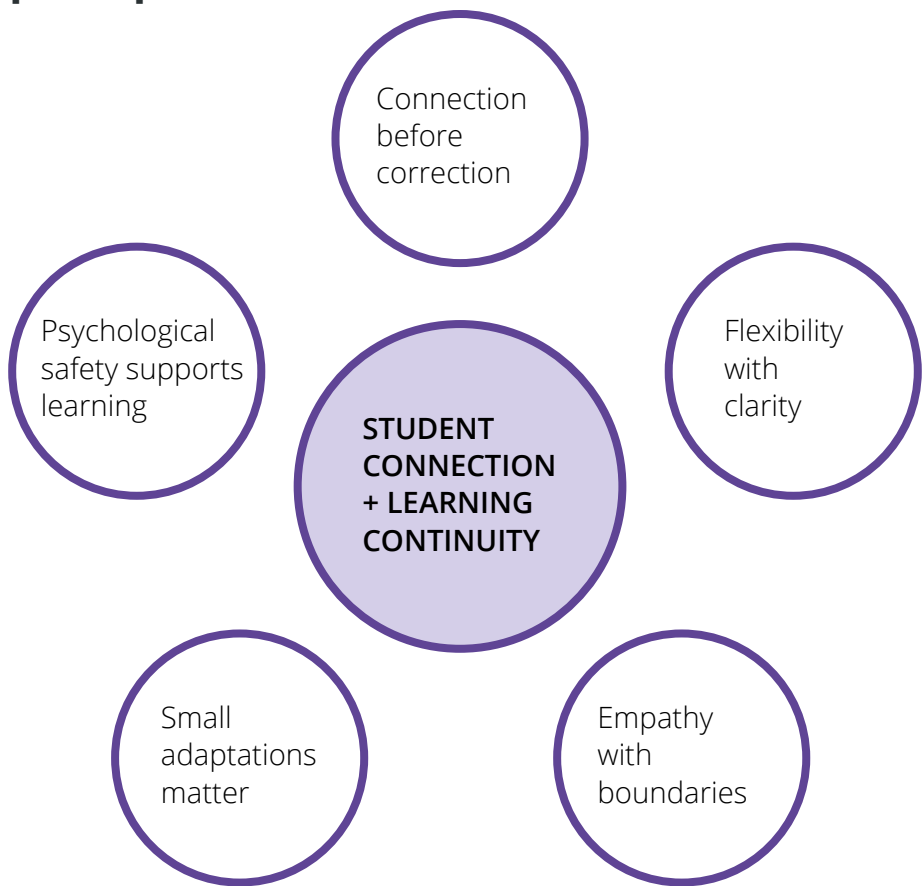
Three-module learning journey



Each module moves from a brief framing to hands-on analysis, response design, and transfer to the participant's own teaching context.

Figure 1. Three-module learning journey.

Training principles



The principles translate trauma-informed thinking into everyday teaching decisions without turning educators into therapists.

Figure 2. Five practical principles used throughout the training.

PRINCIPLE	MEANING IN PRACTICE
Connection before correction	When students disengage, the first response seeks to restore contact before assuming a lack of effort.
Flexibility with clarity	Flexibility works best when expectations, deadlines, and minimum requirements are explicit.
Empathy with boundaries	Educators can validate and support students while staying within a teaching role.
Small adaptations matter	Shorter tasks, clearer communication, and alternative participation options can prevent dropout from learning.
Psychological safety supports learning	Respectful, predictable, and non-shaming teaching environments make re-engagement more likely.

What this training is – and what it is not

THIS TRAINING IS	THIS TRAINING IS NOT
A practice-oriented educational training for teaching staff.	A clinical training or mental health intervention.
A way to make everyday teaching responses more relational, clear, and flexible.	A replacement for counselling, disability support, student affairs, or emergency procedures.
A structure for discussing difficult cases with colleagues.	A demand that educators become available at all times.
A method for balancing care and academic standards.	A recommendation to remove course expectations whenever students struggle.

2. FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before the session

- **Review institutional support routes:** Prepare a short list of contacts for counselling, accessibility, advising, emergency services, and program coordination.
- **Decide which cards to use:** Choose 3-5 scenario cards that match participants' teaching context and delivery format.
- **Prepare handouts:** Print or share the worksheets in Section 7 and the scenario cards in Section 8.
- **Clarify boundaries:** Explain that the training focuses on educational responses rather than clinical assessment.
- **Create a reflective climate:** Invite participants to discuss possibilities rather than judge what one educator "should have done."

Suggested opening script

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Today we will work with realistic teaching scenarios from disrupted learning environments. The goal is not to find one perfect answer. The goal is to practice professional judgment: noticing signs, avoiding assumptions, supporting re-engagement, protecting dignity, maintaining standards, and knowing when to consult or refer. We will stay within the educator role.

Group norms for psychologically safer discussion

- ☐ Speak from the educator role; avoid diagnosing students.
- ☐ Discuss patterns and responses, not identifiable student details.
- ☐ Assume complexity: behaviour may have multiple explanations.
- ☐ Separate empathy from unlimited availability.
- ☐ Use respectful language when discussing student distress or disengagement.
- ☐ Identify institutional pathways for issues that exceed teaching responsibilities.

Role-boundary map

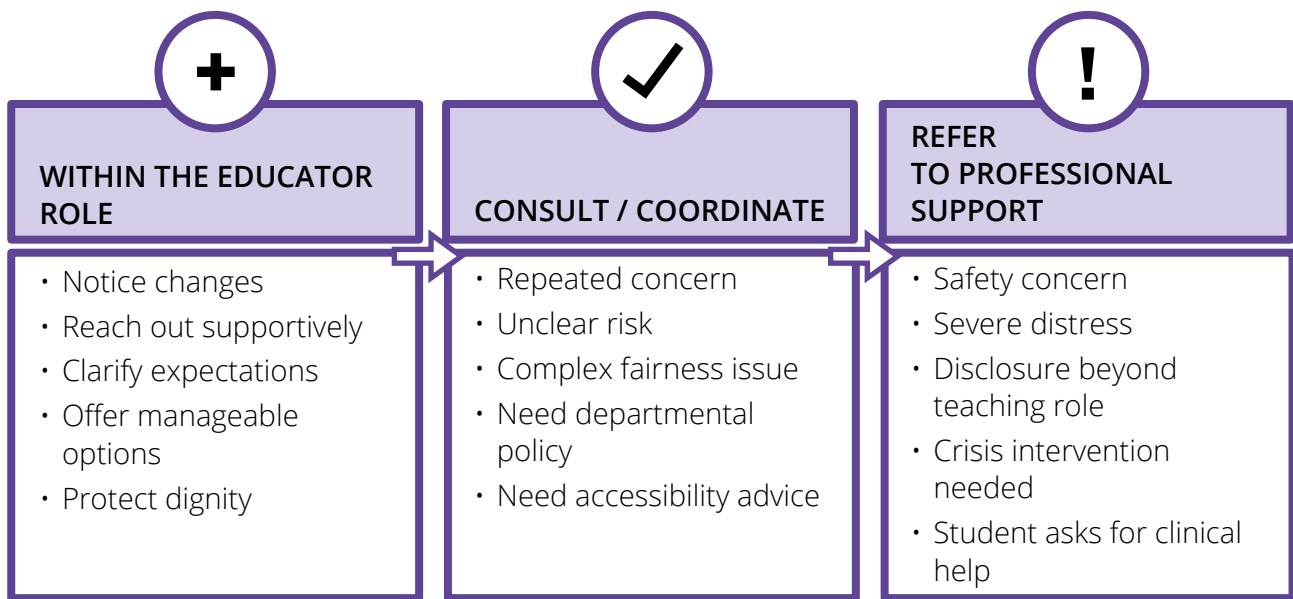


Figure 3. Role-boundary map for educators.

Materials checklist

- ☐ Scenario cards, printed or digital.
- ☐ Participant worksheet pack.
- ☐ Timer or visible agenda.
- ☐ Institutional referral and support contacts.
- ☐ Shared document or whiteboard for group notes.
- ☐ Evaluation form or online survey link.
- ☐ Optional: printed module roadmap and decision-tree graphic.

3. DELIVERY OPTIONS AND AGENDAS

The program is modular and can be delivered as a short workshop, a half-day professional development session, three separate training meetings, a teaching-team reflection session, or an online/hybrid activity. The agendas below can be adapted to local constraints.

Option A: 90-minute workshop

TIME	SEGMENT	FACILITATOR FOCUS	PARTICIPANT OUTPUT
0-10 min	Opening and purpose	Frame crisis-sensitive teaching and the educator role.	Shared expectations and norms.
10-20 min	Mini-input	Introduce signs of disengagement, principles, and boundaries.	Annotated principle sheet.
20-45 min	Scenario analysis round 1	Small groups analyse one scenario card.	Completed scenario analysis worksheet.
45-65 min	Response design	Groups write a message, plan, or classroom move.	Drafted response.
65-80 min	Whole-group debrief	Compare choices and clarify boundaries/referrals.	Shared response options.
80-90 min	Transfer and evaluation	Participants choose one action for their own course.	Action commitment and post-check.

Option B: Half-day professional development session - 4 hours

TIME	SEGMENT	ACTIVITY
0-20 min	Opening	Context, aims, norms, and participant concerns.
20-55 min	Module 1	Signals of disengagement: "What do we know vs what are we assuming?" activity.
55-70 min	Break	Optional individual reflection.
70-120 min	Module 2	Flexible pedagogy toolbox: redesign a disrupted learning week.
120-135 min	Break	Informal exchange.
135-190 min	Module 3	Boundary map, decision tree, emotional disclosure practice.
190-220 min	Teaching-team case clinic	Participants bring one anonymised dilemma and use the card structure.
220-240 min	Transfer and evaluation	Action plan, post-questionnaire, and next steps.

Option C: Three separate meetings

MEETING	FOCUS	CORE ACTIVITY	BETWEEN-SESSION TASK
1	Understanding engagement and wellbeing in crisis	Analyse signs, assumptions, and first responses.	Notice one engagement pattern in a course and write a non-diagnostic interpretation.
2	Sustaining engagement under uncertainty	Redesign a weekly learning routine using flexible pedagogy tools.	Try one low-burden adaptation and document what happened.
3	Responding to distress with boundaries	Practice response scripts and referral decisions.	Share one sustainable boundary or team process to implement.

ONLINE ADAPTATION

Use breakout rooms for scenario analysis, a shared document for group notes, polls for low-stakes participation, and a digital version of the role-boundary map. Ask participants to keep their cameras on on an optional basis and model the same flexible participation options recommended in the training.

4. MODULE 1 - UNDERSTANDING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING IN CRISIS

MODULE FOCUS: RECOGNISING SIGNS WITHOUT OVER-INTERPRETING THEM

This module introduces how crisis conditions can affect student engagement, participation, and well-being. Participants examine how disruption can appear in everyday teaching situations: silence, withdrawal, inconsistent attendance, delayed submissions, reduced concentration, emotional overload, difficulty participating, or sudden change in communication style.

Key themes

1. Crisis can disrupt routine, attention, motivation, identity, safety, and belonging.
2. Visible behaviour is only a partial signal; educators should avoid assuming the reason behind it.
3. Disengagement may be a response to overload rather than a lack of interest.
4. Connection, predictability, and educator presence can help students re-enter learning.
5. Educators need to know the limits of what can be inferred from student behaviour alone.

Mini-input for facilitator

A useful way to frame this module is to distinguish between three layers: visible signs, possible explanations, and educational responses. Visible signs may include missed tasks, silence, or low participation. Possible explanations may include distress, practical barriers, uncertainty, shame, fatigue, displacement, or competing obligations. Educational responses should focus on what can be done now: connection, clarity, a manageable next step, and referral if needed.

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

Do not ask participants to decide “what is wrong with the student.” Ask them to decide what can be observed, what remains unknown, and what low-risk educational response could restore contact.

Hands-on activity 1: Signs, assumptions, and next steps

COMPONENT	DETAILS
Purpose	Practice moving from observable signs to careful interpretations and concrete educational responses.
Time	25-35 minutes.
Materials	Scenario card, Worksheet 1, role-boundary map.
Steps	1. Read the card silently. 2. Underline visible signs only. 3. List possible explanations without choosing one as certain. 4. Decide on a first response that is supportive and brief. 5. Share one response with the group.
Debrief prompts	What did we almost assume? What information do we still not have? What response is helpful even when we do not know the full story?
Output	A completed "Signs, assumptions, and next steps" worksheet.

Example practice: The Silent Student

CARD ELEMENT	CONTENT
Teaching situation	A student who was previously active has stopped participating. The student attends online sessions but keeps the camera off, does not answer questions, and has missed two short assignments.
Key issues	• The student may be overwhelmed, displaced, anxious, practically constrained, or disengaged. • Silence should not immediately be interpreted as resistance or lack of commitment. • The educator needs to respond without pressuring for disclosure.
Possible responses	• Send a short, supportive private message. • Offer a clear and manageable path for re-engagement. • Clarify which tasks are essential and what can be submitted later. • Avoid public confrontation or assumptions.
Reflection questions	• What signs are visible and what remains unknown? • What assumptions should be avoided? • What would be a reasonable first message? • How can care be communicated without becoming intrusive?
Boundary reminder	The educator can invite contact and clarify learning options; the educator should not diagnose the student or demand personal details.

5. Module 2 - Sustaining Engagement Under Uncertainty

MODULE FOCUS: SMALL ADAPTATIONS THAT KEEP STUDENTS CONNECTED TO LEARNING

This module focuses on practical teaching strategies to help maintain student engagement under unstable conditions. Participants explore how small pedagogical adaptations can support continuity of learning when students experience irregular attendance, emotional fatigue, technological barriers, or changing personal circumstances.

Flexible pedagogy toolbox



The goal is not to lower standards, but to lower avoidable confusion and overload.

Figure 4. Flexible pedagogy toolbox.

Key themes

1. Predictable routines can provide stability during disruption.
2. Flexible participation options can reduce unnecessary barriers to learning.
3. Clear and repeated communication reduces cognitive load.
4. Short, structured learning tasks help students restart when overwhelmed.
5. Academic standards can be maintained while expectations are adapted.
6. A sense of belonging and continuity can be built through small repeated contacts.

Hands-on activity 2: Redesign a disrupted learning week

COMPONENT	DETAILS
Purpose	Practice translating flexibility into a concrete weekly teaching plan.
Time	35-45 minutes.
Materials	Scenario card, flexible pedagogy toolbox, Worksheet 3.
Steps	1. Select a scenario involving irregular attendance, low energy, or missed work. 2. Identify the essential learning outcome for the week. 3. Decide which elements must remain fixed. 4. Choose two flexible participation options. 5. Draft a weekly roadmap that students could understand in less than two minutes.
Debrief prompts	What did you keep stable? What did you simplify? How would students know what to do first?
Output	A one-week learning continuity plan.

Example practice: Irregular Attendance

CARD ELEMENT	CONTENT
Teaching situation	Several students attend inconsistently. Some join late, some miss sessions, and others explain that family, security, work, or emotional pressures make regular participation difficult.
Key issues	• Attendance difficulties may reflect real instability rather than a lack of motivation. • Students may need alternative ways to stay connected to the course. • The educator must balance flexibility with fairness and course requirements.
Possible responses	• Provide a weekly learning roadmap with essential tasks. • Distinguish between required and optional activities. • Offer short catch-up summaries or guiding questions. • Create low-stakes opportunities to reconnect.
Reflection questions	• Use predictable deadlines and one clear communication channel. • Which expectations must remain fixed? • Which participation routes can be flexible? • What small change would reduce confusion? • How can flexibility be offered fairly?
Boundary reminder	The educator can adapt participation routes while maintaining course standards and documenting any agreed accommodations.

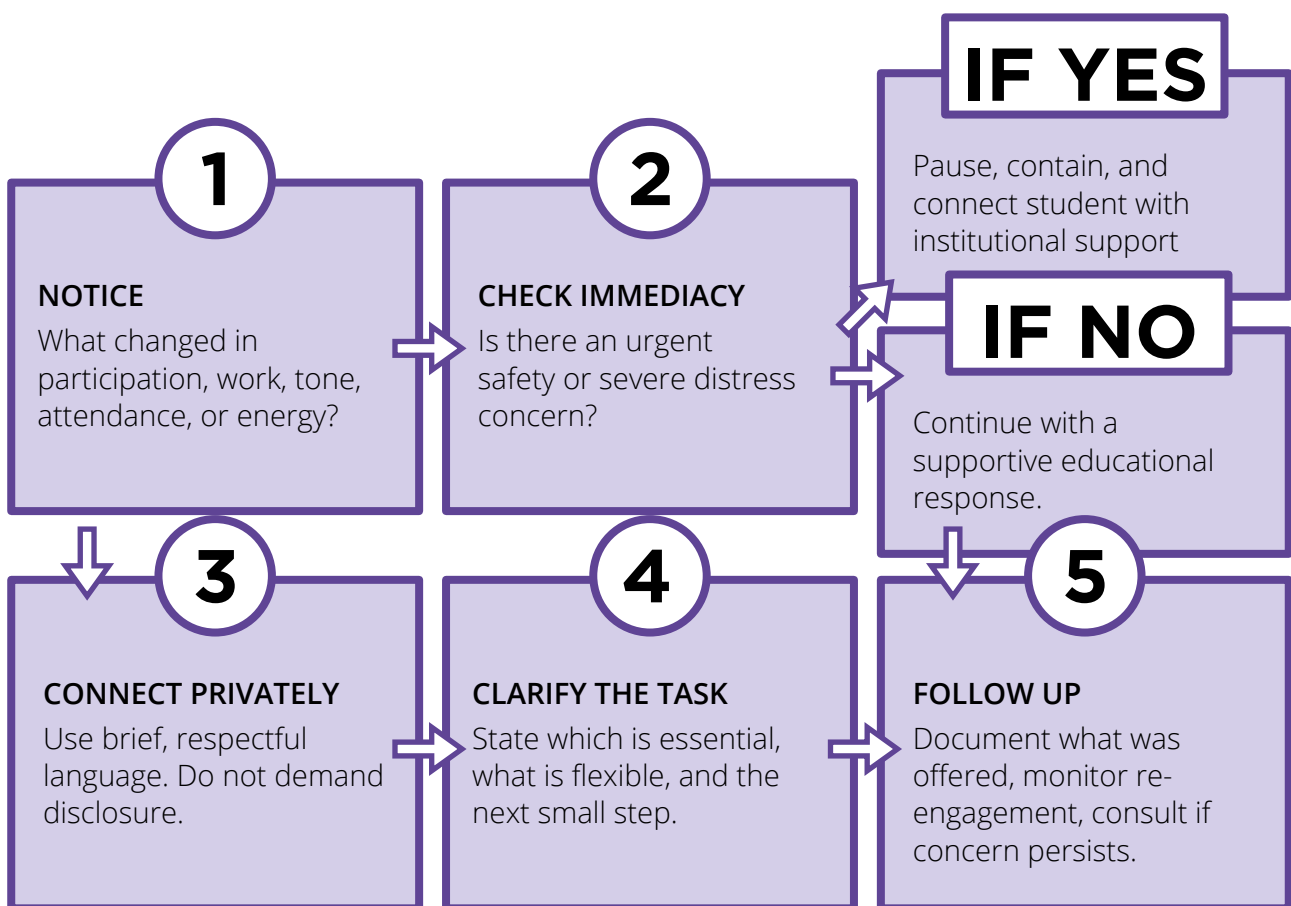
6. Module 3 - Trauma-Informed Responses to Student Distress

MODULE FOCUS: EMPATHY, CONTAINMENT, REFERRAL, AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

This module helps educators respond to emotional distress in ways that are empathic, boundaried, and role-appropriate. Participants consider how to support students' sense of safety and connection without becoming therapists or taking responsibility for issues beyond the teaching role.

Key themes

- Psychological safety in teaching environments.
- Empathy and validation without over-involvement.
- Professional boundaries and sustainable availability.
- Referral to institutional support services when needed.
- Responding to emotional disclosure while preserving dignity and student agency.
- Maintaining academic expectations with humane communication.



Guiding question: What action preserves dignity, supports learning continuity, and stays within my professional role?

Figure 5. Response decision tree for difficult teaching moments.

Hands-on activity 3: Response script lab

COMPONENT	DETAILS
Purpose	Practice writing responses that are warm, specific, brief, and boundaried.
Time	30-40 minutes.
Materials	Scenario card, Worksheet 4, institutional referral information.
Steps	1. Read a scenario involving distress or disclosure. 2. Identify what needs immediate attention and what can wait. 3. Write a 4-6 sentence response to the student. 4. Add one academic next step and one support/referral option. 5. Check the response against the boundary reminder.
Debrief prompts	What makes the response caring? What keeps it professional? What promise should not be made?
Output	A reusable response script.

Example practice: Emotional Overload During Class

CARD ELEMENT	CONTENT
Teaching situation	During a discussion, a student becomes visibly upset and says they cannot continue. Other students become quiet and the educator is unsure whether to pause, continue, or speak privately.
Key issues	• The situation requires sensitivity, containment, and respect for privacy. • The educator should avoid forcing the student to explain publicly. • The educator's role is to support immediate safety and connection, not to provide therapy.
Possible responses	• Calmly acknowledge the situation without over-focusing on the student. • Offer the option to step out, take a break, or speak after class. • Follow up privately after class. • Refer to relevant support services if needed.
Reflection questions	• Reflect on whether the activity requires adjustment. • What response protects dignity? • What must be addressed immediately? • What can wait until after class? • When is a referral necessary?
Boundary reminder	The educator can contain the moment and connect the student to support; the educator should not conduct a therapeutic conversation in class.

7. Hands-On Participant Materials

The following worksheets can be used during the workshop or copied into a participant workbook. They are intentionally simple so that educators can reuse them in teaching-team meetings after the training.

Scenario card anatomy

SCENARIO TITLE + BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION	
KEY ISSUES	What might be happening? What risks are visible?
POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES	What can the educator do now?
REFLECTION QUESTIONS	What should the group discuss?
BOUNDARY REMINDER	What is inside and outside the educator role?

Use the same structure for every card so participants can focus on professional judgment, not learning a new template.

Figure 6. Scenario-card structure used in the training

Worksheet 1 - Scenario Analysis: What Do We Know?

A. VISIBLE SIGNS

What can be directly observed in the scenario?	
What changed compared with the student's or the class's previous pattern?	

B. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS - WITHOUT ASSUMING CERTAINTY

Possible student experiences or constraints	
What information is missing?	

C. FIRST EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE

One supportive first action	
One thing to avoid	
Boundary or referral consideration	

Worksheet 2 - Role-Boundary Mapping

Use this worksheet to decide what belongs inside the educator role, what requires consultation, and what should be referred to professional support services.

WITHIN MY ROLE	CONSULT / COORDINATE	REFER TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Boundary check

- ☐ I can clearly explain the academic expectations .
- ☐ I can offer a manageable next step.
- ☐ I am not asking for unnecessary personal disclosure.
- ☐ I know whom to consult if the concern persists.
- ☐ I know which professional support service is relevant.

Worksheet 3 - Flexible Pedagogy Check

Use this tool to redesign a course activity, weekly plan, or assignment during a disruption.

A. CLARIFY THE LEARNING CORE

Essential learning outcome for this week's activity	
What must remain fixed?	
What can be flexible?	

B. REDUCE AVOIDABLE OVERLOAD

Instruction that can be made clearer or shorter	
Task that can be broken into smaller steps	
Participation alternatives that can be offered	

C. COMMUNICATION PLAN

What students need to know first	
Where/ how it will be communicated	
Deadline or next checkpoint	

Worksheet 4 - Response Design Template

Write a short message or classroom response that combines care, clarity, and boundaries.

PART OF RESPONSE	DRAFT WORDING
Acknowledge / connect	
Name the academic issue neutrally	
Offer one manageable next step	
Clarify expectation or deadline	
Offer support/ referral route if relevant	
Close with dignity and agency	

LANGUAGE TEST

Would this response feel respectful if read aloud? Does it avoid diagnosis? Does it include one clear academic next step? Does it avoid promises the educator cannot keep?

Sample response phrases

PURPOSE	POSSIBLE WORDING
Open connection	I noticed that you have not been able to participate as regularly as before, and I wanted to check in.
Avoid pressure	You do not need to share personal details, but I would like to help you identify a manageable next step.
Clarify essentials	For this week, the essential task is to complete the short reflection by Friday. The optional reading can wait.
Offer choice	You can respond by email, upload a short note, or speak with me during office hours.
Refer appropriately	If you would like additional support, the student support service can help with issues beyond the course requirements.
Maintain standards	I can offer a revised timeline, but the core assignment still needs to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Do / avoid checklist for educator responses

DO	AVOID
Use private communication when possible.	Calling out the student publicly.
Name observed behaviour neutrally.	Interpreting behaviour as laziness or disrespect.
Offer one clear next step.	Sending long, complex instructions.
Clarify what is flexible and what is required.	Changing requirements informally without documentation.
Refer when concerns exceed the teaching role.	Trying to provide therapy or crisis intervention.
Use sustainable boundaries.	Promising constant availability.

Worksheet 5 - Personal Transfer Plan

At the end of the training, participants select one practical change to implement in their own teaching context.

My transfer plan

Course / teaching context	
Challenge I want to address	
One principle I will apply	
One small adaptation I will try	
How I will communicate it to students	
What support or consultation I may need	
How I will know whether it helped	

8. Printable Scenario-Card Set

Print the following pages as individual cards or copy them into a digital handout. Each card follows the same structure so groups can move quickly from situation analysis to decision-making.

Scenario Card 1: The Silent Student

MODULE 1

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A student who was previously active has stopped participating. The student attends online sessions but keeps the camera off, does not answer questions, and has missed two short assignments.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The student may be overwhelmed, displaced, anxious, practically constrained, or disengaged.
- Silence should not immediately be interpreted as resistance or lack of commitment.
- The educator needs to respond without pressuring for disclosure.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Send a short, supportive private message.
- Offer a clear and manageable path for re-engagement.
- Clarify which tasks are essential and what can be submitted later.
- Avoid public confrontation or assumptions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What signs are visible and what remains unknown?
- What assumptions should be avoided?
- What would be a reasonable first message?
- How can care be communicated without becoming intrusive?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can invite contact and clarify learning options; the educator should not diagnose the student or demand personal details.

Scenario Card 2: Irregular Attendance

MODULE 2

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

Several students attend inconsistently. Some join late, some miss sessions, and others explain that family, security, work, or emotional pressures make regular participation difficult.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Attendance difficulties may reflect real instability rather than a lack of motivation.
- Students may need alternative ways to stay connected to the course.
- The educator must balance flexibility with fairness and course requirements.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Provide a weekly learning roadmap with essential tasks.
- Distinguish between required and optional activities.
- Offer short catch-up summaries or guiding questions.
- Create low-stakes opportunities to reconnect.
- Use predictable deadlines and one clear communication channel.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which expectations must remain fixed?
- Which participation routes can be flexible?
- What small change would reduce confusion?
- How can flexibility be offered fairly?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can adapt participation routes while maintaining course standards and documenting any agreed accommodations.

Scenario Card 3: No Work Submitted

MODULE 2

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A student has not submitted any of the first three assignments. The student is still registered and occasionally enters the course site, but has not contacted the instructor.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Non-submission may indicate overload, avoidance, lack of clarity, or practical barriers.
- The risk is that the student disappears from the course completely.
- The educator needs to move from general reminders to targeted re-entry support.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Send a short message naming the pattern and inviting a reply.
- Offer one small next step rather than a full recovery plan.
- State the minimum work needed to remain academically engaged.
- Refer to advising or support services if the pattern continues.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is the minimum viable re-entry task?
- How can the message avoid blame?
- When should the educator involve the program coordinator?
- What policy constraints matter?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can set academic expectations and offer a re-entry route; persistent non-response may require advising or institutional follow-up.

Scenario Card 4: Emotional Overload During Class

MODULE 3

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

During a discussion, a student becomes visibly upset and says they cannot continue. Other students become quiet and the educator is unsure whether to pause, continue, or speak privately.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The situation requires sensitivity, containment, and respect for privacy.
- The educator should avoid forcing the student to explain publicly.
- The educator's role is to support immediate safety and connection, not to provide therapy.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Calmly acknowledge the situation without over-focusing on the student.
- Offer the option to step out, take a break, or speak after class.
- Follow up privately after class.
- Refer to relevant support services if needed.
- Reflect on whether the activity requires adjustment.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What response protects dignity?
- What must be addressed immediately?
- What can wait until after class?
- When is a referral necessary?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can contain the moment and connect the student to support; the educator should not conduct a therapeutic conversation in class.

Scenario Card 5: Distress Disclosed by Email

MODULE 3

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A student writes a long email describing distress, difficulty concentrating, and fear of failure. The student asks whether they should continue in the course.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The email may be a request for academic help, emotional support, or both.
- The educator needs to respond warmly but not become the sole support person.
- A long email can create pressure to solve everything immediately.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Acknowledge the difficulty and thank the student for writing.
- Offer a concrete academic next step.
- Name institutional support options and encourage contact.
- Avoid giving clinical advice.
- Document the response and consult if concerned.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What should the first paragraph communicate?
- What academic information is needed?
- What referral language is appropriate?
- What should not be promised?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can provide academic options and referral information; mental health assessment is provided by professional support services.

Scenario Card 6: Crisis-Related Conflict Between Students

MODULE 3

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A class discussion about a crisis-related topic becomes tense. Two students speak sharply to one another, and other students withdraw from the conversation.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The learning environment may feel unsafe or polarised .
- The educator needs to protect dignity and learning without silencing legitimate disagreement.
- The group may need clearer discussion norms.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Pause the discussion and restate norms for respectful engagement.
- Shift from personal claims to evidence, questions, and course concepts.
- Offer a short reflective writing break.
- Follow up with students if needed.
- Consult departmental guidance for repeated or severe incidents.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What norms were missing or unclear?
- How can the educator de-escalate without shaming?
- When should the discussion stop?
- How can the topic be revisited safely?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can manage classroom dialogue and learning norms; severe harassment or threats require institutional procedures.

Scenario Card 7: Repeated Extension Requests

MODULE 2

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A student asks for a deadline extension for the third time. The reasons are understandable, but other students may see repeated flexibility as unfair.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The educator must balance compassion, fairness, workload, and learning outcomes.
- Repeated extensions may signal a deeper need for support.
- Unclear rules can increase conflict and inconsistency.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Clarify the course policy and what remains possible.
- Offer a structured completion plan with dates.
- Separate flexibility from the removal of essential outcomes.
- Refer the student to advising or accessibility support if needed.
- Use consistent documentation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is fair flexibility in this case?
- Which course outcomes cannot be waived?
- How should the plan be documented?
- When does flexibility become unsustainable?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can offer policy-consistent flexibility; long-term or formal accommodation needs should be handled through institutional channels.

Scenario Card 8: Very Low Class Energy

MODULE 2

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

The class meets after several weeks of disruption. Students are present but passive. Cameras are off, responses are minimal, and group work feels forced.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Low energy may reflect fatigue, uncertainty, emotional load, or unclear relevance.
- Traditional participation methods may not work under current conditions.
- The educator may feel rejected or responsible for restoring energy alone.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Start with a brief, predictable opening routine.
- Use a low-stakes check-in or anonymous poll.
- Break work into shorter tasks with visible outcomes.
- Offer multiple participation modes.
- Close with a clear next step.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What level of participation is realistic today?
- What task structure could help?
- How can the educator avoid taking silence personally?
- What would count as progress?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can design lower-pressure participation options; the educator cannot force emotional readiness.

Scenario Card 9: Students Avoid Cameras

MODULE 2

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

In online sessions, almost all students keep their cameras off. The instructor feels disconnected and worries that students are not engaged.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Camera use may be affected by privacy, bandwidth, fatigue, safety, or home conditions.
- Camera-off does not automatically mean disengagement.
- The educator needs alternative signals of presence and participation.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Do not require camera use unless essential and policy-supported.
- Use chat, polls, shared documents, reactions, or short written responses.
- Explain why interaction matters and offer choices.
- Set predictable participation points during the session.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What forms of presence can replace camera visibility?
- How can expectations be communicated respectfully?
- What is essential for learning in this session?
- What might students experience if pressured?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can request engagement; the educator should respect privacy and avoid public shaming about camera use.

Scenario Card 10: Displaced Student with Unstable Internet

MODULE 1

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A student explains that they are staying with relatives and do not have stable internet or a quiet place to study. They are worried about falling behind.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The barrier is practical as well as emotional.
- The student may need a minimal continuity plan, not a full participation load.
- The educator should avoid assuming the problem can be solved quickly.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Identify the most essential tasks for the next week.
- Offer asynchronous access where possible.
- Provide short summaries or recorded instructions.
- Connect the student to institutional resources for technical or logistical support.
- Agree on a communication plan.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is the smallest realistic learning plan?
- Which tasks can be postponed?
- Which resources can the institution provide?
- How can the student remain connected?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can adapt learning access and refer to resources; housing, safety, and welfare needs require professional or institutional support.

Scenario Card 11: The Educator is Also Under Strain

MODULE 1

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

The educator is trying to support students while also managing personal stress, family responsibilities, and uncertainty. They feel guilty for not being more available.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Educators are part of the crisis context and may have limited capacity.
- Over-functioning can lead to burnout and inconsistent support.
- Boundaries protect both educators and students.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- Use simple routines and reusable templates.
- Set realistic availability windows.
- Coordinate with colleagues rather than carrying cases alone.
- Use institutional referral pathways.
- Name expectations clearly to reduce repeated negotiation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What support tasks can be standardised?
- What boundaries are needed?
- Who can share responsibility?
- What is a sustainable level of care?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

Educators can be caring and reliable without being constantly available or individually responsible for every need.

Scenario Card 12: Balancing Compassion and Standards

MODULE 3

BRIEF TEACHING SITUATION

A teaching team debates whether to reduce the length of an assignment. Some worry that standards will fall; others worry students cannot manage the current load.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Compassion and standards are not opposites.
- The team needs to distinguish essential outcomes from removable burden.
- Shared criteria reduce inconsistency.

POSSIBLE EDUCATOR RESPONSES

- List the assignment's essential learning outcomes.
- Remove or simplify non-essential components.
- Create a transparent rationale for students.
- Offer a revised rubric or minimum requirements.
- Review after implementation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What learning outcome must be protected?
- What burden is avoidable?
- How will the change be communicated?
- How will fairness be maintained?

BOUNDARY REMINDER

The educator can adjust pedagogy and workload; formal program requirements or accreditation standards may need departmental approval.

9. Evaluation Package

The training can be evaluated through a short pre / post questionnaire, participant reflection, and a facilitator debrief. The purpose is not only to measure satisfaction but also to document whether educators feel more prepared to make role-appropriate teaching decisions during disruption.

Training evaluation and transfer cycle



Figure 7. Training evaluation and transfer cycle.

Pre/post questionnaire

Suggested response scale:

1 = not yet confident, 2 = slightly confident, 3 = moderately confident,
4 = confident, 5 = very confident.

ITEM	BEFORE TRAINING 1-5	AFTER TRAINING 1-5
I feel prepared to identify signs of student disengagement during a crisis.		
I can respond to student distress in a professionally appropriate way.		
I know how to balance flexibility with academic expectations.		
I can identify what is within my role and what requires referral.		
I can use scenario cards to think through realistic teaching situations.		
I know at least one small pedagogical adaptation that can support continuity of learning.		

Participant reflection questions

1. Which scenario felt closest to your own teaching context?
2. What assumption about student behaviour will you be more careful about?
3. What is one response phrase you may reuse?
4. What is one boundary you need in order to remain sustainable as an educator?
5. Which institutional support route do you need to know more about?

Facilitator debrief form

AFTER-SESSION DEBRIEF

Which scenarios generated the most useful discussion?	
Where did participants need more guidance?	
What boundary or referral issue remained unclear?	
What adaptation should be made before the next delivery?	
Suggested follow-up with teaching teams or departments	

10. Closing Summary and Implementation Suggestions

Student Engagement and Wellbeing in Crisis is a practical, scenario-based training program designed to help educators support students during periods of disruption and uncertainty. Its central contribution is to translate trauma-informed and engagement-oriented principles into concrete teaching decisions.

The scenario cards keep the training accessible and adaptable. They help educators practice noticing disengagement or distress, avoiding assumptions, responding with empathy, maintaining academic expectations, and recognising when referral or consultation is needed.

Core messages for participants

1. Students may disengage because of overload, instability, shame, practical barriers, or uncertainty - not only because of low motivation.
2. The first response should often be private, brief, supportive, and specific.
3. Flexibility is most helpful when paired with clarity and fairness.
4. Educators are not therapists. A good educational response includes knowing when to refer.
5. Small adaptations can prevent students from falling behind in learning.
6. Sustainable educator boundaries are part of crisis-sensitive teaching.

Suggested implementation pathway

STEP	ACTION
1	Pilot the 90-minute workshop with one teaching team.
2	Collect pre/post confidence ratings and qualitative reflections.
3	Adapt the scenario cards to local institutional policies and support routes.
4	Build a small repository of anonymised cases from local teaching contexts.
5	Use the cards in recurring teaching-team reflection meetings.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

Crisis-sensitive teaching is not about lowering expectations or solving every student's problem. It is about designing responses that are humane, clear, professionally boundaried, and educationally purposeful.

Suggested reading materials

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