



## TCI – Module Three The Therapeutic Milieu and Crisis Prevention

### Therapeutic Milieu

**Is the combination of people, emotions, attitudes and objects that create a sense of safety, respect, belonging, care and accountability.**

Within the milieu spaces we have opportunities to create conditions where crisis can be prevented and young people have the opportunity to thrive. A therapeutic milieu offers a safe, nurturing environment in which young people can heal and continually learn and practices important life skills.

*When you plant lettuce and its doesn't grow well, you don't blame the lettuce – Thich Nhat Hahn, Vietnamese Buddhist monk*

In order to provide children and young people with conditions that are safe and predictable where they are able to succeed and do well, we need to think about all of the systems and spaces in their world.

### Setting Conditions

**A setting condition is anything that makes a challenging behaviour or traumatic stress responses more or less likely to occur.**

A setting condition can be:

**Ideological:** This is centred on the culture and climate that is around the child. The young people are at the centre of the program. An example is an emphasis on the building of relationships between the young person and adult as opposed to a culture of control and rules.

**Physical:** This includes the care environment is it clean, orderly, inviting, does it feel safe and nurturing. Creating a trauma informed physical setting promotes a sense of safety, fosters healing, encourages play and relationship building activities reduces stress and anxiety and provides a positive environment.

**Cultural:** Understanding of human diversity –how are cultural and human differences celebrated and accepted? Cultural Competence is essential and starts with understanding one's own worldview as well as the worldview of the young person and family.



**Social:** Relationships, activities and routines – creating a balance between providing adequate structure (safety and security) and having enough flexibility to meet the changing and individual needs of the young people.

**Emotional:** Pain based behaviour and emotional competence – feeling safe is a setting condition that makes challenging behaviour and pain based behaviour less likely to occur. Avoiding activities that may trigger a young person’s trauma response and also recognising when a young person is having trouble coping and may need assistance.

The environment that surrounds the young people and adults has a profound influence on their behaviour. Very often the causes or setting conditions for a young person’s challenging and pain based behaviours lie within the structure and management of the milieu.

The identification and modification of setting conditions within the milieu will avoid situations that may result in challenging behaviours as well as encourage positive interactions. It is important to know each child’s or young person’s setting conditions are. By addressing or modifying these conditions we can avoid situations that can possibility trigger a child or young person and result in a challenging behaviour.

Most crises can be prevented by building therapeutic relationships, establishing routines and activities that meet young people’s basic and developmental needs. Providing a safe and predictable environment goes a long way in heling a young person learn to cope with daily frustrations and upsets.



**Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) Student Workbook 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Refer to Module One pages S11 – S18.**