What is a Trauma-Informed approach to a Client Check-In via technology?

A trauma-informed approach to conversations with people experiencing reactivated trauma response is best supported by the RICH principles: Respect, Information, Connection, and Hope. During this time of higher fear and anxiety, nervous system regulation (your own and your client's) is key to an effective interaction.

Here are some tips to foster RICH principles:

1. Plan ahead – When trauma is reactivated by new/additional stressors, the executive functioning of the brain is affected. In these instances, processing and cognition can be challenged, decisions are difficult to make, too much information or too many directions add to the reactivation of the limbic system making focus and follow through especially difficult. Consider that less may actually be more at this time. Plan to cover only what is most important and leave space for the client to focus and regulate (see below).
2. Regulate yourself before contacting the client (this may mean spending 2 or 3 minutes breathing and centering; it may mean shaking out your body to down regulate your own nervous system, it may mean gentle stretching and light movement prior to a call).
    a. Be prepared to listen as well as assist.
    b. Be ready to focus on the whole person (physical and emotional well being)
3. Begin the contact with a greeting of kindness and curiosity.
4. Inform client of what you want to review/discuss for the call/interaction.
5. If possible to view one another – pay attention to any visible signs of tension.
6. If it feels right, invite the client into a moment of presence – using a shared mindfulness practice (invitation to slowly breathing, or use a tool such as the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise – for more examples see playlist on Vermont AHS YouTube channel).
7. Practice reflective listening
8. Co-plan for social/emotional well-being
9. Close with information on how to stay connected to assistance, and what is next (to the extent that you know).

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