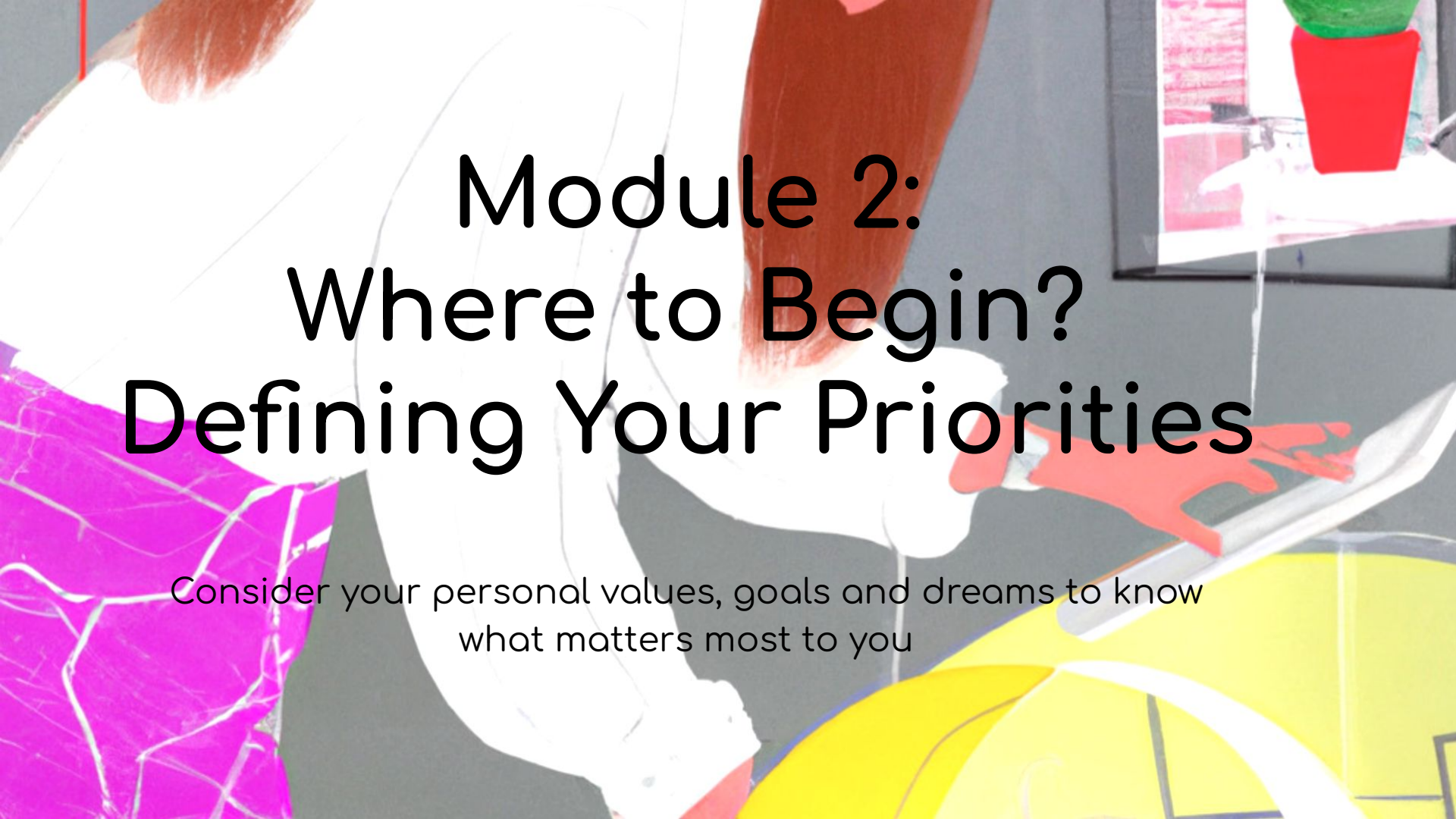


An abstract, painterly background. On the left, the back of a person with long reddish-brown hair is visible, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a vibrant magenta skirt with a white cracked pattern. On the right, a desk scene is depicted with a red pot containing a green plant, a clear glass, and a hand in a red sleeve holding a silver pen over a yellow notepad. The overall style is modern and artistic.

Module 2: Where to Begin? Defining Your Priorities

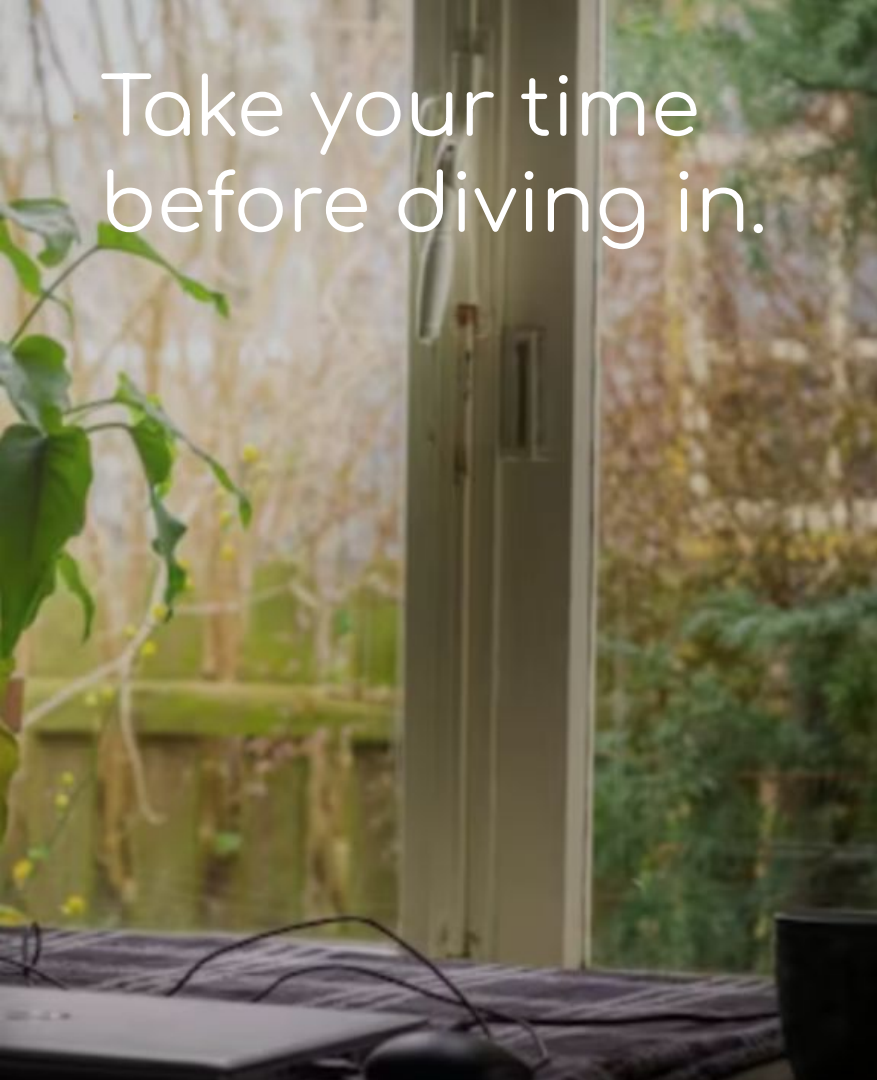
Consider your personal values, goals and dreams to know
what matters most to you

Before we begin the work, let's start with our top priority - *you*.

We hope you are feeling eager and excited to move forward as a survivor in action! This work can bring so many positive changes to your life and others'. Survivor action can help you feel empowered, included, connected and inspired. It can return a sense of justice and help you find your own voice.

It may also bring new difficult challenges and retraumatizing pain. We want to limit and avoid this. It's important to always remember that your health and safety should come first.

How do we find a healthy balance while engaging in survivor action?

A photograph of a window looking out onto a garden. In the foreground, a green plant with large leaves is visible on the left. The window frame is white, and the view outside shows a garden with various plants and trees. The text "Take your time before diving in." is overlaid on the left side of the image in white.

Take your time
before diving in.

It can be tempting to **rush into action** once you feel ready to find your voice and start changing the world.

Many survivors who have worked in this space for years say they wish they would have **slowed down** and taken more time at the beginning to **learn about the field**, understand their own needs, define their boundaries, establish support, and see what options make the most sense for them.

There are so many ways to get involved. **You have time to explore and to figure out what is best for you.**

A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person is wearing a grey sweater. A pair of glasses is on the table to the left. The text 'Plan for your own self-care and safety.' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Plan for your own self-care and safety.

Remember that you won't be able to help anyone in the long-term if you **burn yourself out** or become harmed by it.

Making sure the actions you choose are **sustainable and safe** will allow you to support others effectively. Pay attention to your feelings, reactions and physical symptoms. **Set clear boundaries** and limits ahead of engagement.

No one else will be able to do this for you, because no one else knows what you personally need.

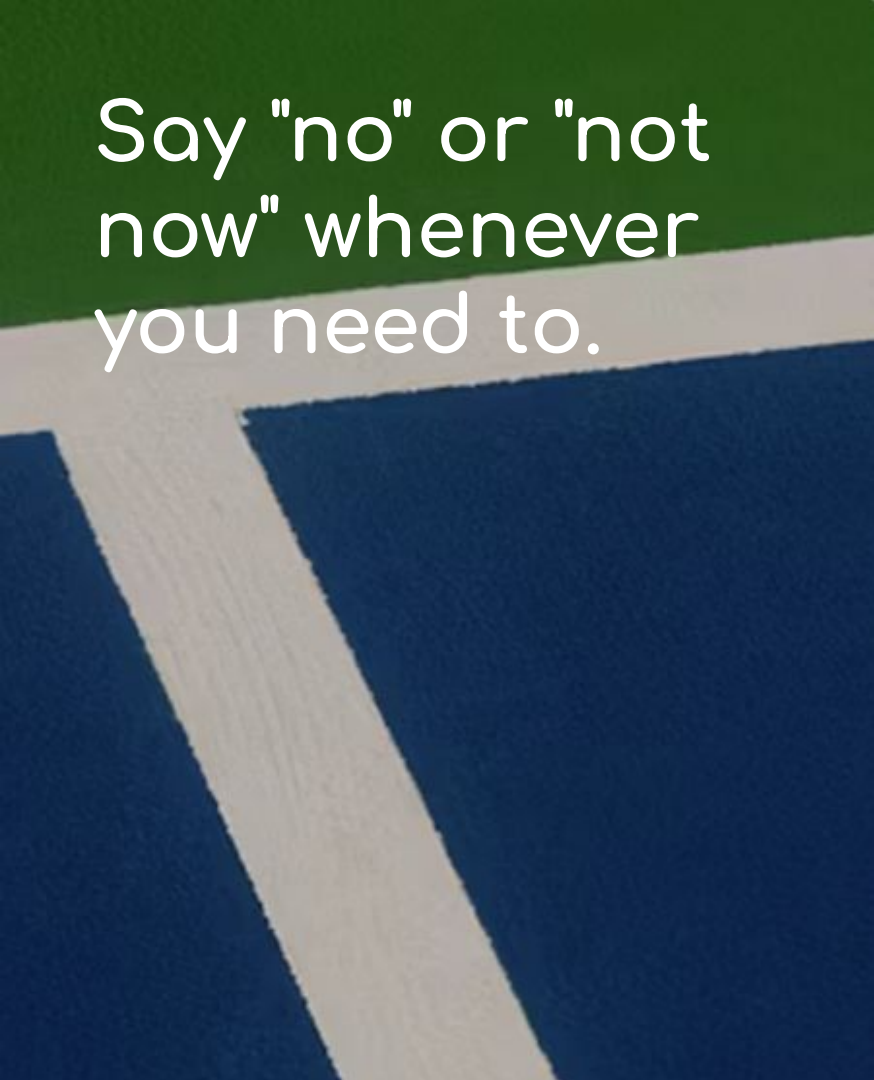


Don't do this
alone.

Even though being a survivor can often feel like a deeply isolating experience, the truth is that **you are never alone**. We are all in this together.

There are so many kind people ready to support you, even if you haven't found them yet. **Ask for help** and resources. Look around and online for organisations, groups and communities taking care of survivors.

It may take some patience to find the right **friends, mentors and partners**, but this is not a journey you should do on your own.



Say "no" or "not now" whenever you need to.

When you have experienced the pain of abuse, it can feel like an **overwhelming burden** to end it everywhere. **You may feel pressure** to change the world so that no one else ever feels this way again. You may feel like this is your responsibility - but it is not.

You can and should always say "no" anytime an action would compromise your health or wellbeing. That way you will be able to say "yes" when the right opportunities do come. **Trust your instincts and prioritise yourself.**

If you're a survivor, you've probably had to learn to be resilient and tough. You had to put up with a lot of traumatising experiences and place your comfort on hold so you could make it this far - and you did it, that's what made you the strong person you are today!

The next step is to continue healing by making sure you are no longer trying to survive, but instead, thrive. You deserve safety and sustainability in your life and your work.

We will talk more about specific risks for survivors in action and safety strategies in Modules 4 and 5 of this course.

Reflection

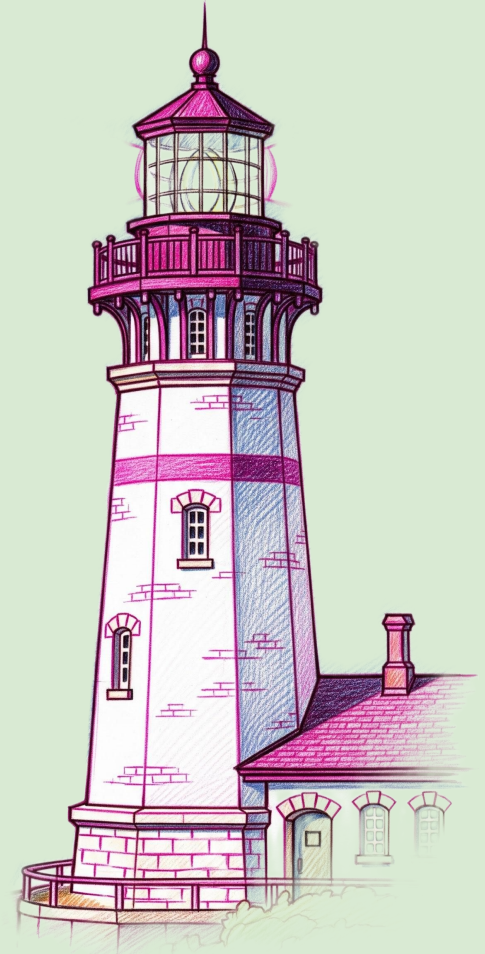
Take some time to answer the following questions in your journal:

- ❑ Why do I want to get involved in survivor action, advocacy or support?
- ❑ What do I hope to accomplish or get out of it?
- ❑ How can I commit to prioritising my safety and wellbeing above these goals?

Every survivor is welcome in this movement. What will be the most fulfilling way for you to contribute?

For many survivors, we may have big dreams - e.g. end all child abuse. And then we also have more tangible goals - such as creating a local education program or fighting for a specific law.

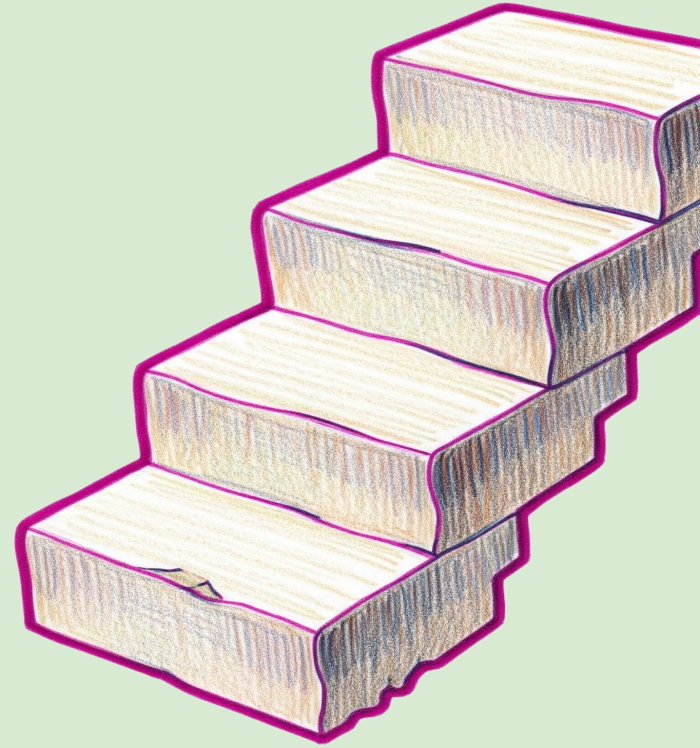
At the start, it may be helpful to use your big dreams as a guiding light to decide the direction of your actions. Then, you can focus on the first achievable steps toward that vision - start small.



Small steps build momentum, clarity and confidence. As you get more involved, that experience and the relationships you gain may open up new ideas and opportunities.

Embrace each step as a learning opportunity. If you start to feel overwhelmed, just take a step back and remember that you are part of a big, global survivor movement.

If we all do something small, it may not seem like much on our own; but together we can create significant change and impact.
Every action counts.



Who am I?

As you are getting ready to start your survivor advocacy or action journey, it's essential to start by reflecting on who you are, what you can safely do, what matters most to you, and what resources you have.

Take some time to consider and journal:

- ☐ Who am I besides what happened to me?
- ☐ What is important to me?
- ☐ What do I like to do?
- ☐ What am I good at?
- ☐ How much of my time and energy do I want to commit to for now?



3 Levels of Survivor Disclosure

As a survivor, you alone own your story and identity - no one else can take that from you. You have the right to the protection of your personal privacy. You also have the right to change your mind about how you represent yourself at any time.

For some people, stepping into the light and speaking out about your identity as a survivor and your experiences can be liberating and empowering. For others, it may not feel comfortable or safe.

There are three main categories of survivor disclosure that we will reference in this training.

1. Undisclosed

Survivors who are undisclosed prefer to keep their identity and experiences with abuse private.

Undisclosed survivors are the most common - statistically speaking, they may be all around us, and we just don't know it.

You can still do important, meaningful, work without disclosing your story or identity. For many, this is the safest choice, at least to start.



1. Undisclosed

Example: The Phoenix 11 is a group of survivors of child sexual violence who do advocacy work as an anonymous collective.

To protect their safety and privacy, they do not use their real names and never include their faces or identifying information.

Together, they have an a powerful impact: thephoenix11.com.



2. Partially Disclosed

Partially disclosed survivors may only share parts of their story or only with certain people or in specific contexts.

For example, some survivors may feel comfortable and safe telling a small group of people about their identity in person, but will not post online. Or they may say that they are a survivor, but not want to give any additional details.

It's essential to respect these boundaries.



1. Partially Disclosed

Example: Lara (not her real name) is a survivor working in human rights law for victims of sexual violence, especially children, LGBTQ+ people and migrants.

In professional meetings and online, she never discloses that she is a survivor to protect her safety, privacy and well-being.

However, sometimes when meeting with trusted individuals, she will disclose that she is a survivor and has personal experiences as someone in the marginalised groups she supports professionally.



3. Fully Public

The most visible survivors in advocacy and action are fully public.

This is a courageous personal choice, but it comes with significant risks and challenges to navigate. Support systems, safety plans and resources are essential for fully public survivors to stay safe.

Public survivors are the most likely to attract attention, both positive and negative. It is not for everyone, and we do not advise it for survivors who are new to the movement.





Outing

In English, "outing" has become a commonly used term to describe when someone reveals another person's identity, particularly if they are part of a marginalised community or group. In this space, we use it to describe when a person is "outed" - exposed by someone else - as a survivor without their consent or free choice.

It is never OK to out someone else. This is disrespectful to their privacy and can also be dangerous. Outing can lead to severe consequences, including harassment and mental health issues.

Always prioritise consent and respect boundaries, for yourself and for others. Remember that we each own our own stories and have the right to share them on our terms.

Reflection

Take some time to answer the following questions in your journal:

- ❑ What level of survivor disclosure sounds comfortable to me at this point in my life and healing journey: undisclosed, partially disclosed or fully public?
- ❑ What boundaries do I want to protect for myself?

Remember, you can always change your mind about how you publicly represent yourself; but it is easier to start with less disclosure. Once you share something, it can be hard to take back. Consider your comfort level and safety first.



You've now completed Module 2: Where to Begin? Defining Your Priorities

[Click here to move on to
Module 3: Different Ways to Get Involved](#)