

# Yellow Flags & Trauma-Informed Care in Manual Medicine

When to notice. How to deliver care when you do.

## YELLOW FLAGS — PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS WORTH NOTICING

Yellow flags do not require diagnosis. They are signals that warrant scope-appropriate response — deeper listening, gentler delivery, possible referral.

<b>COGNITIVE / BELIEFS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catastrophizing ("this will never get better")</li><li>• Fear-avoidance beliefs about movement</li><li>• Perceived injustice / blame</li><li>• Pain identity ("I am my pain")</li></ul>	<b>EMOTIONAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visible anxiety, low mood, irritability</li><li>• Tearfulness in the room</li><li>• Anger toward prior providers</li><li>• Hopelessness or flatness</li></ul>
<b>BEHAVIORAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoidance of activity, work, social life</li><li>• Over-reliance on passive care</li><li>• Doctor-shopping pattern</li><li>• Missed appointments in clusters</li></ul>	<b>SOCIAL / WORK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited social support</li><li>• Workplace conflict or job dissatisfaction</li><li>• Active litigation or compensation claim</li><li>• Family overprotection or under-support</li></ul>

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE — 5 PRINCIPLES FOR MANUAL MEDICINE

Physical contact, prone positioning, and adjustments can trigger trauma responses in patients with histories of abuse, assault, MVAs, or surgical trauma. This is not therapy — it is how you deliver chiropractic care.

- 1 Explain before you touch** Describe what you're going to do, where, and why — before contact. Predictability lowers nervous-system threat.
- 2 Ask permission** "Is it okay if I work on your neck today?" 99% say yes. The 1% who say no needed the agency.
- 3 Go slowly** Especially with new patients, cervical work, and prone positioning. Speed reads as threat to a sensitized nervous system.
- 4 Watch for distress signals** Sudden tearfulness, freezing, dramatic flinching, dissociation. Stop. Check in.
- 5 Give patient agency to pause or stop** At any time, no questions, no awkwardness. Build it into your visit norms so they don't have to be brave to use it.