

RITUAL

Catherine St-Cyr

Department of Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
trustwomen@gmail.com

KEYWORDS: Trauma-informed care

First we prepare the terrain.
Do you find speculum exams difficult?
We can premedicate. Sometimes that helps.

You have the power here. Say pause, or stop
I will immediately obey. Immediately.
I will say what I'm doing before I do it.
I will sit you up so you can be above me, looking down
I will check in with you verbally, and visually.
Hand you the speculum to demystify.
Here, move it around. Quack, quack.
Every word carefully chosen.
Let your knees fall to the side.
(Never anything you've heard in trauma.
Never say open your legs, I tell the residents)
And if you tell me to stop, it's not a failure.
It's a victory. You said no
And it was respected.
It's a triumph. Be proud. ■

Biographical note

Before medicine, the author was a counsellor and intervention worker. She retains a keen interest in the social sciences and is forever curious about the human condition.