

## Trauma Informed Skill Building Suggestions

### Safety and Stabilization

Externalizing Children and Adults ... travel up and down “Vulnerability Mountain” very quickly and need skills at all places on the mountain

### Remember – Top opportunities for growth for children (and adults) with complex trauma are

- Self-Regulation Skills
- Positive Self-Identity
- Co-Regulation Skills (being in a trusting healthy relationship with others)

### Children with externalizing behaviors who have experienced trauma struggle with these basic skills

(Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 114)

- 1) Acknowledging and coping with vulnerable emotions
- 2) Modulating intense emotions, particularly in the face of key triggers such as injustice, shame, etc.
- 3) Accepting responsibility for actions in social conflict
- 4) Engaging empathy and perspective-taking in difficult relationships

### All Interactions Need to Embrace the Trauma Informed Core Values from Fallot (2011)

- 1) Safety (all forms!!)
- 2) Trustworthiness
- 3) Choice (which includes Voice)
- 4) Collaboration
- 5) Empowerment

### OTHER TIPS –

Don't force a child to acknowledge a difficult emotion before they are ready

Do normalize their denied emotions (acknowledge, validate, understand)

Respond to the NEED, don't react to the BEHAVIOR

Understand that externalizing behaviors protect a child from deep shame and overwhelming feelings

### Build Motivation and Resilience

In Motivational Interviewing ... remember to bring your OARS

- ask **O**pen questions, **A**ffirm consumer statements, **R**eflect consumer statements, **S**ummarize consumer statements

**Step One:** Work with Ambivalence (dialectic) ... always 2 sides and maybe 3

**Step Two:** Resist the “Righting” Reflex

**Step Three:** Demonstrate Empathy

**Step Four:** Engage consumers in Change Talk

## Every Day (Self Care and Protective Factors)

### Self-Regulation and Mindfulness (“sunscreen”)

- Relaxation and Grounding Exercises
- Bilateral Movement
- Attunement Exercises
- Mindfulness Exercise – EX: breathing, “one thing”
- Self-Care Plan (daily practice)

### Self-Awareness (“knowing your skin” and “checking the weather”)

- Educate children about their triggers and trauma responses
  - Wise old owl (Hawn Foundation)
  - Guard Dog (Hawn Foundation)
  - Smoke Detector (Van der kolk)
  - Alarm System ( ARC book pp.316-318)
  - Light Switch (“Please Explain Anxiety to Me”)
- Teach and practice with them identification of feelings and needs
- Engage them in “Behavioral Experiments” where they try something different
- Teach about Thought Distortions (“thought distortion box”) so they can begin to recognize thoughts they tell themselves that take them down to “Distress Valley”
- Supporting beliefs that child or adult deserves “good” things
- Recognizing “bumps in the road” don’t mean “a crash”

### Relationship Skills or Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills (“bringing a friend to the beach”)

- Empathic Communication Skills (mirroring)
- Change/Acceptance choices (handout)
- Practicing how to identify a feeling, state a need, and make a request

### In the Distress Valley - Distress Tolerance Skills

#### Emotional Distress (“aloe on sunburn”)

- ACCEPTS (Activities; Contributions; Comparisons; Emotional Opposite; Pushing away; Thoughts; Sensations)
- Galvanic Skin Response (hand-warming)
- Distraction (mandala)
- Vacation “meditation”
- “Just Worrying” Skill

### Build Resilience – Resilience can be taught (Daniel & Wassell, 2002; Werner, 1993)

Support Systems (people and relationships)

Assertiveness

Self-Regulation/Emotional Regulation

Communication Skills

Ability to Trust

Setting Realistic Goals

Problem Solving Skills

Empathy

Positive Self-Identify

Reflective Behavior