

coping with
difficult
behavior



Facilitator's Guide to Module Three of TST-FC

APRIL 2017

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

TST-FC: A TRAUMA-INFORMED CAREGIVING APPROACH

Trauma Systems Therapy for Foster Care (TST-FC) is a skill-building, trauma-focused curriculum for foster parents, including kin and other caregivers. TST-FC was adapted from Trauma Systems Therapy, developed by Dr. Glenn Saxe of NYU's Child Study Center, and written by Kelly McCauley.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For more information about TST-FC, please contact the Child Welfare Strategy Group at webmail@aecf.org.

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preparing to facilitate

A CHECKLIST

Needed supplies

- Module Three PowerPoint slides
- Large, self-adhesive flip-chart tablet
- Question box
- Handouts (located in the back of this document) — make one copy per participant:
 - Practicing emotional regulation and problem-solving skills
 - The Managing Emotions Guide (MEG)
 - Developmentally appropriate behavior by child's age
- Computer speakers so participants will be able to hear the two videos included in this session

Before you start

- Test the video link on slide 9 of the presentation to make sure it will work in the room in which you are presenting.
- Practice the three emotional regulation skills you plan to teach in this session.
- Check the question box for any submissions.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS GUIDE



Generally, text in this guide is written as you, the facilitator, would speak. In some cases, words in italics indicate a note to you, such as *Write responses on flip chart*.

facilitator's guide: module three



INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

Welcome Back!

-  • Questions
-  • Review homework
- Today we will learn about:
 - Three phases of challenging behavior — Revving, re-experiencing and reconstituting
 - How you can be a powerful, positive presence in your child's life

SLIDE 1

Introduction. Open the session with a greeting. Read aloud and answer questions from the box and then open up the discussion for any other questions.

Discuss homework. What was it like to use a team approach to compile moment-by-moment assessments, develop child's priority problem forms and identify interventions? What did you like about the experience? What was challenging and how did you overcome those challenges?

If you are running back-to-back sessions in which caregivers have not yet had a chance to complete their assignments, one idea is to ask them to get their homework and talk in pairs or trios about how they could see this working. Things to think about: Do they have a child in their home who is struggling? Who are adults for the child's team? Which people could complete a moment-by-moment assessment? Remember, one person could do more than one assessment but there needs to be two separate events. An assessment could also be done with the child, if he or she is of appropriate age. Would it be possible to pull together a phone call or meeting with the child's team to review assessments, develop a priority challenge statement and start on some interventions? Ask if there are any questions.

Goals for Today

Participants will be able to	Trainers will help you to
Detect behavioral signals that indicate children are shifting into one of the 4 R's	Develop skills to understand children's signals of distress, help them regulate their emotional states and use restorative discipline
Recall at least two strategies that promote emotional regulation in each of the 4 R's	Increase your understanding of why it is important to get involved early to prevent children's survival-in-the-moment states
Identify two strategies to use when children are re-experiencing trauma	Improve your ability to respond to children during times of redirection, correction and discipline

SLIDE 2

Goals. Module Three helps you learn how children's affect, awareness and actions can shift across three stages of behavior: revving, re-experiencing and reconstituting. Specific strategies will be provided to help children — and you — manage emotions and behavioral responses.

After today, you will be able to:

- Detect behavioral signals in children that indicate shifts into revving, re-experiencing and reconstituting states.
- Recall at least two strategies for each phase that have been shown to be helpful in promoting emotional regulation.
- Identify two strategies to use when children's behavior indicates that they are re-experiencing trauma.

As facilitators, we hope to help you:

- Develop skills to understand children's signals of distress and help them with their emotional regulation using a variety of approaches, including restorative discipline.
- Increase your understanding of why it is important to get involved early to prevent children's survival-in-the-moment states.
- Improve your ability to respond to children during times of redirection, correction and discipline.

Stages of Behavior (the 4 R's)

	Regulating	Revving	Re-experiencing	Reconstituting
CHILD BEHAVIOR	Restful. Child is calm and engaged in his or her environment	Vigilant. Child has been triggered and is trying to manage emotions	Fight, flight or freeze. Child's coping skills are overwhelmed; s/he is struggling	Calming down. Child is beginning to manage emotions and re-engage
YOUR PRIORITY	Minimize triggers to prevent escalation	Help your child regulate emotion	Make sure your efforts to contain the child do not re-traumatize him or her, keep the child and others safe	Help your child continue to manage emotions and re-engage

SLIDE 3

Emphasize

- During the last session, we discussed how important it is to help a child stay in the regulated stage as much as possible. That said, there will be times when a child experiences survival-in-the-moment states. *Review the four stages with participants.*
- Revving is the stage a child enters when he or she first encounters a trigger or source of cat hair. This is when a child first sends out signals of distress.
- These distress signals are physical and emotional indicators. They tell you the body and mind have been alerted to a potential source of threat. Remember — these threats may be real. Or they may reminders of past trauma that a child perceives to be a real threat.

Revving Is a Critical Time to Help Children Avoid Escalating Into the Re-Experiencing Stage

You can make a difference by recognizing a child's signals of revving and knowing what to do in response. What you do depends on the signals of revving you are seeing.

What have you seen?

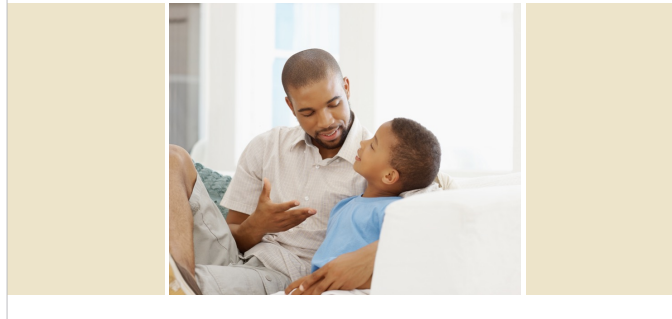


SLIDE 4

Emphasize

- Can you describe signals you have seen that a child is becoming distressed? *Participants may describe seeing children with tension in their facial muscles, clenched teeth or fists, redness in their faces, fidgeting, piercing eye contact, eye contact that turns down or away, leg bouncing, restlessness or fidgeting, crossing arms in front of chest, changes in voice tone or rate of speech, rapid breathing, whining, getting quiet or walking away.*
- All of these signals are pretty common. They are your clues that it is time to help the child get regulated.
- Signals can come up for a child at any time. For example, let's say you are working with a child on her homework. She starts to bounce her leg, look away and become quiet. That's a sign. You will probably want to stop the activity, check in with the child about her feelings and the level of her feelings, then help her get re-regulated before going back to the activity.
- For children who are becoming hyper-aroused, fearful or enraged, you need to think about how you can help them calm down. For children who are beginning to shut down or get numb, you need to think about what works to help them stay connected to the present moment.
- Remember: The revving state is not a teachable moment. It is the time to help the child get re-regulated.

The Power of Our Presence When Children Are Revving



SLIDE 5

Emphasize

- Revving indicates that a child's personal coping strategies are starting to give way. If children can't manage their feelings on their own and no one is nearby to help, they are likely to quickly escalate and re-experience overwhelming feelings and survival behaviors.
- The power of a comforting presence cannot be understated. Reassuring words and actions tell a child you are a safe adult, you are there to help and you can help them "hold" the challenging feelings they are having.

Revving: Now Is the Time to Calm, Not Teach

Focus on the following:

- Identifying when it's happening
- Being present, with close, good eye contact
- Thinking about what you say
- Thinking about what you do

SLIDE 6

Next Steps

- **Discuss.** How can you communicate to the children in your home that you are present for them when they are revving? *Make a list on flip-chart paper.*
- **Talk through some pointers.** Some ways to communicate your presence:
 - Physically get down to the child's level.
 - Offer something to the child (a drink, a stress ball, a beloved toy).
 - Use a soft, gentle voice.
 - Give the child an affirmation ("I see this is hard but I know you can do it").
 - Give the child your full, undivided attention.
 - Provide a supportive touch (put your hand on the child's shoulder or hold hands for children comfortable with touch).
 - Allow a "do-over" ("The tone you just used with me was not respectful. I want to give you a do-over so you can say it again with respect.").
 - Be mindful of words you use to describe children. Avoid hurtful labels, such as "You are so lazy."
 - Don't discuss children's mistakes in front of others.
 - Pull back from a difficult discussion to do something enjoyable together, then come back and try the discussion later.
- **Make a list.** Which of these strategies do you wish you did more of? *Spend five minutes in this discussion.*

Revvig in Children Is a Vulnerable
Time for Caregivers, Too

When are you most at risk for power plays?
How do you balance?



SLIDE 7

Emphasize

- One of the most effective strategies you have for dealing with children who are revving is staying calm yourself.
- That's challenging!
- Be aware of your feelings. Avoid power plays.

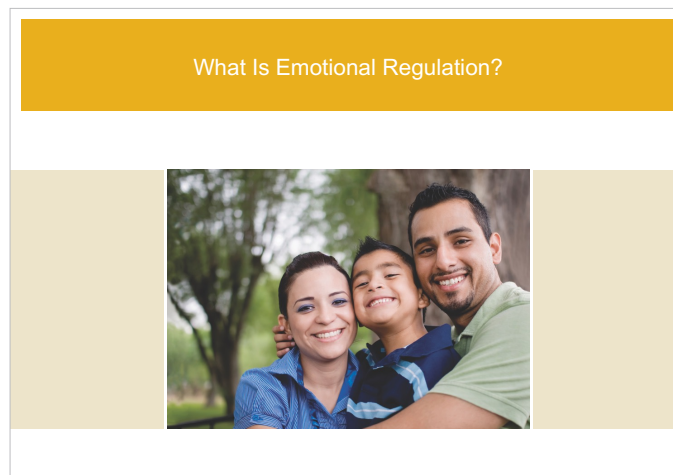
Define

- Power plays are situations in which the child is exerting his or her own independence and challenging your control.
- When are you most at risk of getting into power plays or power struggles? *Ideas participants may mention or that you might emphasize:*
 - *Having unrealistic expectations. We know that trauma derails development. While a child may be 16 years old, he may function at a much younger age mentally and emotionally. For example, you may expect him to do his homework without a lot of prodding from you. Or you may expect that an 8-year-old can get herself ready for bed. It is important to match your expectation with the reality of the child's functional capacity. There is more information on this in your "Foster Parent Resource Guide."*
 - *Arguing or trying to rationalize with children for prolonged periods of time. These approaches, particularly over a long period of time, are counterproductive and may escalate situations. The fewer words the better.*
 - *Getting defensive. Do not allow yourself to get emotional or defensive, especially when children say hurtful things or blame you. Reacting negatively to the child is not helpful or therapeutic. Work hard not to take it personally.*
 - *Trying to win or "out power" the child. Adults are in a position of authority. But using that power inappropriately is not helpful. For example, when a child says, "I don't have to and you can't make*

me!” the situation can turn into an emotional or verbal battle with each participant fighting to the end. Don’t do this. Step away.

Next Steps

- **Ask.** What strategies do you use to avoid power struggles? *Potential participant responses: Walk away; distract the child; give choices; don’t take things personally; tag team with spouse or partner.*
- **Remind.** Trauma does not give children a free pass to behave badly. But it does require us to learn effective strategies for coping with the behavior and to understand when those approaches are most effective. Children who have experienced trauma need boundaries, limits and structure to feel safe and secure; the important thing to remember is how and when we put them into place.



SLIDE 8

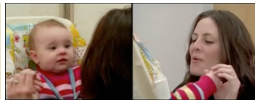
Emphasize

- What is emotional regulation? It is our ability to be aware of and pay attention to our feelings, identify and label how we feel and manage our feelings so they don’t result in harm to ourselves or others.
- Emotional regulation skills usually develop over the course of infancy, childhood and adolescence. However, many children in foster care have not had the opportunity to learn these skills. As a result of intense or long-term stress or trauma in their lives, children in foster care may have emotions that feel overwhelming or out of control.
- Children need to learn to manage their feelings to do well in school, have good mental health and enjoy healthy social relationships.

One Video/Two Examples

- The Still Face Experiment
 - With Mom
 - With Dad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>



SLIDE 9

Emphasize

ACTIVITY: WATCH AND DISCUSS “STILL FACE” VIDEOS

TIME: 15 MINUTES

Link to the “Still Face” YouTube videos. Two can be accessed from the same link: The first is of mothers and babies. When this video finishes, the second, featuring fathers and babies, will begin. Both are also listed separately on YouTube as well.

Ask. What resonated for you?

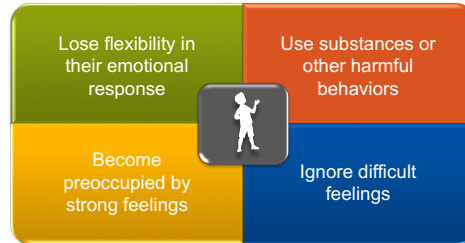
Emphasize

- All children learn to manage their feelings by engaging in “serve and return” experiences with their caregivers.
- When the child is hungry, the attuned caregiver — a caregiver who is responsive to the child, or on his or her wavelength — notices and feeds the child, sending a serving of care. The child then settles down. He or she may calmly look at the caregiver, returning a signal of success to the caregiver, who also relaxes.
- Over the course of time, when caregivers are not attuned or their responses do not help the child relax, the child does not learn how to calm down.
- With consistent caregiving, children learn how to calm themselves, because they have learned that they can trust their caregiver to give them what they need. They learn how to experience feelings without becoming overwhelmed.
- *Please end with this statement:* Children learn from us how to manage their feelings.

Children Who Do Not Learn How to Manage Their Feelings Can Get Stuck Emotionally

What does it look like when kids get stuck?

They may do the following:

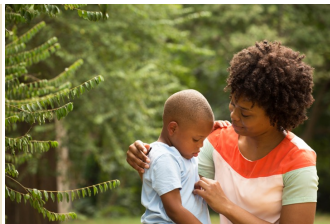


SLIDE 10

- If children are not able to learn healthy ways of expressing their feelings, they can become stuck. If children get stuck in emotional patterns that are or can become harmful, you might notice that they are:
 - ignoring difficult feelings and shutting down emotionally;
 - using substances or other harmful behaviors to avoid strong feelings; or
 - becoming preoccupied by strong feelings.
- Your job is to help children learn how to experience the full range of human emotions without letting their feelings overtake them.

Emotions Are Important and Can Profoundly Affect Our Actions

Practicing how to manage our feelings promotes lifelong skills



SLIDE 11

Emphasize

- Everyone in your home, including your spouse, other children, babysitter and relatives, can benefit from building his or her emotional regulation skills.

- Practicing these skills when you and the child are calm makes it more likely that the skills will be used when someone is upset.
- Skill building can involve fun activities the family can do together for a few minutes each day. Many families make them part of their daily routine.
- Skill building can include relaxation activities like yoga, breathing exercises, meditation or muscle relaxation. Or they can include learning how to identify and express feelings through mindfulness practices, journaling or feeling expression games.

Let's Talk

Do you currently use any emotional regulation skills in your home? If so, which ones do you find helpful?



SLIDE 12

- **Briefly discuss.** Do any of you currently use strategies or exercises to build your or your child's emotional regulation skills? Which approaches are your favorites? How have you noticed these approaches helping?

Guiding Children and Youth On the Use of Emotional Regulation Skills

- Encourage skills to use around others and when alone
- Practice when calm
- Use at the first sign
- Mix it up
- Have skill descriptions handy

SLIDE 13

Emphasize

- Encourage children to select skills they are likely to use when they are alone and when they are in a room full of people.
- Remind them that practicing some emotional regulation skills every day can help release emotional pressure that builds during the week.
- Encourage children to begin using skills at the first sign of revving.
- Remember that skills may stop working after a while, either because the child gets tired of them or because the child is changing, growing and developing.
- Keep a list of skills or ideas for regulating emotions close at hand for quick reference. The “Foster Parent Resource Guide” can help!

INTRODUCING THREE REGULATION STRATEGIES

New Ways to Exercise

- Practice breathing, mindfulness and muscle relaxation exercises on your own and with your kids
- If you practice them when kids are calm, they'll have more skills to draw on when they are upset
- Three examples

SLIDE 14

DEMONSTRATION AND PRACTICE: INTRODUCING THREE DIFFERENT REGULATION SKILLS TIME: 20 MINUTES

- Look for the “Practicing Emotional Regulation and Problem-Solving Skills” handout on your table.
- We are going to try three sample exercises right now. But I want to encourage you when you get home to check out the website listed here. It is chock full of great exercises to try — for yourself, with your family and with the children in your home. This kind of practicing of emotional skills is a hands-on, concrete way to help your kids build their personal toolbox of stress-busting coping strategies.
- We are going to do one breathing strategy, a mindfulness exercise and a muscle relaxation exercise.

- As I demonstrate, I am going to model how you would introduce these skills to children and describe why the tools are important. You might say, “Micah, do you remember the other day when you were having a hard time with your feelings at school? I would like to try something I think could help. Will you try it with me?” or “Hey guys, I know that there are some times when you get on each other’s nerves and it is easy to say and do things you later regret. Let’s try some things that might help so we don’t go there.” The idea is to communicate that these are tools kids can use instead of the behaviors they have been using.
- *Demonstrate each of the following exercises:*
 - Breathing: http://youth.anxietybc.com/sites/default/files/Mindful_Breathing.pdf
 - Mindfulness: www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/Mindfulness%20Exercises.pdf (Exercise#2)
 - Muscle relaxation: www.practicingmindfulness.com/howtopracticemindfulness/relaxationtechniques/how-to-calm-yourself-down-and-chill-out/

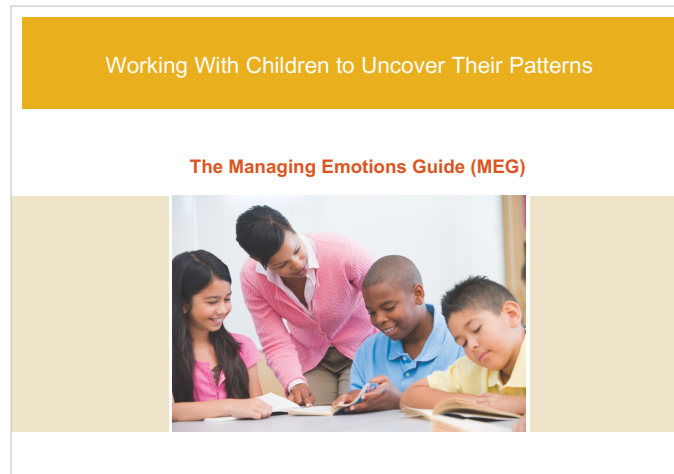
Emotional Regulation Skills: How and When to Use Them?



SLIDE 15

- **Pair up.** Now I want each of you to teach one of these three skills to your partners as if your partner were a child in your home. Then switch. Before you start, let me say a couple things.
 - The best exercises to use are those that connect to something the child is anxious, worried or nervous about. For example, if Tanisha is worried that one more rude outburst could get her kicked off the dance team, she may be motivated to try something new.
 - Match the activities to kids’ interests and developmental levels.
 - Keep it light. I can’t emphasize enough that you want to do these coaching sessions with a playful, light-hearted attitude to make them more inviting for kids to play along.
 - Don’t push it! When children get too hungry, tired, overstimulated or have not had enough physical activity in their day, it can be difficult for them to tolerate trying something new. Make sure these needs are met first.

INTRODUCING THE MEG



SLIDE 16

Emphasize

- Children can provide insight into their own patterns and suggest helpful strategies with support from caring adults.
- You can use the “Managing Emotions Guide” (also called MEG) to start identifying patterns. With some ideas about patterns in mind, you can use activities in the emotional regulation handout to practice new skills with your child.

Background: Introducing the Managing Emotions Guide (MEG)

Review the MEG, clarifying and answering questions.

The MEG helps you capture information about a child’s unique needs. You and the team will work with the child to complete and use this tool.

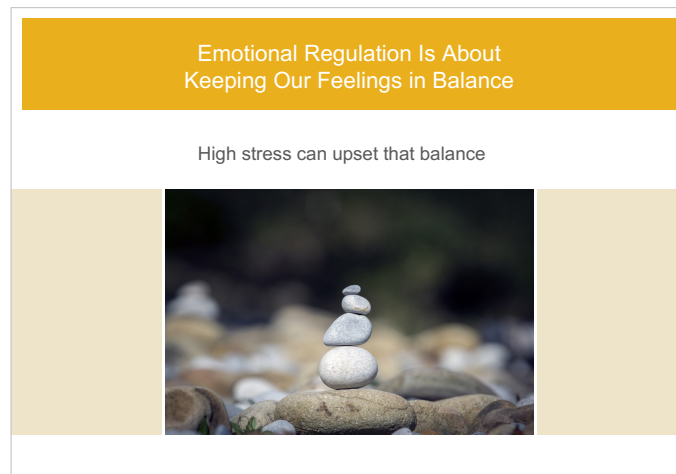
Take a look at Step 1 on page 2. This teaches a child about the states of regulation that he or she experiences. In addition, it helps children learn how they personally experience the four phases and why. It is very helpful for children to understand that these changes are connected to their experiences. Often children feel as though they are bad or out of control. Learning about these patterns can be very healing for children.

Now look at Step 2 on page 3. Complete this page with your child, who can use it to list strategies for staying calm and in control. He or she can also list ways adults can be supportive.

As we look at the MEG, here are some things to think about:

- Some children may feel more comfortable drawing pictures or describing what they see or feel and allowing you to write down the information.

- You can do a MEG with your children or ask the child's caseworker to help.
- The MEG is a working document that will need to be updated periodically.
- With a child's permission, the MEG can be shared with family, teachers, coaches, day care providers, etc.
- You should keep the completed MEG nearby and refer to it often.
- Try to use the child's language on the MEG to describe what you see with the child. For example, maybe the child describes how she acts in the revving state by saying, "I start freaking out." When you see her struggling, you can say, "I notice you are starting to freak out, because I see that you are starting to get spacey. What can I do to help you?"



SLIDE 17

Emphasize

Strategies for helping children learn to regulate themselves are going to be the foundation of your success. Our best chance of avoiding survival-in-the-moment responses comes from keeping children regulated, with their feelings in balance.

Today, we talked about several strategies to help children regulate themselves. Using the MEG provides children and teens with a chance to learn about how their bodies, minds and feelings change from one state to another.

When children understand that changes in these states are because of trauma they have faced, they often begin to feel better about themselves. We want children to discover for themselves how their bodies feel and change as they move through the four states. The more they understand these changes, the better their chances of learning how and when they need to calm themselves.

EMOTIONAL HOTSPOTS



SLIDE 18

DISCUSSION: EMOTIONAL HOTSPOTS

TIME: 5 MINUTES


- **Introduce the discussion.** There may be specific times that are likely to be emotional hotspots for kids in your home.
- **Ask.** Is this true in your home? Can you provide some examples? *Participants may list things like bedtimes, mornings, transitions (switching from one activity to another), homework times, meals, shower or bath times, being in public, vacations, etc.*
- **Ask.** Why might these times be so difficult, based on children's trauma history?
- **Teach.** Children may associate being told "no," or being redirected, with times when they were physically or emotionally abused. As a result, they may be hypersensitive to experiences in which they are not in control. They may react with a survival-in-the-moment response. Remember: During times of abuse, all power and control are taken away from the child against the child's will. Children equate being in control with being safe.
- **Remind.** Children who have experienced trauma may also have a low tolerance for frustration. The mere mention of the word "no" can feel threatening.
- **Ask.** So how do you deny requests when you need to? *Solicit ideas from participants and list them on flip-chart paper. Ideas may include things like reviewing house rules when the child is regulated, telling the child what to do vs. what not to do, reassuring the child, avoiding mixed messages so you aren't saying more than you need to, etc.*

STRATEGIES FOR SAYING “NO”

How to Say “No”

What have you tried that works?

LET’S PRACTICE



SLIDE 19

ACTIVITY: STRATEGIES FOR SAYING “NO”

TIME: 5 MINUTES

- **Discuss and list ideas on the flip chart.** We are going to talk about how to say “no.” Let’s say you really need to tell a child or teen “no” when he or she is requesting something.

- **Teach.** I want to talk about three strategies for saying “no.”

One is couching the “no” in a positive statement. “Mikala, I really appreciated how politely you asked me if you could go out with your friends tonight. I’m sorry that it is not going to work. We have your sister’s concert to go to and as a family we try to support one another. It’s important for you to have time with your friends, so let’s talk about getting together with your friends tomorrow or Saturday.” Then, before she has a chance to argue, say, “Thank you for understanding. I really appreciate it.”

- **Describe.** When you need to say “no”:
 - Be as positive and realistic as possible (“Let’s talk about a playdate tomorrow, since today won’t work”).
 - Briefly explain your reasoning (“I wish you could go to the movie, but I want your fever to go down so you feel better”).
 - Give choices (“What can we do instead — do you want to play a board game or read a book?”).
- **Introduce.** The next two strategies include:
 - Making it clear your “no” is about keeping the child safe and healthy. You might say, “Georgie, that’s not safe. I have to say no.” Sometimes as parents we forget it’s important for kids to know the “why” behind our decisions, particularly when it demonstrates that we care for them.


- Hearing disappointing news can be challenging for anyone. Validating that you understand they are disappointed and then asking if there is anything you can do to help or just sitting with them quietly is sometimes all that is needed to convey we care about them even when we have to say “no.”

SETTING PERSONAL GOALS

SLIDE 20

Let's Talk

- Pair up, talk with your partner about:
 - **One specific goal** you have for yourself to work on for the coming week
 - Why you want to work on this particular goal
- **Sample goals:** I will try using a softer tone of voice; not shouting from another room; using good eye contact when giving directions; allowing “do-overs”



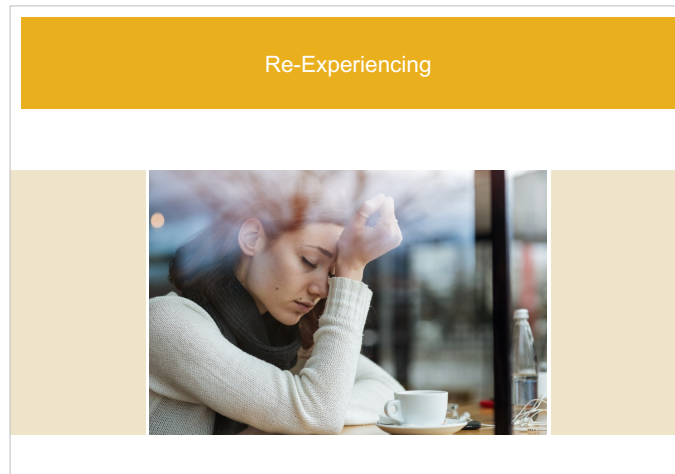
20

ACTIVITY: SETTING MY PERSONAL GOALS

TIME: 10 MINUTES

- **Describe the task.**
 - Pair up.
 - Spend five minutes discussing a personal goal you want to set for your behavior in the next week. Do you want to be more of a presence with a child who is struggling? Do you want to try new ways of saying no?
 - Remember all the tools you have learned: emotional safety talk; staying neutral; pre-teaching; saying “no”; avoiding power struggles; using emotional regulation skills.
- **Reconvene the group.** Talk about why you chose this goal. Write your goal down. Next week, we will have time for you and your partner to check in with each other to see how it went.

Re-Experiencing



SLIDE 21

Stages of Behavior (the 4 R's)				
	Regulating	Revving	Re-experiencing	Reconstituting
CHILD BEHAVIOR	Restful. Child is calm and engaged in his or her environment	Vigilant. Child has been triggered and is trying to manage emotions	Fight, flight or freeze. Child's coping skills are overwhelmed; s/he is struggling	Calming down. Child is beginning to manage emotions and re-engage
YOUR PRIORITY	Minimize triggers to prevent escalation	Help your child regulate emotion	Make sure your efforts to contain the child do not re-traumatize him or her, keep the child and others safe	Help your child continue to manage emotions and re-engage

SLIDE 22

Emphasize

- Re-experiencing is the stage in which children demonstrate survival-in-the-moment responses of fight, flight or freeze. At this point, it may be more difficult for you to intervene.
- Children are often flooded with feelings that remind them of their trauma. When this happens, their attention is focused on survival. They may be overwhelmed with feelings of threat and harm. They may disconnect from their current environment and the people in it. They may even disconnect from their own individual selves.
- It is important to know the child's unique way of showing that he or she feels overwhelmed. Children who are emotionally reactive may express tumultuous feelings or behavior. Children who are emotionally shut down may express very little; their emotions may be very difficult to detect.

What to Do When Children Are Re-Experiencing



SLIDE 23

Next Steps

- **Ask.** Do you have ideas about what children look like when they are re-experiencing? Let's hear examples of children who are hyper-aroused as well as those who are shut down or disassociating.

Safety Is Priority #1

If possible, do the following:

- Remove other children from the area
- Try to reduce noise and other stimulation
- Remind the child you are there to help; he or she is safe
- Intervene as soon as possible
- Take three deep breaths; tell yourself something positive ("This isn't about me, we will get through this")
- **Stay neutral**
- Use short sentences to tell the child what to do; praise
- Use emergency plan, if needed

SLIDE 24

- **Remind.** When a child is re-experiencing, you need to focus your attention on the safety of the child and others in the home. Children are not able to talk about why they have the feelings they have or what is happening inside. That part of their brain has gone offline. They will need to be calmed down or brought back into awareness before they can engage in rational discussion.
- **Give tips.** When a child is re-experiencing:
 - Intervene as soon as possible, but before you approach the child, take some deep breaths yourself. Take a moment to make a positive statement to yourself. ("This is not about me. I can handle this. We will get through this.")

- Approach the child from the side, if possible. Be close but not too close to the child (between one and three feet away).
- STAY NEUTRAL. Use your “Staying Calm and Neutral Tip Sheet” from our last session, which you can also find in your “Foster Parent Resource Guide.”
- Use short, simple sentences and a calm, non-threatening voice.
- It’s human nature to mirror one another. If you are breathing deeply and talking slowly, the child will likely begin to do the same. If you are visibly stressed, he or she will become more stressed.
- Use strategies the child identified in his or her Managing Emotions Guide or MEG.

HOW TO HELP IN A SURVIVAL MOMENT

How to Help When a Child Is in a Survival Response

- **Ground the child** in the here and now
- Describe what you see, set limits and offer choices. Use strategies the child identified in their Managing Emotions Guide
- Avoid discussing what is making the child angry, panicked or sad. Let the child know you will talk about that once they are calmer
- Keep others in the room safe. If possible, ask others to leave the room rather than moving the child
- **Praise** any small movement the child makes toward doing the appropriate thing
- Seek help by using your emergency contacts, if needed

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DEMONSTRATION: HOW TO HELP IN A SURVIVAL MOMENT

TIME: 5 MINUTES

- **Set up the situation.** I am going to talk you through some ways to talk with a child who is re-experiencing or having a meltdown. If you want to be reminded of pointers for handling meltdowns later, look for the backgrounder in your “Foster Parent Resource Guide.”
- First, ground the child in the here and now. “Michael, it’s just you and me in the living room. You are safe here.”
- Then, describe what you see, set limits and offer choices. For choices, use strategies the child identified in his or her MEG. For example, you might say:
 - “You look angry. It’s okay to feel angry but it’s not okay to hurt yourself or someone else. To help bring your anger down, would you like to sit in the rocking chair or run around the yard three times?”

- “I want to make sure you are safe. What would help you calm down? Would you like to jump on the mini-trampoline or do some breathing exercises with me?”
- “I know this is very important to you. How can I help? Can I get your music or would you like to go to your room?”
- Stay away from the topic of what is making the child angry, panicked or sad. Let the child know you will talk about that once he or she is calmer.
- Keep others in the room safe. If possible, ask others to leave the room rather than moving the child.
- Praise any small movement the child makes toward doing the appropriate thing. “Good, I’m glad you sat down.” “Thank you for going to your room. I know that wasn’t easy.” “Good job using your indoor voice.”
- **Brief discussion.** Were there strategies that others have found to be helpful that we may have missed?

PRACTICE WITH SELF-REGULATION

What Works When a Child Is Re-Experiencing?

- Identify which of three groups you would like to work in: preschool, elementary and secondary
- Look at the developmental chart for your age group and talk about what re-experiencing looks like in this age group
- Share with each other strategies that have helped when kids are re-experiencing
- Discuss your ideas as a large group
- Discuss use of calm-down plans for revving and emergency contacts for re-experiencing

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ACTIVITY: DISCUSS WHAT HAS HELPED YOU TIME: 15 MINUTES

- **Set up the situation.** Divide the room into three areas by children’s ages: preschool, elementary school and secondary school (including middle and high school). Then, depending on the number of participants, have them further divide into groups of 3–5 people.

Sample of Challenges by Developmental Stages

Preschool	Elementary	Secondary
Struggles to track light or faces	Is frequently sad, worried, afraid or withdrawn	Feels hopeless and unable to make things better
Regularly cries for hours and is very hard to calm	Is easily hurt by peers or bullies others	Withdraws from family or friends
Does not babble or make simple gestures	Is preoccupied with violent movies, TV or games	Often gives in to negative peer pressure
Does not try to move, crawl or explore	Is fearful with familiar adults — or too friendly with strangers	Becomes violent or abusive
Seems overly fearful, even in safe situations	Has strong negative thoughts of him- or herself	Drives aggressively or speeds or drinks and drives
Is extremely aggressive and hostile toward peers	Has an extreme need for approval or support	Has a favorable attitude toward drug abuse
Has trouble expressing emotions	Had highly conflicted relationships	Diets aggressively even when not overweight

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- **Brief discussion.** Look at the section of the developmental handout that corresponds to your group's age range. First, discuss how re-experiencing can look for children in this age range. Then, discuss with each other things you have found to be helpful in dealing with children who are re-experiencing in this age range.

Allow 10 minutes to elapse.

- **Ask.** Have groups report their findings.

Emphasize

- Because of the numerous challenges for the child and us, we want to do everything we can to prevent re-experiencing moments.
- *Discuss emergency planning. Refer to plans in guide. Talk with participants about when to use their calm-down plans and when to use their emergency contacts. Remind them of the need for a calm-down plan of their own for when they are struggling to stay out of power-play situations.*
- The goal is for caregivers to understand when the child can use his or her calm-down plan, when the parent should use his or her calm-down plan and when calling emergency personnel is more appropriate.
- Please share the child's calm-down plan with his or her social worker so you can receive additional ideas and support if needed and so the social worker can know how you are working to support your child.
- An important side note: There is an emergency contact form in your "Foster Parent Resource Guide." Make several copies of it — one for your fridge, one for the wallets of all adults in the family. Then, check this contact information regularly to make sure phone numbers are up to date, you have the right contact information for your caseworker — that sort of thing.

Reconstituting

Eventually children will return to baseline



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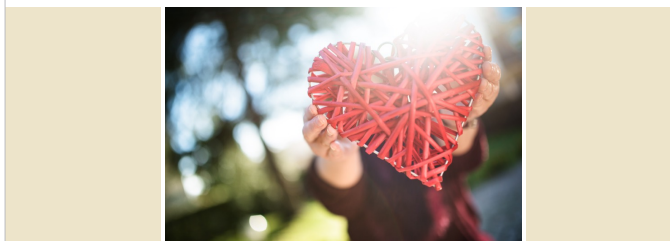
Emphasize

- At some point after the survival moment, children will begin to balance out. This is called reconstituting.
- As children calm down or re-engage with their environment, remember that they are highly sensitive at this point and are at great risk for escalating back into re-experiencing. As children become quiet, it can be tempting to think all is well, but they still need a lot of support. You may want to:
 - Reinforce the child's positive responses.
 - Reassure continued safety.
 - Limit exposure to high-stress events or lots of stimulation.
 - Avoid processing what led up to the re-experiencing state too quickly. The child should be completely calm before you try to learn from the experience or provide discipline.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative Practices vs. Punishment

Hearing from you



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There will be moments, of course, when despite all of the strategies and all of the efforts a child may enter revving or re-experiencing and discipline may be needed. Moving away from punishment to helping a child learn from their mistakes is an important move to make. Children who have experienced trauma need boundaries, limits and structure but what is critical is how and when we administer it. Giving out consequences when a child is revving or re-experiencing can lead to further escalation. Additionally, being harshly punitive may only re-traumatize kids. One way to discipline that has been shown to be helpful is to use “time-in.” This strategy can work with children in a variety of age groups.

Introducing Time-In

Time-in works by keeping the child nearby and under close supervision after a meltdown or difficult behavior



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Have you heard of time-in? *Either have a participant define it or define it yourself.* Time-in is a constructive form of discipline. It can be an improvement over “time-out,” which disconnects children and reinforces a sense of a child’s aloneness from the family. Your resource guide has a backgrounder on this you can read later.

How Time-In Works

1. The child sits in a “Let’s think about it” spot
2. Ask the child to think about the situation, what went wrong and how they could have acted
3. When the child says “Ready,” ask them to describe what could have been done differently. Listen closely, at the child’s level. Make eye contact and respond with a kind but firm voice
4. You and the child role play how to do it next time
5. Praise the child for doing it correctly during role play

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Emphasize

- Time-in works by keeping the child nearby and under close supervision while the child sits in a “let’s think about it” spot.
 - This spot can be anywhere within eyesight and close proximity of the caregiver.
 - The child is asked to think about the situation, what went wrong and how he or she could have handled the situation differently. It is important to have this conversation when the child is completely calm.
 - When the child indicates, “Ready,” the caregiver is nearby and ready to engage when the child is ready to talk. The caregiver listens closely with supportive engagement (down on child’s level, using good eye contact, using a kind but firm tone of voice) while the child describes what could have been done differently.
 - The child and the caregiver then role play how the child can do it differently next time.
 - The caregiver praises the child for doing it correctly.
- This method helps children feel connected.
- The idea here is that once we see the pattern, we can make small adjustments in how we work with children that can bring about big change. When the child uses his or her “time-in” plan, the caregiver must acknowledge it and compliment the child.

The Benefits of Restorative Discipline

- Giving consequences when kids are revving or re-experiencing can lead to further escalation
- Harsh punishment may re-traumatize kids

**Kids need boundaries, limits and structure —
but how you provide them is key**

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Emphasize

- Restorative discipline allows the child an opportunity to make things right. How can you use it to benefit the child in your home?

- When the child is calm, think about restorative practices instead of punishment. If damage has been done, how can the child work to make things right? Remember:
 - Children need to be able to learn from their mistakes.
 - Part of the learning process is to make things right if a child has done something hurtful or damaged anything.
 - Shaming, or using guilt with children, is less effective than providing children with an opportunity to repair what has been harmed.
 - Some examples of making things right include: writing an apology, volunteering to help others, doing something helpful for the person harmed, repairing or working to replace the damaged item (within reason), working to change behavior so mistakes aren't repeated.
- It is important that the child work with those harmed to develop an agreement on what may help healing to occur. This may mean you will need to facilitate a conversation between, say, the child and a sibling who has been harmed about what the child can do to make things right. Let me emphasize this: Having separate discussions in advance with each of the children about the purpose of the restorative process often leads to better outcomes.
- Once a restorative plan is developed, it will need to be monitored to ensure completion.
- Use your judgment about whether additional consequences may be needed. For example, a child who has deliberately broken a sibling's toy may need not only to replace it, but also to lose the privilege of playing with the sibling's toys for a period of time.

DISCUSSION: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

TIME: 5 MINUTES

- **Discuss.** Ask participants if anyone has used restorative discipline. How did it work? If it did not work well, what do you think you could have done differently?

Homework and Questions



Homework

- Practice your behavioral goals



Questions

- Put question in the question box, or
- Email one of us

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- **Questions.** Any closing questions or comments?
- **Homework.** Please focus on the behavioral goals you set for yourself and be ready to share with your partner how it felt and how it worked out. We would be happy to help you with your crisis management plan if you have any questions.

Next Session



- Date and time
- Place

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- **Appreciation.** Thank you for your hard work today. *Review the date, time and place for the next session.*



handouts

The next several pages contain the following handouts:

- Practicing emotional regulation and problem-solving skills
- The Managing Emotions Guide (MEG)
- Developmentally appropriate behavior by child's age

PRACTICING EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

In our TST-FC sessions, we talk about the importance of boosting children's problem-solving capacity. We also practice three self-regulation exercises:

- **BREATHING:** http://youth.anxietybc.com/sites/default/files/Mindful_Breathing.pdf
- **MINDFULNESS:** www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/Mindfulness%20Exercises.pdf
(Exercise#2)
- **MUSCLE RELAXATION:** <http://www.practicingmindfulness.com/howtopracticemindfulness/relaxationtechniques/how-to-calm-yourself-down-and-chill-out/>

Find more

Use the internet to keep looking for the right exercises for you and your family. Begin by exploring:

- **This Pinterest collection on self-regulation**
www.pinterest.com/pin/13792342585066454/
- **Games suggested on PBS Parents**
www.pbs.org/parents/adventures-in-learning/2015/11/games-that-teach-self-regulation/
- **Mindful Schools' multimedia resources**
www.mindfulschools.org/resources/explore-mindful-resources/
- **Audio backgrounders on mindfulness from the University of Vermont College of Medicine**
<https://soundcloud.com/mindfulhealth/tracks>
- **A wikispace on self-regulation developed for teachers that is also useful for parents**
<https://self-regulationintheclassroom.wikispaces.com/Self-Regulation+in+the+Classroom>
- **Materials by The Incredible Years**, including materials about Wally, who solves problems using his detective skills, and Tiny Turtle, who struggles to manage his emotions.
<http://incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/for-parents/>
- **A handful of exercises from The National Center for Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health**
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Exercises-for-Grounding-Emotional-Regulation-Relaxation-Final.pdf

How to make it work

- Practice emotional regulation and problem solving as a family, so everyone gains skills.
- Make practicing fun, light hearted and constructive.
- Match exercises to kids' interests and developmental level.
- **Don't push it!** Are your kids hungry, tired or in need of a nap or physical exercise? Meet these basic needs first before practicing emotional regulation and problem-solving skills.

MANAGING EMOTIONS GUIDE (MEG)

The MEG is for kids, teens and families. It helps you understand how you react when you experience “triggers” or are reminded of really stressful events.

Sometimes it is hard to realize that things going on around you can make it difficult for you to think clearly, stay calm and make good choices. The MEG can help you, your family and others figure out what leads to problems and what helps. Use the MEG to identify healthier strategies to use when you have strong emotions or behavior that is hard to control.

With your permission, copies of the MEG can be shared with anyone in your life who can help. That might include a grandparent, social worker, teacher or school counselor.

With the MEG, you can start to make changes that help you take charge of your emotions during times of stress.

THIS MEG IS BY:

FOR: *List everyone who should get a copy. Possibilities include YOU, therapist, parent, teacher, psychiatrist, home-based clinicians, coaches and anyone else you think knows you well and can help you when things get tough!*

MY PRIORITY PROBLEM I AM WORKING ON:

Step I: Understanding my emotions (Building Awareness)

USUAL STATE		SURVIVAL-IN-THE-MOMENT STATES	
REGULATING <i>Being in control</i>	REVVING <i>Getting upset</i>	RE-EXPERIENCING <i>Losing control</i>	RECONSTITUTING <i>Getting it back together again</i>

WHAT FLIPS MY SWITCH: What happens in my environment that gets me upset?

AWARENESS: What am I thinking, what am I paying attention to, am I spaced out?

AFFECT: What do I feel, what does my face show, what does my body feel like?

ACTION: What am I doing, what am I saying, what do I feel like doing?

Step 2: Managing my emotions (Applying Awareness)

REGULATING Being in control	REVVING Getting upset	RE-EXPERIENCING Losing control	RECONSTITUTING Getting it back together again
<i>Things I can do to continue to feel good and in control</i>	<i>Things I can do when I start to become upset</i>	<i>Things I can do to stay safe and keep myself from losing control</i>	<i>Things I can do to calm down and fix any problems that happened when I lost control</i>
Things I can do			
Things an adult or friend can help me with			

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR BY CHILD'S AGE (SAMPLE)

PRESCHOOL	ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY
Develops a social smile	Speaks in full sentences, tells longer stories, enjoys communicating	Can calm down and handle anger
Develops a general routine of waking and sleeping	Begins to understand and follow simple rules and accept disappointment	Sets goals and works toward achieving them
Responds to others' expressions and emotions	Takes pride and pleasure in new skills	Accepts family rules, completes chores and other responsibilities
Experiments with sounds and words	Gains increasing control over emotions and behavior	Needs time for emotions and reasoning skills to catch up with rapid physical changes
Tries to pull up, move around, explore	Shows growing awareness of good and bad	Is gaining social and emotional skills in the context of being a teen, living in a family, going to school, etc.
Is curious and tries to amuse him- or herself	Develops increasing ability to draw, write and read	Is developing growing capacity to handle social, school and other rules and tasks
Begins to recognize patterns of behavior, times of day, common objects and special people	Has identifiable personality traits, likes and dislikes	Is beginning to have a sense of the future, of the consequences of actions

Causes for Concern by Child Age (Sample)

PRESCHOOL	ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY
Struggles to track light or faces	Is frequently sad, worried, afraid or withdrawn	Feels hopeless and unable to make things better
Regularly cries for hours and is very hard to calm	Is easily hurt by peers or bullies others	Withdraws from family or friends
Does not babble or make simple gestures	Is preoccupied with violent movies, TV or games	Often gives in to negative peer pressure
Does not try to move, crawl or explore	Is fearful with familiar adults — or too friendly with strangers	Becomes violent or abusive
Seems overly fearful, even in safe situations	Has strong negative thoughts of him- or herself	Drives aggressively or speeds or drinks and drives

PRESCHOOL	ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY
Is extremely aggressive and hostile toward peers	Has an extreme need for approval or support	Has a favorable attitude toward drug abuse
Has trouble expressing emotions	Has highly conflicted relationships	Diets aggressively even when not overweight

Want more details? See the source document, *Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth*, at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/braindevtrauma.