



# Understanding Trauma

SESSION ONE FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR ARC REFLECTIONS

SUMMER 2017



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

### ARC REFLECTIONS

ARC, or Attachment, Regulation and Competency, is a framework for working with children and teens who have experienced trauma. Developed by Margaret Blaustein and Kristine Kinniburgh of the Justice Resource Institute, ARC builds on the resilience of children, teens and families.

ARC Reflections — an ARC-informed caregiver training curriculum for foster parents, kin and other caregivers — was written by Blaustein and Kinniburgh with support and consultation from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The model was piloted in six child welfare agencies in 2015 and evaluated by Child Trends, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center with a focus on child welfare.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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# PREPARING TO FACILITATE

## A CHECKLIST

### Materials needed

- Whiteboard or flip chart and markers
- Name tags
- PowerPoint slides
- Pens and paper
- Multicolored markers on each table
- Small basket of manipulatives (if available) and descriptions of the regulation activities from your *Facilitator Welcome and Handouts* booklet (either on whole sheets or cut the activities into squares) on each table

### Handouts

- Check-in handout (two per participant)
- Olivia handout
- Self-reflection worksheet: How have people influenced you?
- Homework sheets: Check-in handouts
- Take-home log
- Summary sheet (with teaching points, homework assignment)



## A NOTE ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Words written in italics are generally suggesting that you, the facilitator, take an action. For example, that you *Focus on themes of caring and responsiveness* or *Suggest that participants pair up*.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE TO SESSION ONE

## WELCOME

 <p>THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION</p>  <p>TRAUMA CENTER At Justice Resource Institute</p>	<h3>ARC Reflections</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ARC, or <b>Attachment, Regulation and Competency</b>, is a framework for working with children and teens who have experienced trauma. Developed by Margaret Blaustein and Kristine Kinniburgh of the Justice Resource Institute, <b>ARC builds on the resilience of children, teens and families</b></li><li>• ARC Reflections — an ARC-informed caregiver training curriculum for foster parents, kin and other caregivers — was written by Blaustein and Kinniburgh with support and consultation from the Annie E. Casey Foundation</li></ul>
<h3>Welcome</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This group will meet nine times for two hours each time</li><li>• <b>Please attend all sessions</b></li><li>• Each session will include the following segments:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Warm-up</li><li>• Opening check-in</li><li>• Review and report back</li><li>• Theme of the day</li><li>• Self-reflection</li><li>• Take home</li><li>• Practice</li><li>• Closing check-in</li></ul></li></ul>	

SLIDES 1, 2 AND 3: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

### Welcome

Hello! *Introduce yourself briefly — just your name and title or role — and provide any necessary, brief background about the training.*

- You will be introducing yourselves to each other in just a moment.
- *Provide basic information necessary to ensure participants' comfort (parking, location of restrooms, breaks).*

### Teach

In this group, we will follow the same routine each week. Routines are an important part of building safety and rhythm for children and teens who have experienced trauma, as well as for all of us. Each session will include:


- **Warm-up.** Generally, we will have an opening activity related to the theme of the day to engage you in the content and build cohesion as a group.

- **Opening check-in.** This activity will be taught in a few moments and is an opportunity for you to notice your internal state and the ways your internal state links to your ability to engage, be thoughtful, feel comfortable, etc. This is one of the primary skills we will be trying to support in your parenting. Each session will offer at least two opportunities to practice this skill.
- **Review and report back.** After the first week, we will briefly review the previous week's content and each meeting will include time for you to speak in small groups about the previous week's homework assignment.
- **Theme of the day.** Each week, we will learn about a particular theme. This week's theme, for example, is understanding trauma.
- **Self-reflection.** Each week, you will be asked a specific question to help you think about ways the week's theme applies to your own life.
- **Take home.** You will be asked to identify one piece of information that resonated with you or increased your understanding or skill set each week and write a sentence about this learning in your log.
- **Practice.** Each week, you will be asked to try what you have learned at home. I will explain the activity and provide appropriate handouts.
- **Closing check-in.** You will be asked to do another check-in.

#### Ask

Before we start, does anyone have questions about the weekly routine or the general approach?





WARM-UP

Warm-Up

- Introduce yourself
- In **one word**:
  - What made you decide to become a foster parent?
  - What sustains you now? What keeps you going?

SLIDES 4 AND 5: ICEBREAKER

### Goal

To allow foster parents and caregivers to introduce themselves and begin to establish group cohesion.

### Do

Introduce yourself in more detail, this time providing more information about your background as a trainer and, if applicable, as a parent.

### Ask

- I would like each of you to introduce yourselves, including your first name, the ages of your children (biological, foster, adoptive) and the number of years you have been a foster parent. **Note:** *If the group is very large, introductions can be done in small groups. If you break into small groups for the introductions, however, come back to the full group for this next part.*
- Please use one word to describe what led you to become a foster parent. *If participants struggle to respond, consider providing a few examples (such as helping or caring).*
- What sustains you as a foster parent currently?

### Discuss

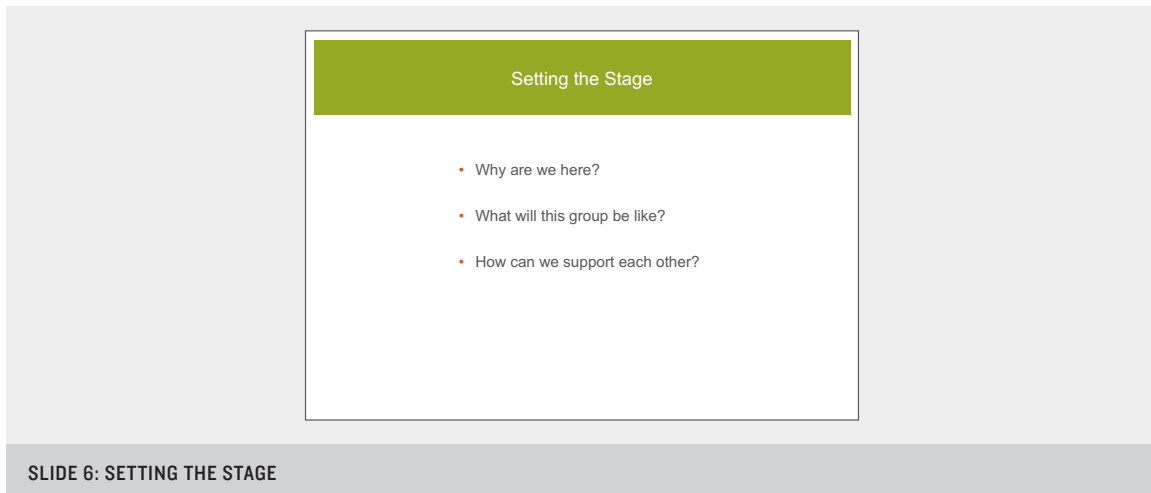
- The words you use to describe your motivation or what sustains you often represent personal values. These values link to our experiences, our self-perception and our relationships. This means that being a foster parent is often closely tied to personal identity and sense of self.
- Notice that what encourages people to become foster parents and what keeps them going may be different.

### Ask

Has what motivates you changed over time? Why, do you think?

### Teach

- Many people may go into this work for an externally directed motivation, such as to help a child. Over time, they may find that the rewards are more internal. For example, because it is so rewarding to make a connection with a child or teen.
- Notice that people in this group may become or remain foster parents for many different reasons. That said, there are likely to be many similarities among all of us, too.
- *Underscore certain themes to participants, such as caring, giving back, making a difference, kindness, protecting the vulnerable.*
- One of the challenges of caring for children and teens who have experienced trauma is that our core self (and core values) are both rewarded and challenged.



Setting the Stage

- Why are we here?
- What will this group be like?
- How can we support each other?

SLIDE 6: SETTING THE STAGE

### Goal

*To take time to discuss group goals, format and ways for group members to support each other.*

### Ask

Why did you decide to take part in this group?

### Share

- This group is designed for foster or resource parents and kin caregivers.
- It is intended not only to be a support forum, but also to provide information about the ways trauma has affected children and teens in your homes and support you in building a skill set that will both help you and help them.
- The group will feature a lot of teaching content, along with activities, discussion and homework. Although we really encourage you to participate, we know that some activities will be more comfortable than others. You are always welcome to actively observe rather than participate if you prefer.
- If you take a look at your materials, you will see the topics that we will be covering. We will start by talking about how experiences have affected children and teens in your home; next, we will take some time to talk about your own experiences as a foster or resource parent or kin caregiver; and then, we will talk about specific skill sets, such as how to read and respond to children's behaviors, how to help them learn skills for managing emotions and how to support positive identity.

### Do

*Establish ways the group can be supportive of each other and take care of themselves.*

### Say

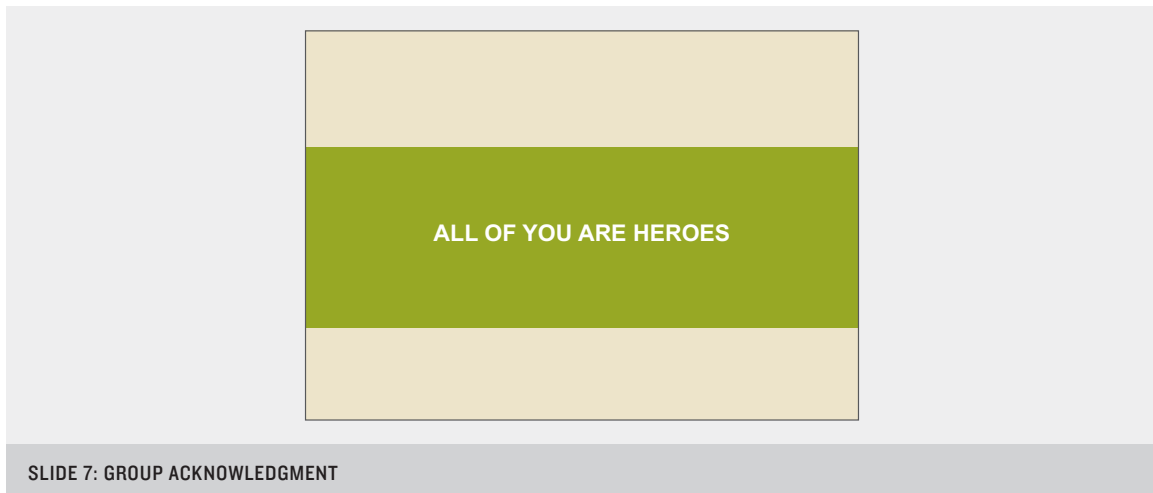
In this group, we will be teaching about and discussing information that can bring up big thoughts or feelings. Because of that, it is particularly important that we agree on ways to support ourselves and

each other. For instance, let's discuss things like keeping what is said here confidential and being nonjudgmental. What ideas do you have for ways group members can be supportive of one another?

- *Elicit ideas from the group. Write these down on the flip chart or whiteboard and retain for future sessions. If not raised by the group, be sure to include or discuss the following key points:*
  - *Active listening to other group members*
  - *Nonjudgmental response — no shaming, blaming or criticism*
  - *Take care of yourself — if you need to take a break or get support, do*
  - *Confidentiality — do not talk about what group members have said to other people*
  - *Use your support team — for instance, check in with your case manager or family support worker*


### **Optional**

*You may wish to add in a team-building or icebreaker activity here.*



### Goal

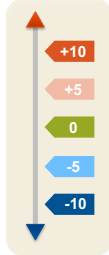
*To take a moment to acknowledge the tremendous role foster parents and caregivers play in the lives of children. Being a foster parent is incredibly challenging — and so necessary and life changing.*



**OPENING CHECK-IN**

Let's Talk About Energy

How high (or low) is your **energy** right now?



SLIDES 8 AND 9: INTRODUCING THE CHECK-IN EXERCISE

### Goal

*To introduce the check-in exercise.*

### Teach

- We all have different levels of energy or arousal in our bodies at various times. This level of energy or arousal may be linked to what we are doing, the mood we are in, how tired or excited we are or our own natural set point.
- Energy is linked strongly to emotion in general and to distress and the danger response in particular. Consider the ways your energy may change when you are sad, angry or nervous. When you feel afraid or very upset, arousal will often surge into your body, so you have the energy you need to protect yourself.
- The more we are aware of our internal experience, the better we are able to manage it.

### Do

*Show the energy thermometer, noting that participants have similar thermometers as handouts.*

### Do

I want you to think about your energy. Think of it on a scale from +10 (very high energy) to -10 (not just calm, but frozen or disconnected). Mark your energy level on the provided handout.

### HANDOUT: CHECK-IN

How Comfortable?

How comfortable does that **energy** feel in your body?

Totally Comfortable

Really Uncomfortable

SLIDE 10: INTRODUCING YOUR ENERGY'S COMFORT ZONE

### Goal

*To introduce the idea of a comfort zone.*

### Teach

- Although there is no such thing as good energy or bad energy, the level of arousal we have may feel comfortable or uncomfortable in our bodies. Some of this depends on our circumstance (for instance, where we are or the time of day). It may depend on our personal preferences.
- When our energy is uncomfortable in our bodies, we might want to consider taking steps to feel more comfortable.

### Do

*Show the comfort scale on the PowerPoint slide.*

### Ask

On this part of your chart, please rate how comfortable or uncomfortable your current energy level feels.

How Effective?

How good a match is your **energy** level for what you are doing?

Great Match

Terrible Match

SLIDE II: INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF YOUR ENERGY'S EFFECTIVENESS

### Goal

*To introduce the concept of effective energy.*

### Teach

- Although we generally do not think of energy as good or bad, our arousal or energy level may or may not be a good match for what we are trying to do at any given moment in time.
- For instance, higher levels of arousal may be useful in the morning when you are trying to run errands or accomplish things. But if arousal is too high, it may get in the way of what you are doing. For example, high arousal at night may make it hard for you to sleep.
- Frozen energy, or feeling disconnected, may feel comfortable for some people who are overwhelmed by feelings or relationships, but may also make it hard to engage in activities or be with friends.

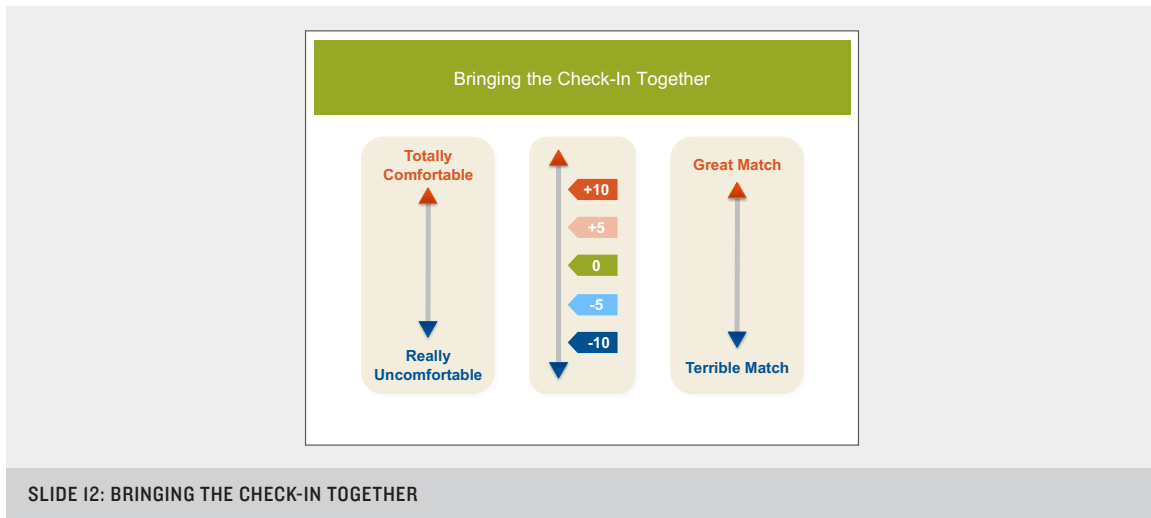
### Do

*Show the energy match scale on the slide.*

### Ask

Please rate how good a match you believe your current energy level is with the task you are doing (participating in this group).





### Goal

*To show how the three portions of the check-in work together.*

### Do

*Show participants the combined check-in figure.*

### Discuss

- We will be beginning and ending every group with a check-in.
- Does anyone want to share what you noticed while doing the various components of the check-in?
- *You may want to serve as a model and provide your own reflections on the topic.*

### Ask

Does anyone have any questions about these concepts?

Getting Comfortable

- If your energy is comfortable and a good match, great!
- If not, **what can you do to get it there?**

SLIDE 13: GETTING COMFORTABLE

### Goal

*To support participants in experimenting with regulation tools.*

### Teach

- All of us engage in a variety of activities during the day to help bring our energy up or down and keep our bodies and emotions feeling comfortable. These activities can be as simple as taking a deep breath or stretching and as involved as working out at the gym, taking a yoga class or meeting with a spiritual counselor.
- Not everyone responds to the same strategies and the same strategies won't necessarily work for us all the time. For this reason, it's important to experiment with different ways to manage our energy and arousal and keep our bodies comfortable.

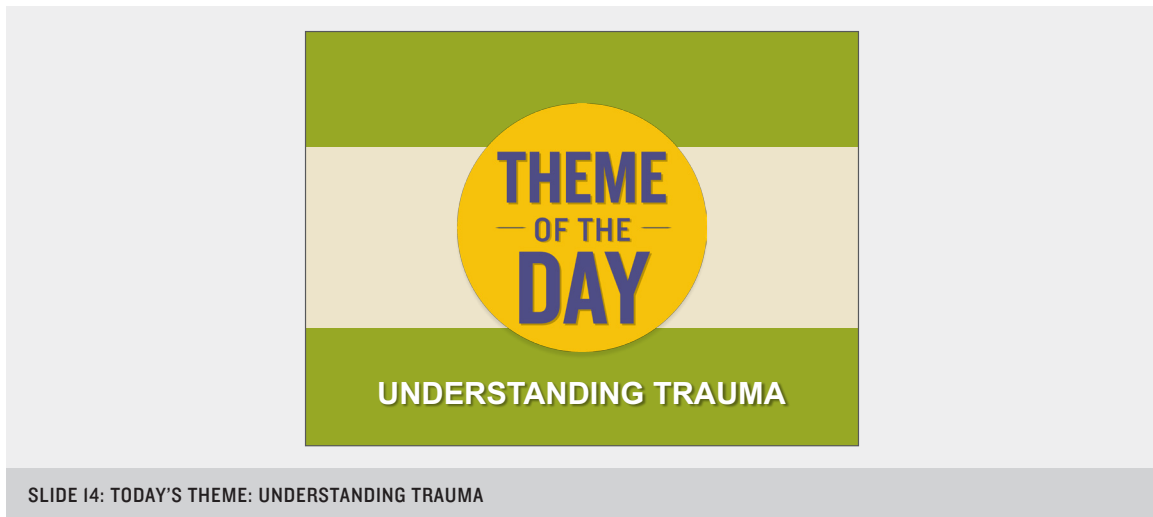
### Do

*Show participants provided regulation items (bubbles, stress balls, etc.) and/or regulation activity sheets that are one each table, with a brief description of each.*

### Ask

During today's session, please experiment with at least one tool (a regulation item or activity). Notice whether you like it and whether it brings your energy up or down.

## THEME: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA



### Goal

*To introduce the day's theme, which is an introduction to foundational information about traumatic stress.*

### Ask

When you think about trauma, what types of experiences do you think of?

### Do

*List the experiences mentioned by participants on the whiteboard or flip chart.*

Understanding Trauma

- Research shows that **nearly half** of children from birth to 17 have experienced at least one type of trauma — it is not as rare as you might think

SLIDE 15: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: NEARLY HALF OF KIDS EXPERIENCE IT

### Goal

*To illustrate that the experience of adversity is more common in childhood than many people think.*

### Teach

- While some people believe trauma happens to only a handful of children and adults, research shows it is very common. Consider these numbers:
  - One in five girls reportedly experiences sexual abuse.
  - One in three children reports acts that might be classified as physical abuse.
  - One in five adults reports growing up in a home in which there was domestic violence.
  - One in five children in the United States grows up in a home marked by significant enough poverty that the family does not reliably have enough to eat.
- For children and youth in foster care, trauma is the norm, not the exception. For children and youth of color or who identify as LGBTQ, trauma is even more common and complex.

### Ask

Are any of you surprised by these numbers? Why or why not?

### Understanding Trauma

- Research also shows that all sorts of adversity — **things that don't leave a bruise** — can have a negative effect on children and teens
- Many of the stressors that shape children's and teens' lives are chronic and pervasive, such as neglect, racism, poverty and frequent moves
- Trauma can also include events, such as being hit or experiencing rape, an accident or an earthquake

SLIDE 16: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: IT OFTEN DOESN'T LEAVE A BRUISE

#### Goal

*To highlight the likelihood that many significant experiences have shaped the lives of children and teens who come into foster parents' homes.*

#### Teach

- Many people believe that the word “trauma” refers only to things that we see in the media: violent assaults, car accidents, acts of terror, natural disasters and acts of abuse.
- We are learning more and more that there are many stressful childhood experiences that may challenge children and teens. They may also experience multiple and overlapping traumas that happen at the same time or in close proximity to one another. Some examples include caregiver mental health issues, poverty or racism.
- It is important not to presume to know what particular trauma experience most affected a particular child or teen.

#### Ask

Think about the children or teens who have come into your home. What type of experiences may have most profoundly influenced their lives? These may (or may not) include experiences that might be classically defined as trauma. How might the race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity of the child have affected his or her experience of trauma?

### Understanding Trauma

- Feelings are complicated. You might think that children and teens are always happy to get away from an abusive parent. But many identify leaving a parent, even an abusive one, as **the hardest experience they have had**

SLIDE 17: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: FEELINGS ARE COMPLICATED

#### Goal

*To highlight the complicated nature of feelings.*

#### Teach

- Feelings are complicated!
- It makes sense that we believe that children and teens should be happy to escape an abusive, neglectful or otherwise negative environment. However, attachment is a powerful thing. Research shows that even in the worst of relationships, children and teens often find a way to form a connection with the adults in their lives.
- For most children and teens, their relationship with their caregiver had many facets. There may have been acts of violence but there may also have been acts of caring. Children and teens often report feeling loved even in the face of boundary violations. Children's and teens' feelings are often very complicated. It is impossible to simplify them into a single emotion.
- Loss and grief are a profound part of the experience of most children and teens in foster care.

#### Ask

- Please think about your own role in parenting children or teens who have experienced very complicated losses and separations from their caregivers, including sometimes less-than-ideal caregivers. In what ways do you imagine this might affect your own interactions with the children or teens in your care?
- Be sure to consider this both from your perspective and the perspective of the child or teen.

### Understanding Trauma

- Trauma can **profoundly influence** a child or teen, even when it takes place during infancy — and even when he or she has no memory of what happened

SLIDE 18: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: TRAUMA CAN PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCE A CHILD OR TEEN

#### Goal

*To address the myth that trauma will not affect very young children.*

#### Teach

- Many people believe that very young children are not affected by trauma because they have no language, can't describe their experience and may not even remember it. However, research shows that trauma in early childhood can have a profound influence on a child's or teen's development.
- Infancy and early childhood are a time of rapid brain growth and development. Children's or teens' environments and relationships have a strong effect on both. Even if a child or teen can't name a traumatic experience, his or her development may have been affected by trauma.
- Memory is about more than language. In fact, all of us develop memories or associations based on internal sensations, facial expressions, sensory inputs, etc.

#### Ask

Has anyone in this room ever had a child or teen placed in your home whose experience of trauma happened very early in his/her life? In what ways do you believe this child or teen was affected by that experience?

### Understanding Trauma

- Being in a safe environment, even with the most well-intentioned and loving caregivers, **does not mean a child or teen feels safe**

SLIDE 19: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: BEING SAFE DOESN'T MEAN A CHILD OR TEEN FEELS SAFE

#### Goal

*To illustrate that it takes time to build safety.*

#### Teach

- For many caregivers, it can be hard to understand how a child or teen can be in a safe, loving home and still be struggling.
- Although experiencing safety, caring and attention are all very important parts of children's and teens' healing process, it takes time for them to truly feel safe.
- This is particularly true for children and teens who lack permanency, who are unsure how long they will be staying in your home and who don't know what will happen next. For them, safety itself can be frightening. They may worry about becoming accustomed to safety and these new relationships and then losing them.
- Children and teens who have experienced repeated danger in their lives will often remain vigilant, focused on detecting further signs of danger — in the environment, in their relationships and in the world in general.

#### Ask

In what ways have you seen children or teens in your home demonstrate that they feel afraid or unsure?



### Understanding Trauma

- Chronic trauma shapes nearly every aspect of a child's or teen's life
- There are many different things that are important to a child's or teen's healing. One of the most important is having **long-lasting, supportive relationships**

SLIDE 20: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA: THE NEED FOR LONG-LASTING, SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

#### Goal

*To expand understanding of important components for building healthy development and healing for children and teens who have experienced trauma.*

#### Teach

- There are several important components for building healthy development and healing for children and teens who have experienced trauma.
- Many people believe that talking about a traumatic experience will fix it. In fact, putting words to experience (developing a story, or narrative) may be important, but it is often only one aspect of what a child or teen needs to resolve past experiences. For instance, some of you may know a child or teen who speaks all the time about things he or she has been through but who doesn't seem to improve or feel better. A child or teen may even feel worse after talking about his or her trauma. He or she may fail to understand the impact trauma has on his or her life and continue to engage in negative or unhealthy behavior.
- As we will discuss, children and teens need external supports, the experience of positive relationships, opportunities to be successful and to feel powerful, the ability to regulate their emotions and bodies, strategies to manage their behaviors and other things we will address over the next several sessions.

#### Ask

For those of you who have had children or teens in your homes, what things have you done that seem most helpful to them? What other experiences seem to be important to support these children and teens?

### Understanding Resilience

- Particularly with the right supports and resources, children and teens have **a remarkable ability to thrive**, even when they have experienced multiple hard things in their lives
- There are many factors that can support resilience, some of which we will talk about in this group. These include:
  - a safe home
  - supportive, lasting relationships
  - the ability to manage hard feelings
  - feeling positive about yourself

#### SLIDE 21: UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

#### Goal

*To highlight that children and teens can be resilient, especially with supports and resources.*


#### Ask

How would you define “resilience”? *Write participants’ responses on the whiteboard or flip chart.*

#### Teach

- Obviously, trauma can have a very strong negative effect on outcomes for children and teens. However, many, many people who experience trauma go on to live healthy, happy lives.
- One of the major factors that predicts how well a child, teen or adult will do is the number and type of resources, or positive supports and qualities, the person has. These resources may be internal (for instance, being able to handle hard feelings) or external (like having someone to talk to or feeling like people care). We will spend a lot of our time in this group talking about how to build or support these resources.

## Meet Olivia

<p>Meet Olivia</p> 	<p>Olivia's Story</p> <p><b>Olivia is a 5-year-old girl</b> of mixed ethnicity. Her parents used substances (primarily heroin, alcohol and marijuana) and there was frequent violence in their relationship.</p> <p>The family moved four times during Olivia's first two years and was homeless once. Often Olivia's mother would leave her with friends or other relatives for brief periods.</p>
<p>Olivia's Story</p> <p><b>Olivia and her mother</b> moved into a shelter when Olivia was 3 years old, but her mother returned to Olivia's father after six months.</p> <p>Two months later, dad was incarcerated because of a domestic violence incident and multiple intent-to-distribute charges.</p> <p>He was arrested in front of Olivia.</p>	<p>Olivia's Story</p> <p><b>Olivia was removed</b> from her mother's custody three months later after allegations of neglect and physical abuse.</p> <p>In the past year, Olivia has lived in three different foster homes. She was just placed in her current home.</p> <p>Olivia's mother has been unable to comply with service plans requiring treatment of her diagnosed bipolar disorder and substance abuse.</p>

SLIDES 22 – 25: MEET OLIVIA

## Do

*Introduce the provided case example. Read it aloud and let participants know they can read along in their handouts. Let them know we will be returning to Olivia throughout the sessions.*

A presentation slide titled "So What Is Trauma?" in a green header. The main content area is white and contains two bullet points. The slide is set against a light gray background.

So What Is Trauma?

- What in Olivia's experience would you consider **traumatic**?
- Why?

SLIDE 26: SO WHAT IS TRAUMA?

### Goal

*To apply the concept of trauma to Olivia's life.*

### Ask

- What do you consider to be the traumatic aspects of Olivia's experience and why? *Write participants' answers on the whiteboard or flip chart.*
- How might Olivia's race or the race of her parents have affected her experience of trauma?
- How many of you have known children or teens whose lives resemble Olivia's? In what ways does her story feel familiar?

Common Elements of Trauma

**TRAUMA:**

- Activates the survival instinct
- **Overwhelms the ability to cope**
- Generally causes intense feelings of helplessness and vulnerability, even outside the situation
- May generate a range of negative feelings: fear, rage, betrayal, shame, guilt, submission
- May be experienced as predictable (such as sexual abuse) or unpredictable (such as parental mental health issues)

SLIDE 27: COMMON ELEMENTS OF TRAUMA

### Goal

*To describe the common elements of potentially traumatic experiences.*

### Teach

- Trauma activates the part of the brain responsible for survival. This switch to “survival mode” is not within the child’s or teen’s conscious control.
- The experience of trauma may be subjective. What feels overwhelming for one child or teen may or may not for another. A child’s or teen’s internal and external resources and developmental stage influences this. It makes a difference whether a child or teen has a caring adult in his or her life, for example, or is a toddler versus a teenager.
- Because a child or teen has no control over traumatic experiences, over time he or she may exhibit learned helplessness and profound vulnerability.
- Strong feelings are a part of the traumatic experience.
- Children and teens may experience trauma as predictable or unpredictable. This may affect how they react to it. Unpredictable trauma — like not knowing if a parent will be violent or nurturing on a particular night — may produce constant vigilance, as a child or teen needs to be constantly prepared in case bad things happen. If trauma has happened at a particular, expected time — Saturday mornings or when a certain person visits — children and teens may develop powerful anticipatory anxiety.

### Ask

Would anyone add anything to this definition of trauma? Why?

How Has This Influenced Olivia?

- What do you think Olivia has learned about **relationships**? How do you think she might react to other people?
- What do you think Olivia has learned about herself in the past five years?
- How do you think Olivia got through her experience? What **survival skills** might she have learned?

SLIDE 28: HOW HAS THIS INFLUENCED OLIVIA?

### Goal

*To apply to Olivia what participants have learned about the effect of trauma.*

### Ask/Do

Let's think about Olivia. *Facilitator should read the three questions on the slide, one at a time, and solicit responses from the group. Write participants' responses on the whiteboard or flip chart.*

### Teach

*If participants don't mention the following, please discuss them:*

- **Relationships:** A child like Olivia may feel relationships, such as the relationship with you, may be dangerous, unpredictable, not permanent or not to be trusted
- **Self:** Olivia may feel she is unimportant, vulnerable or unlovable.
- **Survival responses:** Olivia's reactions may be survival responses to experiences she has faced. For example, maybe she cries a lot so adults will pay attention to her. Perhaps she learned to shut down and stay invisible so she doesn't get hurt. She may engage in self-harm (banging her head) to self-soothe if her parents didn't respond when she was distressed.

### What Is the Lens?



SLIDE 29: THINKING ABOUT TRAUMA: WHAT IS THE LENS?


#### Goal

*To introduce the idea that trauma shapes our lens (or understanding) of the world on many levels.*

#### Teach

Trauma shapes the way children and teens understand and make meaning about their world. Over the next few slides, we will look at three important categories in which children's and teens' system of meaning is shaped.

## Attachment

What Is the Lens?	What Is the Lens?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Attachment</b> is the lens for relationships</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is in the room?</li></ul> 

SLIDES 30 AND 31: ATTACHMENT

### Goal

*To illustrate that the experiences we have in early relationships can influence how a child responds to future relationships*

### Teach

- Just like Olivia, many of the children and teens who come into your home will have experienced anxiety, lack of care and, at times, harm in relationships.
- When children and teens have experienced repeated stress in relationships, they develop strategies for managing future relationships. One strategy is to assume that others will harm them and therefore enter into relationships prepared to defend themselves.
- When you interact with children and teens who have experienced repeated harm, it is important to remind yourself that at any given moment the child or teen may be interacting not just with you, but with every person who has ever hurt, rejected or abandoned him or her in the past.

### Ask

- In what ways have children and teens in your home interacted with you that might be based on previous, stressful relationships?
- In what ways have your own interactions with children and teens in your home been influenced by your growing-up experiences?



### What Is the Lens?

- **Labels** we are given influence the lens for self

HELLO my name is The Cutter	HELLO my name is The Hoarder	HELLO my name is Too Noisy
HELLO my name is Impulsive	HELLO my name is Foster Kid	HELLO my name is Manipulative
HELLO my name is The Quiet One	HELLO my name is The Liar	HELLO my name is Stupid

SLIDES 32 AND 33: LENS FOR SELF

### Goal

*To illustrate the ways children and teens internalize negative experiences.*

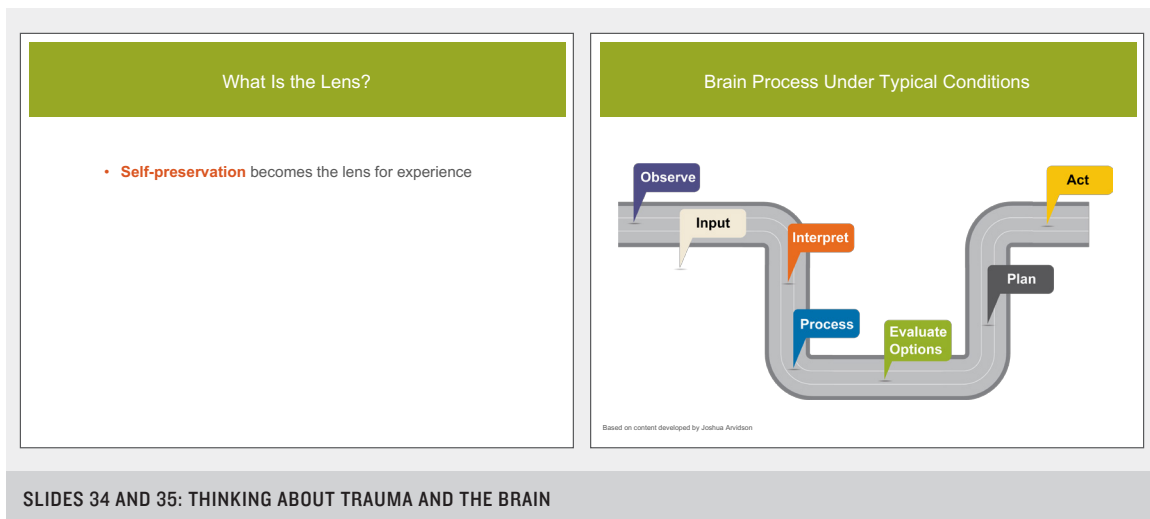
### Teach

- Children and teens develop a sense of self, based on their early experiences, including their successes and failures, the labels others use about them and their ability to influence — or not — the world around them.
- Most of the children and teens who come into your home will have been through many layers of negative experiences and will have heard — and been given — numerous labels by other people.
- Over time, these experiences and labels may become the filter through which children or teens see themselves.

### Ask

- Can you think of other ways children or teens might view themselves — other labels they may have heard about themselves?
- How might the race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity of the child influence the way a child views him- or herself and interacts with the world?
- How might these labels influence the way a child or teen interacts with or approaches the world — and how he or she might interact with or approach you?

## Thinking about trauma and the brain

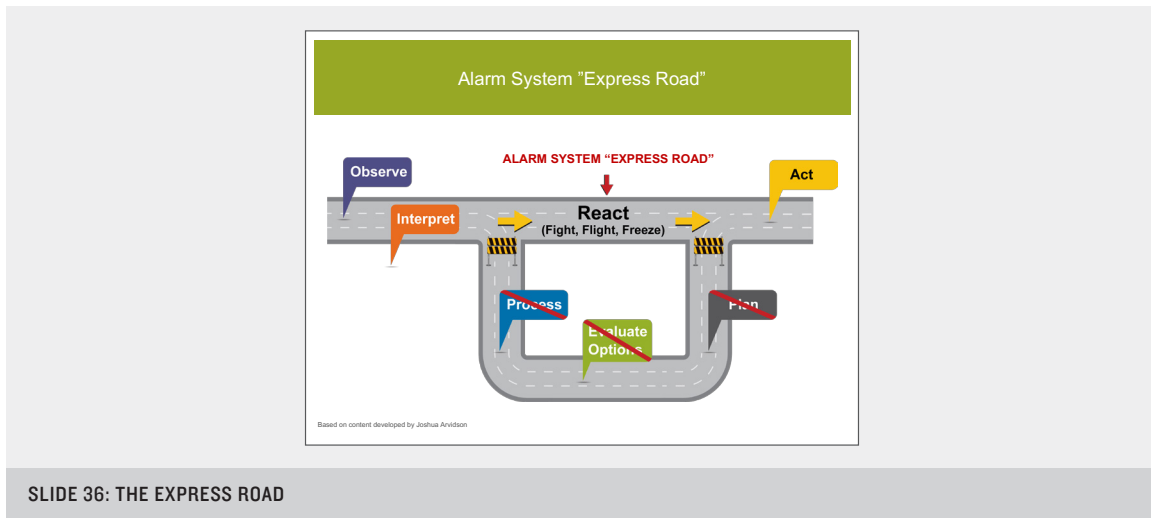


### Goal

*To introduce the information highway and ways our brains process information.*

### Teach

- We are going to talk about ways our brains process information, how we experience danger and what is often called the information highway.
- Let's start by realizing that every experience is subjective and each of us has different views of what is and isn't dangerous.
- This slide shows the brain under typical conditions. Generally, in a new situation, each of us observes, takes in information, makes meaning and chooses a fitting response. For instance, most kids, when they hear a loud noise, will pause, try to figure out what it was and — assuming it's not something dangerous (for instance, if the noise was made by a nearby construction site) — will go about their business.



### Goal

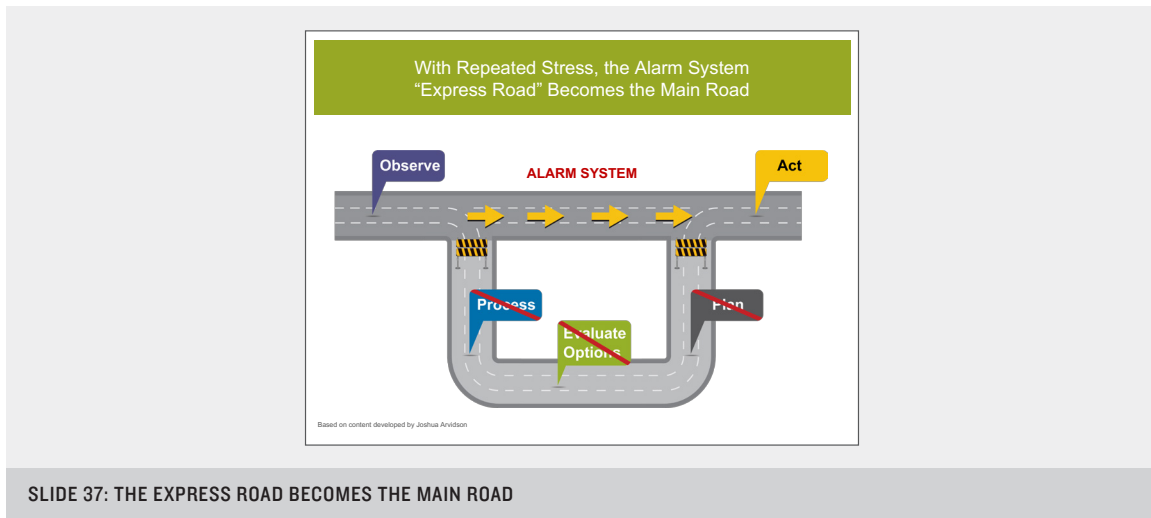
*To introduce the Express Road — or how we process information when there is danger.*

### Teach

- When we face danger, our brains operate a little differently. Faced with danger, our brains make the best judgments they can, very quickly, based on what we hear, see, taste, smell and feel and what we have learned over time about the signals of danger.
- Once a situation is perceived as dangerous, the brain helps us survive by skipping some responses and speeding up others. For instance, if you walk by a construction site and a block of wood suddenly hits the sidewalk in front of you, you may jump out of the way before even thinking about it. Instead of being on the "Main Road," your brain puts you on the "Express Road."

### Ask

I don't need you to share with the whole group, but I would like you to think about a time when you were in some sort of danger. Try to remember how your body reacted. If you are willing, jot down a few notes about what you remember.



## Goal

*To highlight the impact of chronic danger on how we perceive our experience.*

## Teach

- Even though the Express Road is activated by danger, what each person perceives as dangerous is very different. Children or teens who have been exposed to long-lasting or repeated negative experiences perceive many different things are potentially dangerous or negative — even experiences that don't seem at all dangerous to others. These experiences — like a situation, a touch, a look, a smell or a feeling in their bodies — can potentially put them on the Express Road.
- So how does this link to the behaviors you see? All of us get better over time at the things we do often. That's true of repetitive actions such as driving, operating machines, changing a baby's diaper, typing...all things that typically take focus and conscious effort when we first start doing them but that become automatic over time. If we do these actions enough, we may not have to think very hard about doing them. That is because our brains learn to be more and more efficient over time. Our thinking brain gets out of the way and lets our action brain take over, except in unusual circumstances.
- When children or teens experience danger over and over, the same thing can happen, only the behavior or action that is getting efficient is survival. A child's or teen's response to perceived danger can happen frequently and lead to survival behaviors instead of thoughtful processing of information. In other words, the Express Road can become the Main Road. We will talk more about these survival-based behaviors in our next meeting.

## Ask

- What kinds of things have you noticed that put children or teens in your care on the Express Road?
- In your experience, what happens once a child or teen is on the Express Road — how does he or she behave?

## Connecting the theme to Olivia

Where Does This Leave Olivia?

- What happens:
  - When you expect people to be dangerous, untrustworthy or unavailable?
  - When you believe you are unworthy of care?
  - When you expect the world to be dangerous and view even safe experiences as frightening?
  - When you have **limited capacity to cope** with any of that and you believe you have no one to turn to?

SLIDE 38: CONNECTING THE THEME TO OLIVIA

### Goal

*To prompt consideration of ways the trauma lens shapes experience for children and teens in foster care.*

### Teach

- So how might what we've been learning affect Olivia? Can you imagine the kinds of experiences Olivia might struggle with, and how her struggles might show up in her behaviors, her relationships and her emotions?
- Responses to these questions, and strategies for managing and shifting these responses, will be the focus of future sessions.

### Wrap-Up

- Many different things may be experienced as traumatic
- Trauma can profoundly influence **child development**
- Trauma shapes the child's or teen's lens for self, for relationships and for danger
- Trauma responses are designed to help the child or teen protect him- or herself and survive


SLIDE 39: WRAP-UP

### Goal

*To review the key teaching points from today's session.*

### Ask

Does anyone have remaining questions about today's topics?



**SELF-REFLECTION**

Who or What Influenced You?

- Think about up to three influential people, experiences or environments
  - Lens for self
  - Lens for relationships

SLIDES 40 AND 41: SELF-REFLECTION

### Goal

*To build understanding of the ways experience shapes our lens of the world by applying today's concepts to foster parents' and kin caregivers' own lives.*

### Ask

- The next step is to begin applying concepts taught in today's session to your own life. On your worksheet, please jot down brief notes about three people, experiences or environments from your childhood that influenced you.
- Think about some of the ways these influential factors may have affected how you act in or think about relationships. How did they affect how you perceive yourself?

### Do

We are going to divide into small groups. I would like each of you to share at least one item from your worksheet.

### HANDOUT: SELF-REFLECTION WORKSHEET



SLIDE 42: TAKE HOME

### Goal


*To identify at least one take-away concept from today's session.*

### Ask

Each session, we are going to encourage you to identify at least one take-away concept — an idea, concept or something you learned from our session today that you can apply in your own life, or that felt relevant or important to you. Please write this down in your log.



# PRACTICE AT HOME



PRACTICE

Practice

- Take home your check-in handouts
- This week, try to do a check-in **at least once every day**. Make a note of where you were, what was going on and when you did it

SLIDES 43 AND 44: PRACTICE


## Goal

*To support group learning through a homework assignment.*

## Practice

We discussed that after every meeting you will be asked to try out a new skill. This week's assignment is to do a check-in once a day until our next session, using the provided worksheet. Make a brief note about where you are or what you're doing each time you fill it out.

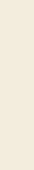
## HANDOUTS: CHECK-IN



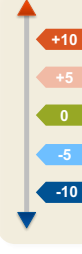
**CLOSING CHECK-IN**

What Is Your Energy Right Now?


Totally Comfortable



Really Uncomfortable



Great Match



Terrible Match

SLIDES 45 AND 46: CLOSING CHECK-IN

### Goals

*To increase awareness of internal experience and the effect of this experience on our ability to be present and engaged; to increase awareness of coping strategies; and to engage caregivers in a parallel process, as this is a skill set they will be supporting in their child or teen.*

### Teach

- The check-in is an opportunity for you to tune in to your own experiences at the start and end of each session. Being present and engaged takes practice for all of us. The more we are able to do this ourselves, the more we can support children and teens in doing the same thing.
- We also experimented with a variety of tools for regulating, managing, focusing or changing our energy.

### Do

Two things before we go:

- Let's take a moment to do a closing check-in before we go. I would like you to notice the level of energy or arousal in your body right now and rate it on the provided scale. Then, notice the degree to which this energy or arousal is comfortable or uncomfortable and rate that. Lastly, notice the degree to which your energy/arousal is a good match for the current situation (leaving the group), and rate that.
- Then, take a minute to consider the various tools you tried out today. Identify any that might be helpful in supporting you to feel comfortable and effective in your body.



SEE YOU NEXT TIME!

SLIDE 47: CLOSING

### Closing

- I am looking forward to next week. Our theme will be “Behavior Makes Sense.”
- *Note the time and location of the next meeting.*