

PEACEful Homes – Intervention Resources

Predictability and Routine

Emotional Literacy

Attuned Relationship

Calming Activities

Empowerment

PREDICTABILITY AND ROUTINE

- Make **routine, structure and predictability** a priority. For example, use a visual schedule to map out the child’s day, use a calendar to map out what is coming up. Use consistency with caregiver responses and prepare child for transitions or any changes in routine, have food/snacks to help regulate, incorporate morning rituals before leaving for school, incorporate regular relaxation activities into night time routines. (i.e. breathing ball, relaxing music, etc.).
- **Daily check ins** and **“broaden and build”**, some ideas include:
 - **‘What was good?’**: This intervention consists of encouraging the child to think about what was positive and memorable about their day. Children experiencing trauma may not be used to thinking about their day may focus on all that went badly. Beginning to call to mind the positives builds a habit of looking for what was ‘good’. Over time, this habit can promote emotional buoyancy.
 - **‘10 Best Things’**: This intervention consists of encouraging the child to think of their ‘ten best’ lists. Children experiencing trauma often do not think of their history as having positive value. By encouraging children to think about their ten best: memories, meals, toys, super-hero’s, video games, etc, the caregiver promotes a broadening of positive memory and corresponding emotion.
 - **‘This or That?’**: This intervention consists of encouraging the child to think of the ‘best’ of compared sets. The strategy is an exercise in building positive emotions. Over time, these emotions can broaden and build toward longer lasting moods. By asking “Chocolate or Vanilla?” the child will select their favorite ice-cream. By contrasting their favorite (Vanilla) to another (Strawberry), the child then selects their favorite again. The strategy continues until there is an ultimate ‘best’. The strategy can be played using meals, toys, super-hero’s, video games, etc. By doing so, the caregiver promotes a broadening of positive memory and corresponding emotion.
 - **‘Toot your own horn’**: This intervention consists of encouraging the child to think of what they did well. It is designed to help children identify their strengths and build self-esteem. By doing so, the caregiver promotes a broadening of positive memory and corresponding emotion. The caregiver asks the child to think about a time they did something well and were proud of. The caregiver can ask the child to draw a picture, write a story or create a symbol that represents their activity. This creation can then be placed on display around the child’s environment.
 - **‘What went well’**: Helping children identify what they are doing well, rather than what they did wrong, can change the focus of the child. Focusing on what they did ‘right’ builds positive emotions and self-esteem. “Catching” the child doing something right (instead of wrong) builds on positive focus.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

- **Implicit Teaching:** This is a powerful strategy that involves experiential daily interactions between the caregiver and the child. Often children do not want to be told what to do, but will pick up on HOW adults do things. This can be done by modeling emotion language regularly (i.e. I'm feeling frustrated, do you know what that means? Do you ever feel frustrated?)
- **Explicit Teaching:** Directly teaching social and emotional skills. Ask what curriculum the school is using and try to use common language and strategies so there is familiarity.
- **Reflect Feelings/ Empathy** - This intervention consists of reflecting back to the child, that their emotions and experiences are understood by the adults in their environment. This is usually a priority intervention and is essential to the development of both attachment and emotion regulation. Provide a safe place to talk about feelings. Reminder: validating how the child is feeling is not the same as condoning the behaviour. If necessary, set aside a designated time and place for sharing.
- Facilitate **self-monitoring** opportunities, i.e. 0-10 scale, zones visual, feelings chart/thermometer

ATTUNED RELATIONSHIP

- **Physical proximity:** Keep the **child close**, maintain a high level of physical presence, support and supervision, as you would for younger children.
- **Sends offs:** Make a ritual and routine for "good-byes", keep that routine consistent.
- **Do not take the child's emotions or behaviours personally.** Where are you on the stress staircase? If you feel yourself becoming angry or feeling hurt or rejected, take a moment to reflect, calm yourself and then come back to the interaction. **Remember!** How you manage your own emotional arousal and regulation is **vital** to assisting the Child and to maintaining a peaceful home.
- **Counter the shame response.** *"I see you need help with ..."* (stopping an activity, moving to another part of the room, cleaning up, not kicking the chair, etc.). Warnings and second chances are less helpful for these children, as they don't necessarily want to please adults and to establish relationships—that non-abused children use to maintain a sense of connection.
- **Time in not time out.** Time out replicates the rejection these children have often experienced and reinforces the child's sense of self as unlovable. Instead, ask the child to come sit with you to complete their work. *Reframe their disruption as a need for your extra attention and help.*
- **Non-contingent Relationship Building Time:** Child directed 1:1 time with caregiver every day, no matter what happened with that child that day.
- **Consequences, not punishment.** Consequences for unacceptable behaviour should be natural consequences, designed to repair any damage to relationships or property, rather than punishments that have no relationship to the behaviour. Where possible, consequences should have a relational element.
- **Acknowledge good decision and choices.** Traumatized children tend to receive little praise, and in fact often don't respond well to praise. They do, however, need positive reinforcement when they have done something well. Try to avoid statements about internal characteristics, such as "you are a good kid", as sometimes that is too much of a contradiction for a child who believes that they are not good or kind, but actually, bad and unlovable. It is better to comment on actions, so the child can feel good about something they have done.
 - **Public versus Private Praise.** Often public praise will be uncomfortable for a child who has been through traumatic events. Ask: "when I'm proud of you, how should I let you know?"

CALMING ACTIVITIES

- **Mindfulness activities.** Incorporate these in your daily routine. Remember: it is better to model and encourage the child to join in than it is to TELL the child. Most of the time, children need an adult to help co-regulate.
- **Drumming.** This intervention consists of allowing the child to make rhythms using hands, feet, or percussive instruments. The focus here is on creating opportunities for patterned, repetitive, and rhythmic stimulation.

Younger and/or developmentally challenged children may respond best to copying or clapping games. More sophisticated drumming can be added as the child's developmental/functional abilities improve. Drumming (rhythmic or chaotic) can be both therapeutic and cathartic.

- **Sound Generator:** This can be used both during the day and at night. The child's hours of sleep provide an ideal opportunity to be providing pattern, repetitive, and rhythmic stimulation for many hours at a time, so this is often a mandatory intervention with highly aroused children. A principle that we have followed is that sounds such as waves, rain, and wind will provide patterned, repetitive, rhythmic stimulation deep in the brain. We must be careful that the sounds we use for intervention are not activating to the brain by being random or too stimulating – e.g. a forest sounds tape that includes random bird noises may be too alarming for some children.
- **Create a Cozy Corner or Calm Zone** in the house (this can be used to calm anxious energy).
 - Tools: soft lighting, and comfort items such as: soothing furniture, cushions, bean bag chair, weighted blanket, stuffed animals, squishy balls, headphones, calming music, calming scents
 - Techniques: shoulder squeeze, hug, burrito blanket wrap, deep breathing, etc.
- **“Body check” or “self check”.** Directly teach the child what “body clues” might come up when feeling anxious or stressed. Teach the child to “self-check”, for example, instead of saying, “stop being loud” or “stop wiggling”; the caregiver can say, “Can you check yourself please”. This allows the child to develop the crucial life skill of self-monitoring.

EMPOWERMENT

- Find and **celebrate successes**; build off of existing skills and interests; develop mastery
- **Offer choices** to give the child a sense of control. Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos. The caregiver can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate. *You can*
- Give **the child a voice** in home expectations, routines, and activities (for example: “my job, your job”)
- **Service Learning:** when the child helps others in need, this expands who they are and fills their own need (i.e. reading to younger children, taking shelter dogs for walks, time with elders, etc.)