

A GUIDE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPERVISORS  
for the online module

# RESPONDING TO TRAUMA AND SUPPORTING RESILIENCE



[cycsuite.org](http://cycsuite.org)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction . . . . .	2
How To Use This Guide . . . . .	3
Supervisor's Checklist . . . . .	5
<b>Chapter 1 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>6</b>
Pause & Ponder A: . . . . .	7
<b>Chapter 2 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>8</b>
Pause & Ponder B: . . . . .	9
Pause & Ponder C: . . . . .	10
<b>Chapter 3 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
Pause & Ponder D: . . . . .	12
<b>Chapter 4 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>
Worksheet 1: Approaching Interactions . . . . .	14
<b>Chapter 5 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>16</b>
Worksheet 2: Providing Safety and Security . . . . .	17
<b>Chapter 6 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>
Worksheet 3: Nurturing Self-Regulation . . . . .	20
Worksheet 4: Meaningful Relationships . . . . .	22
Worksheet 5: Problem Solving . . . . .	24
Worksheet 6: Building Emotional Thinkers . . . . .	26
<b>Chapter 7 Summary . . . . .</b>	<b>28</b>
Worksheet 7: Discovering Resources . . . . .	29
Worksheet 8: Open Communication . . . . .	31
Seeking Resources . . . . .	33
References . . . . .	36





# INTRODUCTION

## EACH DAY YOU PREPARE YOUR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SETTING TO BE A WARM, SAFE, AND SECURE PLACE FOR CHILDREN –

knowing that the relationships and experiences children have build their brains and bodies. Nurturing, consistent, and high quality connections with adults strengthen each child's ability to overcome obstacles in life as they grow and develop. When a traumatic event occurs in a young child's life, all areas of development may be impacted.

What tools and resources are needed by you and your staff to recognize the signs of trauma and potential influences on children?

Use this Guide for Early Childhood Supervisors with your staff to facilitate a deeper understanding and application of the training module, *Responding to Trauma and Supporting Resilience*. This guide supports knowledge and strategies learned in the training module to:

- define trauma and its influence on development,
- recognize concerns and help build resilience,
- identify practical strategies to use during daily routines, and
- connect and engage families with resources and support.

Assist staff to recognize possible signs of trauma and enhance their practices so each child and family in the early childhood setting thrives!

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Tailor-made for supervisors and administrators, this guide lays out step-by-step tips to support early childhood professionals who have completed the online training module, *Responding to Trauma and Supporting Resilience*. The guide provides tools that empower your staff to immediately put into action what was learned!

Use this guide to determine areas of focus, follow the worksheets to plan and achieve goals. Here is what the guide provides:



## The Supervisor's Checklist

Review a checklist of the topic areas covered in the online training module, chapter by chapter, so you can focus on supporting staff to understand trauma and identify practical strategies that build resilience. This allows flexibility to have staff collectively work together or take an individualized approach. Either way, you prepare your staff to make quality improvements.

## Chapter Summaries

A brief summary of each training module chapter provides highlights and key points.

## Pause and Ponder Page

These one-page summaries present critical topics from the online training module. Use these with your staff and for your own reflection and investigation of concepts. Then refer to the question prompt to spark curiosity, contemplation, and dialogue about the topic.

## Action Plan Worksheets

These one-page worksheets are designed as collaborative tools to aid staff members in putting into practice what was learned. Use each worksheet to guide discussion about changing practices or select specific worksheets for staff to complete independently. These concise worksheets are intended to generate ideas and support logical application in everyday settings. Each worksheet includes the following sections:



- **Observe and Plan:** Prior to putting any new practice in place, there needs to be preparation! This section prompts staff to take time to observe their own practices. Then, staff move on to considering what they are inspired to change to ensure ALL children in their setting are able to grow, learn, and develop. Staff are encouraged to complete this sentence, "I am inspired to..." and describe what action they want to take.

**Example: I am inspired to try a new strategy which facilitates problem solving by offering choices.**



- **Try It Out:** Now it's time to try it out! A table of prompts organizes you and your staff to create an action plan to put a new practice, strategy, or change in place. Think about your end goal and why it is important. Complete the who, what, when, where, and how questions with staff to intentionally plan.

**Example:**

<b>Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!</b>	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	Sam, a 4-year-old child attending on Mondays and Wednesdays, who is refusing to select a center for free play time and sits at the table, watching his peers play.
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	To learn more about Sam, I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find out his interests, favorite toys, and activities</li> <li>• connect with his family to learn what play he enjoys at home</li> <li>• collaborate with team members to gather more information</li> <li>• select two preferred choices for free play activities to present to Sam based on information learned</li> </ul>
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	I will offer the two choices before free play time each day Sam attends
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	I will present the choices to Sam at the table where he is most comfortable
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make visual cards that display the two, preferred free play activity choices and encourage Sam to select one and then guide him to the activity of his choice</li> <li>• communicate with Sam’s family to share strategies</li> <li>• review and revise choice making options for Sam as he increases his independence in choosing an activity</li> </ul>



- **Keep Data:** Growth and change are measured by keeping track of what the baseline is (what was happening before a new strategy or practice was put in place) and what occurs following the use of a new strategy or practice. This section provides questions for staff to consider how to gather data and monitor progress as an early childhood professional.



- **Reflect:** After making a change it is important to pause and reflect. Guide staff to understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how it is working using reflective questions. This allows you to focus on what works together.



- **Engage Families:** Valuing, respecting, and recognizing the vital role parents and family members play in supporting children’s development, including social-emotional health is essential. This section provides a space to consider the ways information is shared with families. Effective communication by staff supports the whole child and shows families they matter!



- **Supervisor Follow-Up:** for reflection and ongoing communication.

## Seeking Resources

Links and resources included in this section provide practical information from recognized experts in the field on early childhood inclusion.

# SUPERVISOR'S CHECKLIST

See something that sparks your interest? Use the checklist to help prioritize areas of focus, then find the corresponding *Pause and Ponder Pages* or *Action Plan Worksheets* as guides.

MODULE CHAPTERS	I HAVE AN INTEREST IN:	CHECK THE BOX	PAUSE & PONDER PAGE	ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET
<b>IMPACT OF TRAUMA</b>	Understanding ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)		A	
<b>THE WHOLE CHILD AND SIGNS OF TRAUMA</b>	Recognizing possible signs of trauma		B	
	Acknowledging stressors		C	
<b>YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS</b>	Noticing behavior is sending a message		D	
<b>DIGGING DEEPER TO UNDERSTAND INTERACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR</b>	Approaching interactions using a trauma lens			1
<b>RESILIENCE, ATTACHMENT, AND ATTUNEMENT</b>	Connecting to provide safety and security			2
<b>STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT RESILIENCE</b>	Nurturing self-regulation			3
	Establishing meaningful relationships			4
	Encouraging children to problem solve			5
	Building emotional thinkers			6
<b>YOU ARE A TRUSTED SOURCE</b>	Discovering resources for support and information			7
	Keeping lines of communication open			8





# CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

## The Impact of Trauma

Just as everyday experiences build children’s knowledge and physical development, they also shape a child’s mental health and emotional well-being. As an early childhood professional, it is important to understand that **ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)** may affect a child’s brain development, along with their social, emotional, and cognitive functioning. The negative experiences and events in a child’s life may influence their sense of safety, stability, and bonding with others. Young children experience potentially traumatic events differently, therefore, the effects may appear in a variety of ways. Learning what ACEs are can better prepare early childhood professionals to provide effective support, care, and learning.

**“Creating and sustaining safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children and families can prevent ACEs and help all children reach their full potential.”**

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

# PAUSE & PONDER A:

## UNDERSTANDING ACEs (ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES)

Use this page with staff to spark curiosity, facilitate dialogue, and inspire self-reflection.

Research shows that ACEs can impact children's growth and development in many ways and are common across all populations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's initial research study, almost two-thirds of participants reported at least one adverse childhood experience. Adverse childhood experiences include:

- Abuse or neglect
- Abandonment
- Death or loss of a loved one
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Witnessing or experiencing an accident
- Life threatening health situation (such as an extended illness or pandemic)
- Growing up in a household with substance misuse or abuse
- Instability due to separation or incarceration of a parent, sibling, or other member of the household



**Almost 2/3 of participants reported at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs)**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kaiser Permanente, The ACE Study Survey Data

Where a child is born, lives, plays, and grows all influence how a child responds to stress in their life. Other hidden stressors might include:

- Poverty, contributing to hunger, food instability, and/or homelessness
- Family members with mental health issues
- Bullying
- Racism or cultural bias

## PAUSE & PONDER...

**What will I do differently now that I understand ACEs?**





# CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

## The Whole Child and Signs of Trauma

As an early childhood professional, knowing that developmental milestones occur at specific age ranges is essential. Equipped with this knowledge, you know that when children experience significant adversity during the first three years of life, how their brains are shaped and developed might be influenced, resulting in delays in meeting milestones.

There are possible signs or symptoms that signal a child may have or is currently experiencing trauma. By considering the whole child, their routines, how they interact, play, and learn, you are positioned to recognize signs early. Being an objective observer and understanding what to look for is key!

**“When primary caregivers make infants and children feel safe and nurtured, their developing brains are able to spend more time learning and building essential connections. When children feel unsafe or threatened, however, their brains shift into survival mode, making learning particularly difficult.”**

*Child Welfare Information Gateway*

# PAUSE & PONDER B:

## RECOGNIZING POSSIBLE SIGNS OF TRAUMA

*Use this page with staff to spark curiosity, facilitate dialogue, and inspire self-reflection.*

What is a traumatic event to one person, may not be to another – and we all respond differently. Do not assume that certain behaviors or developmental concerns are related to trauma. Take time to become familiar with some of the possible signs of trauma so you are prepared to act when a child needs your support, encouragement, or intervention.

Possible signs of trauma may include:

- Eating or sleeping disturbances
- Somatic or physical complaints
- Clinginess or separation anxiety
- Language delays
- Developmental regression
- A sense of fearfulness
- Irritability, avoidance, or power struggles
- Sensitivity to trauma triggers
- Impulsivity
- Repetitive post-traumatic play
- Sadness or loss of interest in activities
- Poor peer relationships and/or social problems
- Aggressive and/or sexualized behaviors



## PAUSE & PONDER...

**What signs of trauma am I noticing that indicate I need to learn more before responding?**

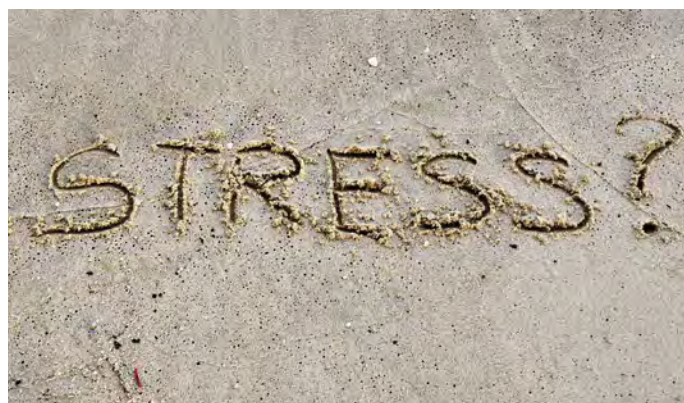
# PAUSE & PONDER C:

## ACKNOWLEDGING STRESSORS

*Use this page with staff to spark curiosity, facilitate dialogue, and inspire self-reflection.*

Everyone experiences stress. Some stress is positive, and some stress can be negative. Stress can become toxic to children and adults when experienced intensively and/or repeatedly or over a long period of time.

Research shows that stress or stressors can accumulate in our bodies, piling up across the lifetime, impacting us in different ways. Take note of your own feelings and acknowledge how past experiences and/or stress might influence your interactions or responses to a child.



Without realizing it, something a child experiences or is going through might trigger an emotional response in you! Secondary traumatic stress, sometimes called compassion fatigue, can be the result of working with others on a regular basis who've experienced trauma themselves. Be mindful of how your own experiences influence and shape your interpretation and responses to a child's actions.

Awareness of your own emotions, along with identifying and developing self-care strategies, will help build your resilience as a professional.

## PAUSE & PONDER...

**What strategies help reduce my stress at work?**





# CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

## Young Children and Their Environments

Experiences and environments greatly impact how children act. This is especially true for children who have experienced trauma. Children's behavior provides adults and professionals valuable information. Why is that? Because all behavior is a form of communication! Children let people know what is going on in their lives through their behavior. So, take time to notice a child and all the communication they are sending through their sounds, words, and actions.

Learn more about how children's relationships, experiences, and current developmental levels might affect their behavior. Then consider how your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences influence the way you respond. How you respond in any given moment and situation sends each child a powerful message!

**"Children, especially young children, are learning new ways to communicate all the time. At a young age, children don't always have the skills to tell us what they want, need, or feel. When this happens, children are likely to behave in ways that are confusing or challenging to their parents and caregivers. It is up to us to try to understand children's behaviors and help them learn to express their feelings in appropriate ways."**

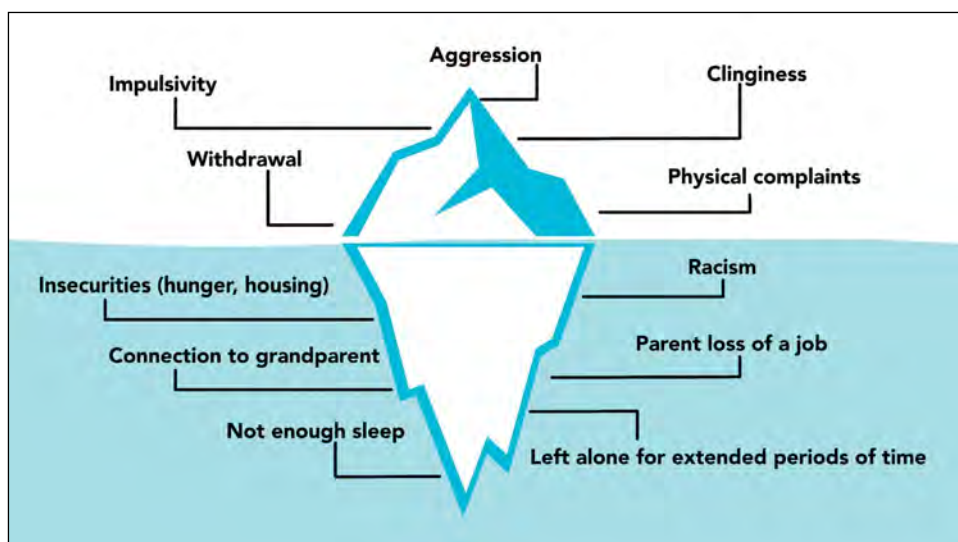
*Administration for Children and Families,  
Office of Child Care*

# PAUSE & PONDER D:

## NOTICING WHEN BEHAVIOR IS SENDING A MESSAGE

Use this page with staff to spark curiosity, facilitate dialogue, and inspire self-reflection.

A child's behavior is complex with lots of things to think about. A helpful analogy to consider behavior might be through a graphic of an iceberg. An iceberg sits in the middle of the ocean. On top are all the behaviors you can see – below the surface in the water are all the things going on with the child you may not be aware of or know.



This image is a reminder that there is more happening than what is seen. When behavior is viewed from this perspective, it is clear more information is needed to grasp **what** is really happening. Then you can shift your perspective and consider **why** a child might be exhibiting a certain behavior.

## PAUSE & PONDER...

What messages are children communicating through their behavior?





# CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

## Digging Deeper

Creating a positive connection with a child may not be as simple as it sounds. As children learn and grow, they may experience frustration, and challenge boundaries or expectations. As they begin to understand and express complex emotions, their behaviors might catch you off guard. Remember, children arrive in your setting, each with their own story. The way they process the world and express themselves may be influenced by the people, environments, experiences, and traumatic events in their lives. Similarly, your own experiences, preferences, and viewpoints influence how you perceive a child's words, actions, and/or behaviors.

Our responses and decisions made in the moment are driven by things unconscious to us, known as implicit biases. The term, implicit bias, refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Everyone has implicit bias. By pausing and taking a moment, your perception and viewpoint of a child's behavior might change.

**"If caregivers are mindful of how a child's whole experience—particularly the emotional tenor—influences the developing brain, they can provide caring relationships that help the child feel secure and open up to an engaging world of exploration and learning throughout the early years."**

*National Association for the Education of Young Children*



# APPROACHING INTERACTIONS

## Observe and Plan

Shifting your thinking about behaviors and starting to consider each child's story from a trauma lens means acknowledging your implicit biases and then following a process: **1) Notice:** Observe children in environments, routines, and interactions across the day taking note of the child's development, experiences, and relationships; **2) Learn more:** Be curious! Communicate with parents, caregivers, and others to collect information about a child. Review records to discover more; and **3) Understand:** You may find your viewpoint changes as you consider the people, environments, experiences, and other influences in the child's life, along with the range of possible ways a child might process and express their reaction to a traumatic event. This understanding helps professionals figure out each child and understand their perspective and unique way of interacting with the world.

**I am inspired to approach interactions using a trauma lens by:**

## Try It Out

Pause and intentionally think about the messages a child is sending. Notice, learn more, and understand before responding!

<b>Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!</b>	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 1 – APPROACHING INTERACTIONS *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What have I noticed about behavior as communication?
- What do I need to find out about each child and family to be supportive?
- How does noticing my own experiences or circumstances as potential triggers influence my reactions or responses to a child's behavior?
- What do I think I could have done differently to support social-emotional well-being in a child?



### Engage Families

Families may turn to you for information and support. Communicate what you notice, have learned, and understand about their child without judgement. Share concerns objectively, talking with families about their child's behavior in a way that considers a trauma lens. Listen to find out what they notice so you can understand and try problem-solving together.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.



# CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

## Resilience, Attachment, and Attunement

Positive interaction with a child starts prenatally and continues across the lifespan. A mother talking to her unborn baby begins a connection and once the baby arrives, relationships strengthen as connections are built with other familiar, caring, and trusted adults. These bonds lead to **attachment**, which have a long-term impact on a child's development and growth. Attachment fosters a child's self-concept, sense of safety and security, and is the foundation for social emotional development.

**Attunement** is the way adults adapt or adjust so they can “tune in” to a child's needs. As caregivers understand and respond, children view them as reliable and trustworthy. Attuning to a child as they grow helps them identify feelings, form self-awareness, and relate to others.

Attachment and attunement lead to **resilience!** Resilience is the ability to bounce back. Resilience is not something that a child either has or doesn't have; it's a skill that they develop as they grow. You can be instrumental in reducing the influence that stress, adversity, failure, challenges, or even trauma has in children's lives by helping them build resilience.

**“The importance of a child's close relationship with a caregiver cannot be overestimated. Through relationships with important attachment figures, children learn to trust others, regulate their emotions, and interact with the world; they develop a sense of the world as safe or unsafe, and come to understand their own value as individuals.”**

*The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*



# PROVIDING SAFETY AND SECURITY



## Observe and Plan

The world of early care and learning is rich with dynamic opportunities to promote attachment and attunement where children feel safe to explore, learn, and relate with others.

Take time to “get in sync,” listen, and show interest to a child in the moment. Then adapt and adjust your words, actions, and reactions as you respond receptively. Model resilience to situations so children have living examples which help them navigate stressful, difficult situations, and learn to bounce back. Are your words, actions, and reactions encouraging resilience?

**I am inspired to connect with children to strengthen their sense of safety and security by:**



## Try It Out

How I interact and respond to children matters! I can “tune in” to be responsive.

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 2 – PROVIDING SAFETY AND SECURITY *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What do I think about the difficulties I've noticed a child experiencing which have hindered their ability to establish relationships?
- What things can I modify to help children feel safe and supported in my setting?
- What do I want my responses to children's behavior to look like so they feel safe, secure, and curious to learn?
- What support will I need to connect with families so together we build their child's attachment and attunement?



### Engage Families

Supporting a child's resilience starts by recognizing the significant role the family plays! Create an opportunity for relationship building by sharing when you see their child connecting, engaging, and interacting with others. Communicate concerns if you notice a child is struggling or is disinterested in connecting or participating. Together with the family, support the development of attachment and attunement for each child.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.



# CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

## Strategies to Support Resilience

Noticing, learning about, and understanding each child provides valuable insight to guide selection of appropriate strategies to support resilience. Intentionally putting strategies into practice requires careful consideration of the whole child, their routines, and connections with others. Resilience-building strategies can help a child develop in these four areas:

- **Regulation.** As children explore the world around them, it is critical that they develop the ability to keep their body in a calm, alert state and ready to share attention, learn, and interact with others and their environment. When a child's physical and emotional responses indicate they are not able to connect with you in the moment, *deep breathing* and *calming spaces* can help foster regulation.
- **Relationships.** Relationships and interactions make a difference in a child's life. Using *rhythm and music*, *rituals*, and *routines* can encourage engagement with the child and foster these important connections.
- **Problem solving.** As children develop skills to think about, approach, and cope with difficulties they establish a sense of ownership and control of their experiences and surroundings. You can promote problem-solving skills by *offering choices*, *social narratives*, or *role playing*.
- **Emotional thinking.** Children's social emotional growth impacts the way they experience, express, and manage emotions and establish meaningful relationships with others. You can help a child become an emotional thinker by *naming feelings*, *reflecting*, and *modeling empathy*.

**“The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.”**

*The Center on the Developing Child,  
Harvard University*



# NURTURING SELF-REGULATION

## Observe and Plan

Self-regulation is the way you or a child controls behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and impulses while managing the sensory world. At times, a child may feel out of sync, unable to participate, overwhelmed, distressed, and have an emotional reaction that sends their brain and body out of focus. Cues that a child is dysregulated may not always be obvious. Some may exhibit strong behaviors, others withdraw and become quiet. Children may use non-verbal signals like facial expressions, gestures, and crying to express their emotions. Sound familiar? You can become dysregulated too! Notice and recognize when you or a child is experiencing this disconnect.

Here are two strategies to try: 1) **deep breathing**, a way to pause, calm down, and get oxygen into the lungs so the brain can think; and 2) **calming spaces**, a safe, secure, quiet place with minimal distractions for pausing before reconnecting.

**I am inspired to try a new strategy for self-regulation (for a child, or myself) by:**

## Try It Out

Notice cues signaling a need for regulation. Have a strategy on hand so you are ready to act!

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 3 – NURTURING SELF-REGULATION *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What cues have I noticed in a child that indicate dysregulation?
- As I think about my reactions in the past, what could I have done differently in my response?
- What ideas do I have about my own ability to self-regulate?
- How do I think using deep breathing and calming spaces to promote self-regulation will work?



### Engage Families

Children behave differently across settings and circumstances. It is important to have ongoing communication with families so children develop the ability to self-regulate across settings. When children can count on the consistency of a caregiver's response and support when challenges or changes occur, they can better self-regulate. A caregiver's ability to self-regulate is equally important. Reinforce the importance of caring for oneself and share ideas about self-regulation strategies for both adults and children.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.

# MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS



## Observe and Plan

As children grow, their ability to form and sustain relationships (with caregivers, peers, and others) is fundamental to their development and emotional well-being. Through relationships, children learn how to think, understand, communicate, behave, and express emotions. Put strategies in place to help children form and maintain these important connections! Incorporate **rhythm and music** into daily activities to provide steady, calming beats that simulate serve and return, supporting back and forth interaction. Try establishing **rituals** together, forming patterns that provide a framework guiding children to act and respond. Provide structure and predictability through **routines**, helping children feel a sense of security by knowing what will happen next. How can you embed these strategies in your daily activities to help children feel safe, secure, cared for, and ready to form relationships?

**I am inspired to try a new strategy which supports children in forming positive and meaningful relationships by:**



## Try It Out

Interactions are the foundation for strengthening and growing connections with others. Put strategies in place so children feel prepared and equipped to form and maintain connections in ways that make sense to them.

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	



## WORKSHEET 4 – MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What have I tried during a child's day that helped me form a more meaningful connection?
- What strategies did I use to create predictability and a sense of safety for the children?
- What will the ideal situation look like when I embed a strategy into an activity?
- What ideas do I have about sharing the strategies with families?



### Engage Families

Your relationship with the family can be a window into the child's life and experiences when not in your care. Understanding the whole child means also being "in tune" to the family's dynamics, culture, values, and preferences. Ongoing communication lays the groundwork for positive connection with families and impacts the child's well-being.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.

# PROBLEM SOLVING



## Observe and Plan

The ability to solve problems requires a child to think, communicate, and take action. Support this by thoughtfully **offering choices** throughout daily activities allowing children to consider their options and grow their independence. Try using **social narratives**, short stories that provide a child with positive idea choices and solutions to prepare for or cope with a challenging situation or experience. Consider **role playing** to explore feelings and abstract concepts through pretend play, providing a safe space for a child to process and express thoughts. How are you encouraging children to learn to problem solve?

**I am inspired to try a new strategy which facilitates problem-solving by:**



## Try It Out

Cultivating young children’s problem-solving skills provides them with lifelong tools to strengthen their resiliency.

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 5 – PROBLEM SOLVING *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- How well did the strategy work in the different activities, routines, and interactions I tried?
- What would the ideal environment in my setting look like for children to feel equipped to face challenges?
- How will I know that children are demonstrating an ability to problem solve after implementing the new strategy?
- What do I think I could have done differently to use problem-solving strategies more effectively throughout the day?



### Engage Families

Sharing strategies to grow children's independence increases the likelihood that these skills will be used at home. Discover what's working for families and encourage children to think and take action on their own when confronted with an issue. Discuss ways families can offer choices, use social narratives, and explore role play as strategies for children to solve problems. By modeling problem-solving strategies, you can encourage that mindset at home.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.



# BUILDING EMOTIONAL THINKERS

## Observe and Plan

Healthy social and emotional development is rooted in connections with others that are nurturing and responsive. Your setting is rich with opportunities to build and practice the skills for children to understand and manage their emotions, feel and show empathy for others, and establish strong relationships. Use these strategies to help build emotional thinkers: 1) **naming feelings** allows children or adults to label a wide range of feelings, whether it's anger, happiness, sadness, or frustration; 2) **reflecting** which is actively listening to a child, repeating what the child says back, and then labeling the feeling; and 3) **modeling empathy** by helping children start to recognize the feelings of others and learn to appropriately respond. How can you embed these strategies into your daily interactions and activities to equip children to become emotional thinkers?

**I am inspired to try a new strategy to support emotional thinking by:**

## Try It Out

As a child's social world expands, they are experiencing, expressing, and managing a variety of emotions. Look for opportunities to impact this critical time of development.

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 6 – BUILDING EMOTIONAL THINKERS *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What are my thoughts about putting strategies in place to promote emotional thinking?
- What more do I need to find out about each child to help select an effective strategy to build their emotional thinking skills?
- When will I try strategies that support emotional thinking in my day?
- How did the children's responses compare to what I anticipated when I used a strategy to promote emotional thinking?



### Engage Families

Share information with families about the strategies you've put into place to encourage the development of healthy social and emotional skills. Ask families to think about how the child is managing their emotions at home and connecting with others. Together, discuss opportunities where strategies can be embedded into their everyday interactions and routines. Offer support when needed, an ear to listen, or encouraging words to help families nurture their child's social and emotional well-being.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.



# CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY

## You Are a Trusted Source

You are a source of support and information for caregivers. This does not mean that you need to be a trauma expert or a counselor for the child or family. Your role is to provide a safe, predictable place for children to grow and learn; talk with parents about their child's development and any concerns; and foster connections which build trusting relationships. By sharing with families, you join them in supporting their child's resilience. Learn the national, state, and local resources that can assist families with their child's development of healthy bodies, emotions, and relationships.

Remember, there are times when discussing concerns might be uncomfortable. Some families might be experiencing struggles and hardships, or there may be circumstances leading to abuse, neglect, or other unsafe actions that impact the child. Consider if a report to a child protection agency is necessary. Showing families you want the best for their child comes through open, honest, and respectful communication, which promotes each child's development and social emotional health.

**“Strong partnerships can provide a safe place where families can explore their hopes, share their challenges, and let us know how we can help. Staff, community partners, and peers can be resources as families decide what is important to them and how to turn their goals into realities.”**

*Early Childhood National Centers, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement*



# DISCOVERING RESOURCES



## Observe and Plan

Explore reliable sources of information and resources to become an informed early childhood professional equipped to be aware of trauma and support resilience in children. With research, you can learn about national, state, and local resources. Seek information and tools that build awareness around stress, trauma, and resilience for yourself and the children in your care.

Know when to seek additional support, feedback, and guidance from supervisors or other professionals on your team. Part of becoming a trusted source for information and resources is knowing where to turn when additional help is needed.

**I am inspired to seek resources for children and families to support their resilience by:**



## Try It Out

Knowledge is power! Be a trusted source so families can count on your guidance for needed reliable information and support.

Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 7 – DISCOVERING RESOURCES *(continued)*

---



### Keep Data

**Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:**

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

**Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:**

- What should happen so I can show families they can rely on me for information and support?
- How am I reaching out to my supervisor and others when I am unable to locate the information or resources I need?
- What is my plan to be prepared to address information and resource needs when they arise?
- How do I think the trauma-related resources shared impacted children and families?



### Engage Families

The whole child includes the family! Listen carefully to what families communicate and be aware they may feel uncomfortable sharing or asking for assistance. The children, however, may signal that support is needed. Consult with other people in the child's life for more information. Be sensitive to cues given by children and families, and stay aware of opportunities to offer resources and support, which can help build resilience during times of stress and trauma.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.

# OPEN COMMUNICATION



## Observe and Plan

Have conversations with families that bolster engagement and connection, especially when discussing concerns. Pause, take a moment and think how you will have that conversation. Consider the information, ideas, thoughts, or concerns you want to convey. Effective and supportive conversations involve balanced back and forth interactions, listening, and responding. Keep in mind the environment, circumstances, and the family’s physical and emotional state can all influence a conversation. Be open and honest with families about why you want to talk with them. Use kind, respectful words, and notice their cues, body language, and tone of voice as you communicate back and forth. Are you allowing the family time to process and respond to information shared, not expecting an immediate response?

**I am inspired to keep the lines of communication open with families so that  
I can share information, concerns, and resources by:**



## Try It Out

Create an atmosphere of open and ongoing communication!

<b>Effective action planning challenges you to ask yourself important questions. Think about your end goal and why it is important!</b>	
<b>WHO</b> is the focus of my plan?	
<b>WHAT</b> action steps are needed?	
<b>WHEN</b> is the ideal time to act?	
<b>WHERE</b> should the action occur for best results?	
<b>HOW</b> will I put the action plan in place?	

## WORKSHEET 8 – OPEN COMMUNICATION *(continued)*



### Keep Data

Ask yourself these questions for data tracking to enhance your skills as an early childhood professional:

- How often will I set up checkpoints to review and revise?
- What additional support (staff support, equipment, resources) will I need to reach my goal?
- How can I keep track of progress in stages to the end goal (one step at a time)?



### Reflect

Step back from your day and consider your thoughts and feelings about the experience. Take time to wonder with these questions:

- How will I learn effective ways to communicate that accommodate families' preferences?
- When will I build intentional communication with families into my schedule?
- What will I do differently to be "in tune" to what family's communicate through their words and actions?
- What will be the most helpful ways to engage and connect with families to form a relationship built on trust and mutual respect?



### Engage Families

Every family's structure is different, and no two are the same! We are all shaped by our environment, experiences, and unconscious influences like implicit bias. You may be unaware or unable to understand certain aspects of families' lives. These aspects can impact your interactions and engagement with them. Reciprocal communication with families should be guided by considering the child and family's home language, culture, strengths, needs, preferences, and environmental influences -- all which impact a child and family's well-being.



### Supervisor Follow-up

I will reconnect with my staff member on \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an opportunity for reflection and ongoing communication.



# SEEKING RESOURCES

Building awareness and learning to recognize possible signs of trauma will enhance your early childhood practices. Seeking resources from recognized experts and sites allows you to find, use, and share information so each child and family in the early childhood setting can thrive.

Use the following resources as a starting point to learn about:



## Understanding ACEs and Signs of Trauma:

- **Take the ACE Quiz**  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/media-coverage/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean/>
- **We Can Prevent ACES** (video)  
<https://youtu.be/8gm-INpzU4g>
- **Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>
- **Implicit Bias Test**  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>
- **Implicit Bias Online Module Series**  
<https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training>
- **Recognizing and Addressing Trauma in Infants, Young Children, and Their Families Online Module**  
<https://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/trauma/index.html>
- **Tantrums, Tears, and Tempers: Behavior is Communication** (PDF)  
<https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c154.pdf>
- **Change the First Five Years and You Change Everything** (video)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbSp88PBe9E>
- **Understanding Child Trauma Infographic**  
[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs\\_campaigns/nctsi/nctsi-infographic-full.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/nctsi/nctsi-infographic-full.pdf)



## Building Resilience, Attachment, and Attunement:

- **In Brief: Resilience Series** (videos)  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-resilience-series/>
- **Resilience and Traumatic Stress** (PDF)  
[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/resilience\\_and\\_child\\_traumatic\\_stress.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/resilience_and_child_traumatic_stress.pdf)
- **Attachment: What Works?**  
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/www/www24.html>
- **What is Secure Attachment and Bonding?** (PDF)  
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/what-is-secure-attachment-and-bonding.htm?pdf=13585>

## SEEKING RESOURCES *(continued)*

---



### Using Strategies to Support Resilience:

- **Sesame Street: Little Children, Big Challenges (PDF)**  
[https://cdn.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media\\_folders/Media%20Root/LCBC\\_GENRES\\_famguide.pdf?\\_ga=2.8363895.411878102.1622060860-180735406.1622060860](https://cdn.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media_folders/Media%20Root/LCBC_GENRES_famguide.pdf?_ga=2.8363895.411878102.1622060860-180735406.1622060860)
- **Actions and Activities to Promote Resilience in Preschoolers**  
<https://centerforresilientchildren.org/preschool/for-parents/>
- **What is FLIP IT! Transforming Challenging Behavior? (video)**  
<https://centerforresilientchildren.org/dcrc-shop/flip-it/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEM5RaM9IWE&t=92s>
- **Conscious Discipline**  
<https://consciousdiscipline.com/>
- **Building Resilience in Children**  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx>
- **Teaching Your Child to: Identify and Express Emotions (PDF)**  
[http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching\\_emotions.pdf](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching_emotions.pdf)



### Becoming a Trusted Source for Families:

- **Promoting Family Engagement: Communicating with Families**  
<https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/family-engagement/lesson-3>
- **Guide to Developing Relationships with Families (PDF)**  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>
- **Parent Involvement and Family Engagement (PDF)**  
[https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/parent\\_involvement\\_and\\_family\\_engagement\\_final\\_508\\_1.pdf](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/parent_involvement_and_family_engagement_final_508_1.pdf)
- **Family Tools**  
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>
- **Tip Sheet for Strengthening Your Child's Resiliency (PDF)**  
<https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/FamiliesChildrenandAdults/For%20Children/strengthen-resiliency-tips.pdf>

## SEEKING RESOURCES *(continued)*



### National Resources

The Center for Early Childhood  
Mental Health Consultation  
Georgetown University, Center for  
Human Development

Center on the Developing Child,  
Harvard University

Center on the Social and Emotional  
Foundations of Early Learning

Devereux Center for  
Resilient Children

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

ZERO to THREE

Sesame Street



### State Resources

BOLD Beginning!

Ohio's Early Childhood Mental  
Health Consultation Program  
at the

Ohio Preschool Expulsion Prevention  
Partnership  
(844)678-ABCs (2227)

Help Me Grow, Ohio's Central Intake  
and Referral for: Early Intervention  
Home Visiting

Or call 1-800-755-4769

Mandated Reporting #  
855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)

Help Me Grow

Ohio Crisis Text Line

Ohio Early Intervention

Ohio Department of Education

Ohio Department of  
Developmental Disabilities

Ohio Department of Mental Health  
and Addiction Services

Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Department of Job  
and Family Services

Ohio Department of Medicaid

Ohio Child Care Resource and  
Referral Association



### Local Resources

Early Childhood Mental  
Health Supports

Ohio Early Intervention

Help Me Grow Home Visiting

Family and Children First Council

Head Start and Early  
Head Start Programs

County Boards of  
Developmental Disabilities

Local Schools

Medical Providers

### Looking for More?

Contact OCALI's Center for the  
Young Child at [cyc@ocali.org](mailto:cyc@ocali.org) or visit  
[www.ocali.org/center/cyc](http://www.ocali.org/center/cyc).

# REFERENCES

---

**Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. (2021, May). *Responding to Challenging Behaviors.***

Retrieved from:

<https://www.childcare.gov/index.php/consumer-education/responding-to-challenging-behaviors>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, May). *Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences.***

Retrieved from:

[https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Ffastfact.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Ffastfact.html)

**The Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. (2021, May). *Resilience.***

Retrieved from:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

**Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021, May). *Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth.***

Retrieved from:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/braindevtrauma.pdf>

**Early Childhood National Centers, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2021, May). *Building Partnerships Series: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families.***

Retrieved from:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>

**National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2021, May). *Caring Relationships: The Heart of Early Brain Development.***

Retrieved from:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2017/caring-relationships-heart-early-brain-development>

**The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2021, May). *Complex Trauma, Effects.***

Retrieved from:

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma/effects>





Center for the  
Young Child

[cycsuite.org](http://cycsuite.org)