



Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents

Welcome!



The Basics

- Who are the facilitators?
- What is the schedule?
- Where are the bathrooms?

Getting to Know Each Other (Group Activity)



- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- What do we hope to learn?

Why a Trauma Workshop?



- Many children in foster care have lived through traumatic experiences.
- Children bring their traumas with them into our homes.
- Trauma affects a child's behavior, feelings, relationships, and view of the world in profound ways.

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Why a Trauma Workshop?

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- Children's trauma affects us, too:
 - Compassion fatigue
 - Painful memories
 - Secondary traumatization
- Trauma's effects—on children and on us—can disrupt a placement.

A Foster Dad Speaks



No one really explained to me about the impact of trauma on a child's life. I wish I'd known more about trauma sooner.

—Sam, foster dad

What We'll Be Learning



- Module 1: Introductions
- Module 2: Trauma 101
- Module 3: Understanding Trauma's Effects
- Module 4: Building a Safe Place

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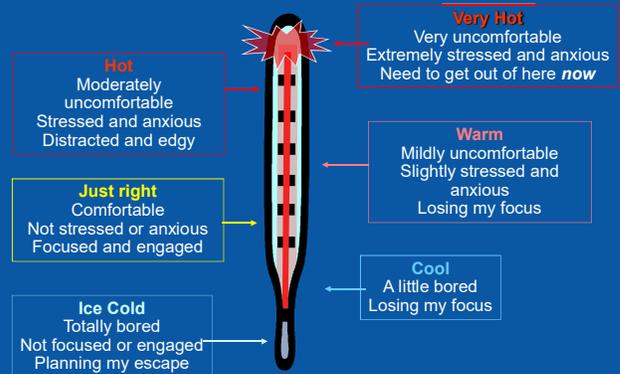
- Module 5: Dealing with Feelings and Behaviors
- Module 6: Connections and Healing
- Module 7: Becoming an Advocate
- Module 8: Taking Care of Yourself

Some Ground Rules



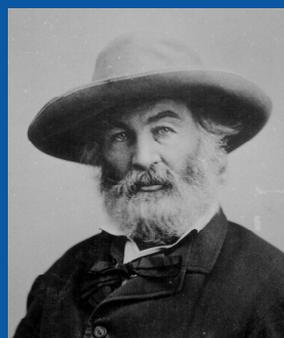
- One person speaks at a time.
- It's okay to disagree.
- Respect everyone's contributions and experiences.
- If a topic or activity makes you uncomfortable, feel free to take a time out.

Feelings Thermometer



Module 1: Introductions

Illustrations by Erich Ippen, Jr. Used with permission.



*There was a child went forth
every day, and all that he
looked upon became part of
him.*

—Walt Whitman

Meet the Children: Maya (8 Months Old)



Maya wakes up crying in the middle of the night.

- When her Aunt Jenna tries to soothe her, Maya arches her back, pushes her hands against Jenna's shoulders, and screams even harder.
- When Jenna tries to make eye contact with Maya, the baby turns her head away.
- "This little baby makes me feel completely rejected," Jenna says. "Sometimes I feel so helpless, I just have to put her down and let her cry."

Meet the Children: Rachel (17 Months Old)



Since being placed in foster care, Rachel has shown little interest in food and has lost a pound.

- Rachel used to say *mamma, dadda, babba, hi*, and *bye-bye*, but has stopped talking.
- Rachel often stands by the door or window, silently looking around as if waiting for someone.

Meet the Children: Tommy (4 Years Old)



Tommy plays repeatedly with a toy police car and ambulance, crashing them into each other while making the sound of sirens wailing.

- When his foster father tries to change Tommy's play, Tommy screams and throws the police car and ambulance.

Meet the Children: Andrea (9 Years Old)



Andrea enjoys reading with her foster father. One day, while she was sitting on his lap, she began to rub herself up and down against his crotch.

- Shocked and startled, Andrea's foster father pushed her away, roughly telling her to "Get out of here!"
- Andrea ran to her room, sobbing, "Why does everyone hate me?" and began frantically packing her suitcase.

Meet the Children: James (12 Years Old)



James is withdrawn and unresponsive with his foster parents. When asked what he wants, he says “whatever” and shrugs his shoulders.

- James has been failing classes at school and hanging out with kids who dress in black.
- When James moved in, his foster parents asked if he wanted to put up some pictures of his grandparents.
- “No, I don’t. Leave me alone!” he snapped, and retreated to his bedroom.

Meet the Children: Javier (15 Years Old)



Javier has gotten into trouble for not paying attention and joking around in class. Now he’s skipping classes to drink or smoke pot in a nearby park.

- At a party, Javier saw a friend verbally abusing a girl. When his friend pushed the girl, Javier beat up his friend.
- When his caseworker asked what had happened, Javier said “I don’t know. I just went into kill mode.”

Sound familiar?

The Challenge



Caring for children who have been through trauma can leave resource parents feeling:

- Confused
- Frustrated
- Unappreciated
- Angry
- Helpless

The Solution: Trauma-Informed Parenting



When you understand what trauma is and how it has affected your child, it becomes easier to:

- Communicate with your child
- Improve your child's behavior and attitudes
- Get your child the help he or she needs
- Reduce the risk of your own compassion fatigue or secondary traumatization
- Become a more effective and satisfied resource parent

The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Parenting*



1. Recognize the impact trauma has had on your child.

(Continued)

*Adapted from "The essential elements of trauma-informed child welfare practice" from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's *Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit*.

The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Parenting *(Continued)*



1. Recognize the impact trauma has had on your child.
2. Help your child to feel safe.

(Continued)

The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Parenting *(Continued)*



1. Recognize the impact trauma has had on your child.
2. Help your child to feel safe.
3. Help your child to understand and manage overwhelming emotions.

(Continued)

The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Parenting *(Continued)*



1. Recognize the impact trauma has had on your child.
2. Help your child to feel safe.
3. Help your child to understand and manage overwhelming emotions.
4. Help your child to understand and modify problem behaviors.

(Continued)

The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Parenting *(Continued)*



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5. Respect and support positive, stable, and enduring relationships in the life of your child.

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5. Respect and support positive, stable, and enduring relationships in the life of your child.
6. Help your child develop a strength-based understanding of his or her life story.

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7. Be an advocate for your child.

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8. **Promote and support trauma-focused assessment and treatment for your child.**

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9. **Take care of yourself.**

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Myths to Avoid



- My love should be enough to erase the effects of everything bad that happened before.
- My child should be grateful and love me as much as I love him/her.
- My child shouldn't love or feel loyal to an abusive parent.
- It's better to just move on, forget, and not talk about past painful experiences.

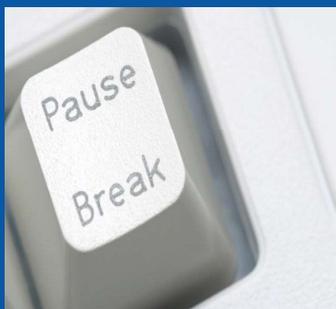
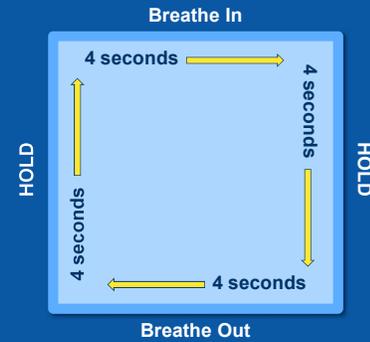
"My Child" Worksheet (Group Activity)



Imagine a real child—a child in your home, a child from your neighborhood, or even a child from the past.

- Fill in the basic information about your child—first name, age, gender—on the “My Child” worksheet.
- Write down what you know about this child’s life before he or she came into your home.
- Make a note of anything about this child that you would like to understand better.

Self-Care Start Up: Square Breathing (Group Activity)



Let's take a break!