A watercolor illustration of the Earth, showing continents in green and yellow and oceans in blue. The painting is done with soft, blended colors and has a textured, artistic feel. It is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the white background.

# Getting to “Calm” Using Trauma Sensitive Strategies

**Prevent Child Abuse Iowa Virtual Conference**

May 4, 2021

Brenda Jenkins, Northwest Area Education Agency Early Childhood Consultant

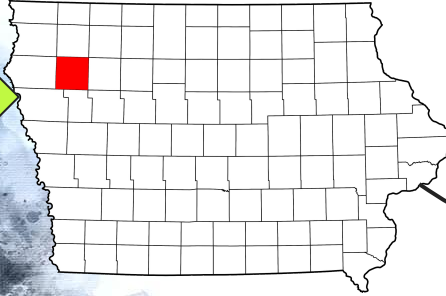
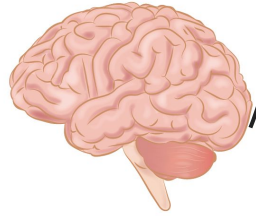
# *Hello & Welcome!*

**My name is Brenda Jenkins and I'll be your facilitator for this session.**

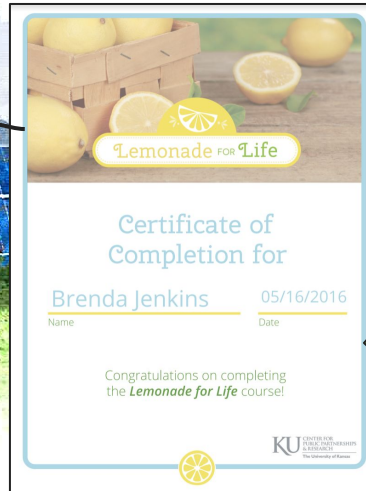
I work at Northwest AEA as an Early Childhood Consultant. I've been an Early ACCESS home provider, ECSE preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher, para, and a birth to 5 teacher in a special school. I've taught in Iowa and Arkansas.



# My Journey



Today





# *This Session*

## **SCHEDULE**

- Check in
- ACEs, Toxic Stress & Behavior
- Resiliency, Relationships & The Importance of YOU
- Strategies
- Q&A

## **OBJECTIVES**

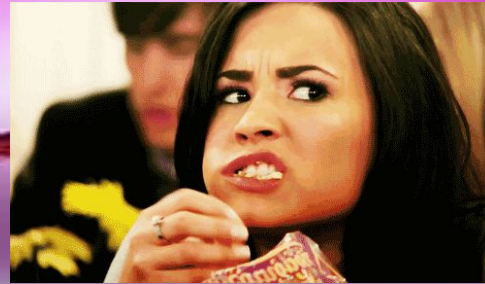
- Understand the need for prioritizing self-care
- Gain more awareness of the relationship between ACEs, toxic stress & behavior.
- Leave with some strategies to use immediately with children exhibiting stress and/or trauma behaviors.

A

B

C

D



*HOW ARE YOU FEELING?  
Can you relate?*

Which photo best represents how you  
are feeling right now?



1.

# *ACEs & Toxic Stress*

What they have to do with  
behavior



# ACEs Include

## Abuse

### Emotional

**Abuse:** Parent or adult in the household swore at you, insulted you, or put you down

### Physical Abuse:

Parent or adult in the household hit, beat, kicked, or physically hurt you. (Does not include spanking)

**Sexual Abuse:** An adult or someone at least 5 years older than you ever touched you sexually, tried to make you touch them sexually, or forced you to have sex.

## Neglect

Items with \* symbol are reverse-scored to reflect the framing of the question.

### Emotional:

Someone in your family helped you feel important or special; you felt loved. Your family was a source of strength or support.\*

**Physical:** Someone protected you and took care of you; someone took you to the doctor if you needed it.\* Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of the family.

## Household Challenges

**Separation:** Were your parents separated or divorced?

**Domestic Violence:** Parents or adults in the household slapped, hit, kicked, punched, or beat each other up.

**Substance Abuse:** Parent or adult in the household used illegal street drugs or abused prescription medications.

**Mental Illness:** Parent or adult in the household was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal.

### Incarcerated Household

**Member:** A member of the household went to prison, jail, or other correctional facility.

# Three Types of Stress

## Positive Stress



Short, stressful events like meeting new people or starting the first day of school are healthy for brain development. They prepare the brain and body for stressful situations later in life.

## Tolerable Stress



Tragic, unavoidable events like a natural disaster or losing a loved one aren't good for us. But if supportive caregivers are around to buffer the stress response, these events won't do lasting damage to the brain and body.

## Toxic Stress



Ongoing, repeated exposure to abuse or neglect is bad for brain development. If no supportive adults are present to help buffer the stress response, stress hormones will damage developing structures in the child's brain. The result is an increased vulnerability to lifelong physical and mental health problems, including addiction.





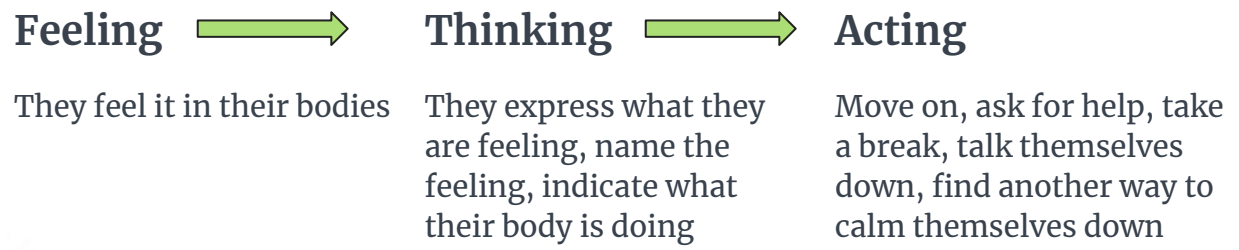
“

*Trauma is the emotional, psychological, and physiological residue left over from heightened levels of toxic stress that accompanies experiences of danger, violence, significant loss, and life-threatening events. Young children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of trauma.”*

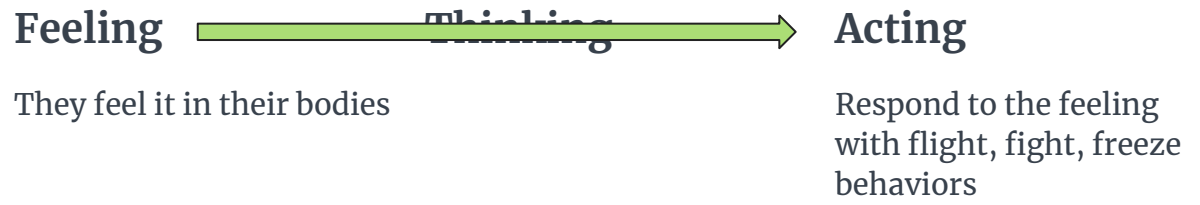
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/397-trauma-and-toxic-stress#:~:text=Trauma%20is%20the%20emotional%2C%20psychological,%2C%20and%20life%2Dthreatening%20events.>



*When children are self-regulated and they encounter a difficult feeling, they go from*



*When children are NOT self-regulated and they encounter a difficult experience, they go from*





## *Fight Behaviors*

- Self-harm
- Inconsolable or rage-filled crying and tantrums
- Inability to be soothed or calmed down
- Hitting, biting, and other aggressive behavior
- Verbal abuse of others
- Rude or defiant behavior
- Need for more control
- Inappropriate sexual behavior or play

Excerpt from the book Trauma & Young Children, Teaching Strategies to Support & Empower by Sarah Erdman & Laura J. Colker with Elizabeth C. Winter, pp 23-35

## Flight Behaviors

- Separation anxiety
- Regression in skills
- Loss of bladder control (enuresis)
- Physical complaints
- Significant changes in eating patterns
- Significant changes in sleep patterns
- Worries about their own or another's safety
- Heightened vigilance and inaccurate perception of danger
- Increased fearfulness
- Mood swings and personality changes
- Repetitive play that recreates traumatic events
- Expressing worry that the trauma will recur
- Negative thinking in worst-case scenarios
- Frequent talk about death and dying



## Freeze Behaviors

- Muteness, refusal to talk
- Limited eye contact
- Withdrawal from activities
- Difficulty forming friendships
- Ignoring directions, not listening, or refusing to participate in activities
- Quick to give up or unwilling to try new things
- Over or under-reacting to physical touch
- Overreacting to sounds or textures
- Overly dependent on others
- Lack of self-confidence

Excerpt from the book Trauma & Young Children, Teaching Strategies to Support & Empower by Sarah Erdman & Laura J. Colker with Elizabeth C. Winter, pp 23-35

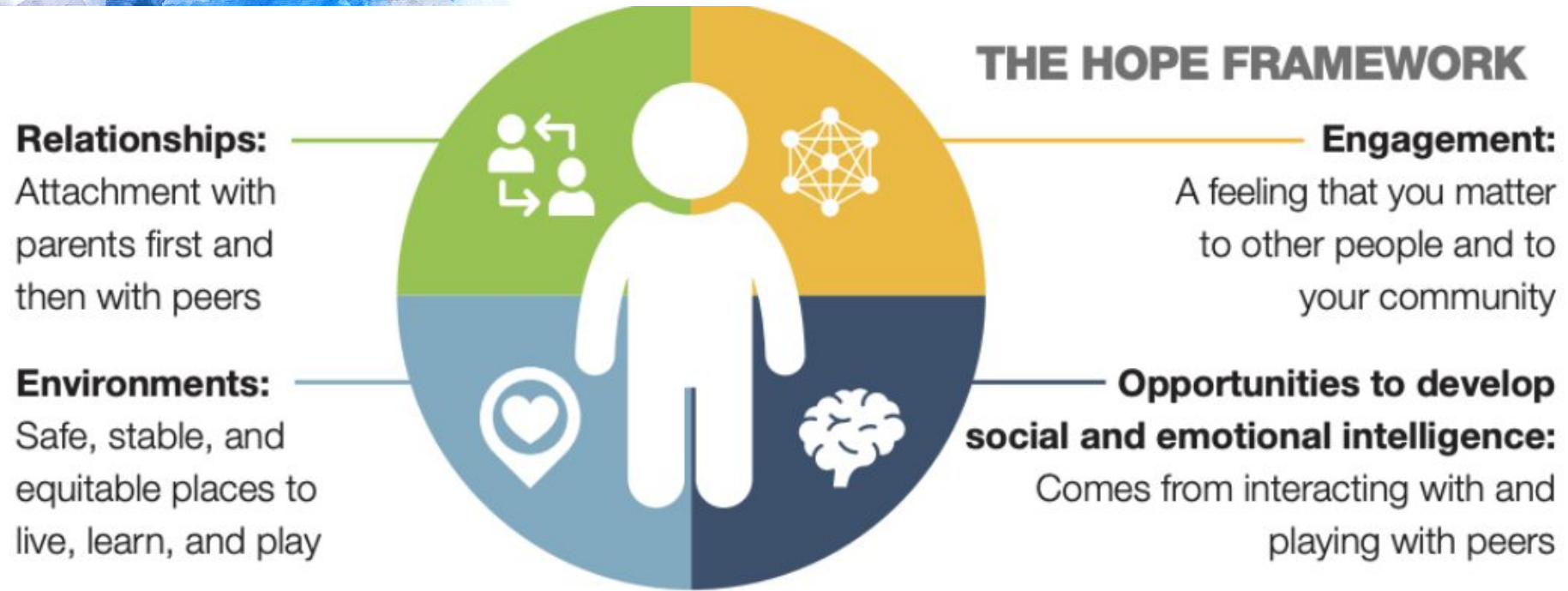
# ACEs *≠* Trauma



- Significant relationships can be pivotal buffers
- Being a member of a marginalized population does not equal trauma or an adverse childhood experience (it is not causal, just a risk factor)
- ACEs are universal, but the access to healing is not.

**It's not about the event,  
It's about the  
experience of the event.**

# ACEs and Children



Source: Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences, 2017

## *Resilience can be the antidote to ACEs!*

- Resilience is the ability to bounce back from life's difficulties. It can be described as a varied and dynamic mix of many traits like determination, toughness, optimism, faith, positivity and hope.
- Resilience isn't necessarily something a child is born with, although scientists now believe that certain children are genetically predisposed to higher levels of resilience.



But the **good news** for all children is that resilience is like a muscle - the more you exercise it, the stronger it grows, especially in very young children where neural pathways are still forming and thinking patterns are elastic.

<https://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/resilience-a-powerful-weapon-in-the-fight-against-aces/>





# Devereux Center for Resilient Children Building their “Bounce”

## Build Attachment & Relationships by

- Really listening
- Playing together
- Being there

## Build Initiative by

- Celebrating strengths
- Exploring new things
- Offering challenges

## Build Self-Regulation by

- Naming feelings
- Teaching coping skills
- Offering choices



## *Resilience as an antidote to ACEs*

“We know that resilience requires that a child can rely on the presence of at least **one supportive, caring adult**. But who are these people?”

<https://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/resilience-a-powerful-weapon-in-the-fight-against-aces/>



2.

## *Managing our stress & thoughts*

One reason it matters so much

"When **little** people  
are overwhelmed by  
**big** emotions,  
it's our job to share  
our calm, not to  
join their chaos."

- L.R. Knost

## Thoughts?

During our time together, our focus is on getting children to a calm state. That being said, we cannot overemphasize the importance of getting ourselves to a calm state first.

<https://andreasamadi.podbean.com/e/self-regulation-and-your-brain-how-to-bounce-back-towards-resilience/>

A watercolor illustration of a wind farm. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a vibrant sky in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. Several wind turbines are visible, with the most prominent one in the foreground on the left. The background shows rolling hills and more turbines in the distance. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a mix of colors.

“

*A regulated, calm adult can regulate a dysregulated, anxious child, BUT a dysregulated adult can NEVER regulate a dysregulated child.”*

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/the-constellation-of-regulation-part-1-of-the-3-rs>



“

*When you are in fight,  
flight, or freeze, none of  
your solutions work.”*

*-Bari Koral*



## Bari Koral- 5 Mindfulness Tools to Reduce Anxiety Now

1. Tapping
2. Havening Touch
3. “Peace Begins With Me”
4. SuperHero Strength
5. ABCs of Mindfulness
  - a. A: Awareness
  - b. B: Breath
  - c. C: Calm consistently



3.

## *Strategies*

To help children get to a calmer state





*A think about:*

*“When a flower doesn’t bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower” –Alexander Den Heijer*

# Toxic Stress: Strategies

## In the moment...

➤ Two most successful ways to calm the amygdala:

❖ Breathing

- Bring our kids into regulated rhythms
  - Focused breathing
  - Tapping

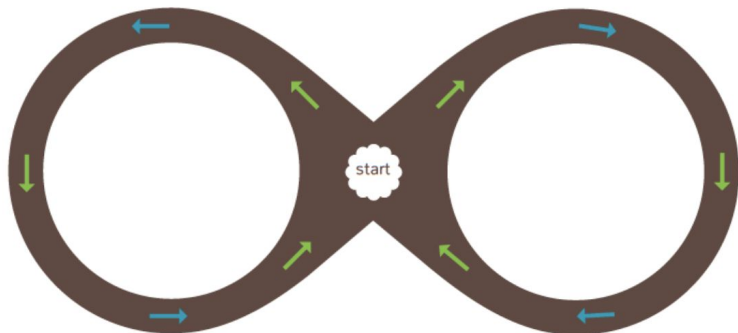
❖ Movement

- Walking/pacing - brain intervals

➤ Trauma-Informed Responses

# Using Shapes to Teach Deep Breathing to relieve Toxic Stress

## LAZY 8 BREATHING



Start with the 8 on it's side and start in the middle

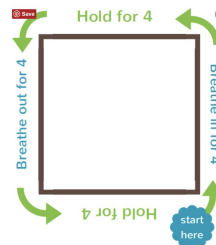
Go up to the left and trace the left part of the 8 with your finger while you breathe in.

When you get to the middle of the 8 again, breathe out while you trace the right part of the 8 with your finger.

## TRIANGLE BREATHING



## SQUARE BREATHING



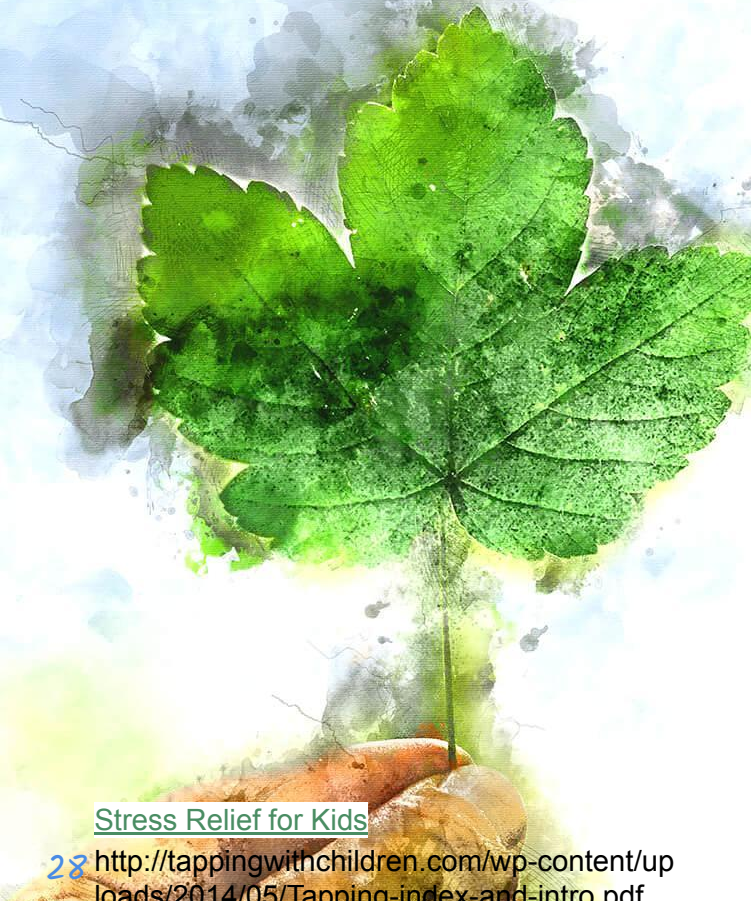
## STAR BREATHING



# Tapping

(Emotional Freedom Techniques, EFT)

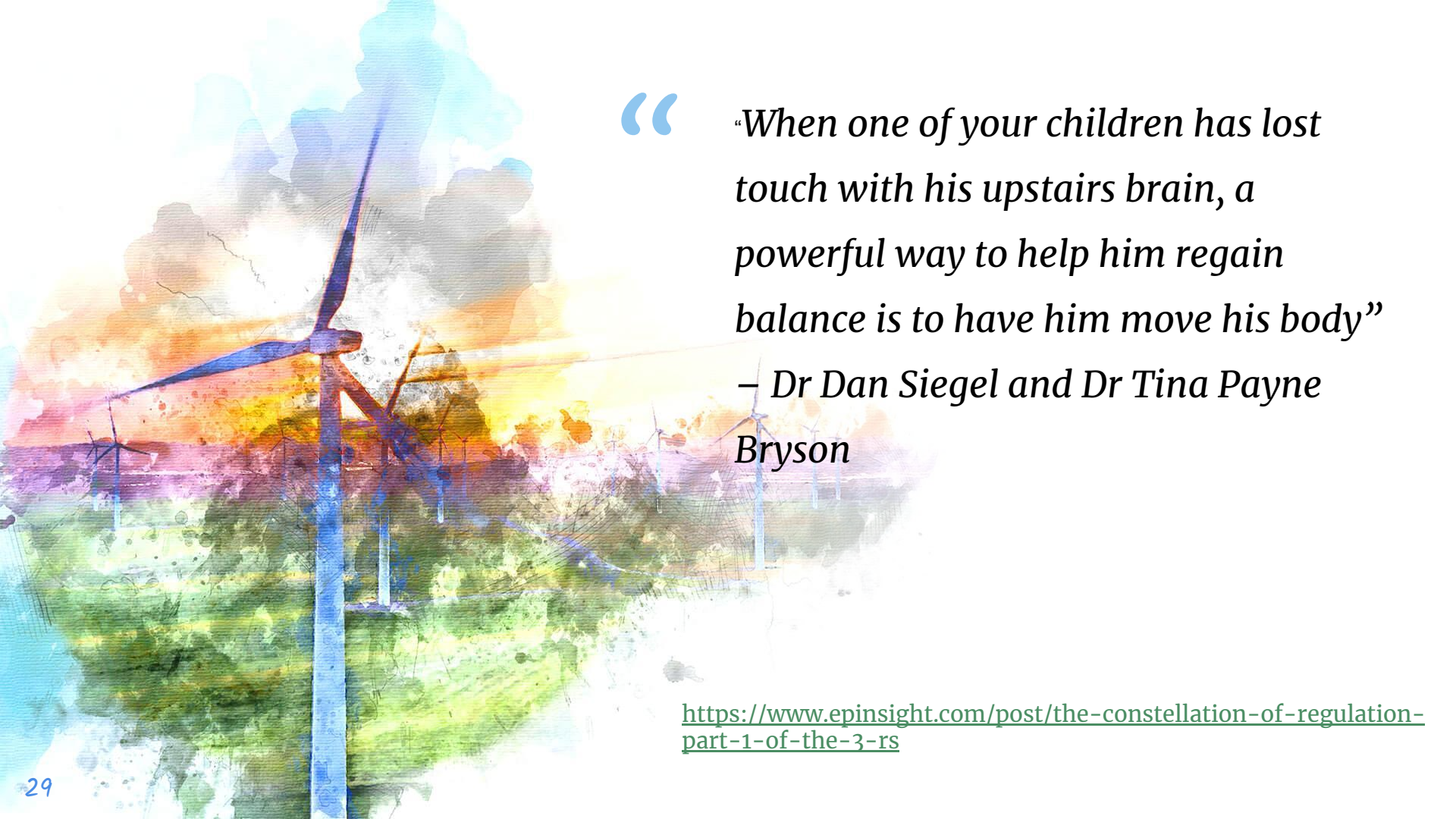
## Toxic Stress Strategy: Tapping



Stress Relief for Kids

28 <http://tappingwithchildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Tapping-index-and-intro.pdf>



A watercolor illustration of a wind farm. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a vibrant sky in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. Several wind turbines are visible, their blades and towers rendered in soft, painterly strokes. The foreground shows a field of green grass, also depicted with watercolor textures. The overall style is artistic and serene.

“When one of your children has lost touch with his upstairs brain, a powerful way to help him regain balance is to have him move his body”  
– Dr Dan Siegel and Dr Tina Payne Bryson

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/the-constellation-of-regulation-part-1-of-the-3-rs>

# Toxic Stress: Strategies = Movement



- Brain Breaks
- Vigorous Exercise

Bonus: Exercise also preps brains for learning!

## Toxic Stress: Strategies = Responding vs. Reacting

Traditional Reactions	Trauma-Informed Responses
“Go to the principal’s office.”	“I’m here. You’re not in trouble.”
“Stop crying.”	“It’s okay to feel.”
“Detention is waiting for you.”	“Sit with me.”
“Don’t you talk to an adult like that.”	“You’re allowed to have a voice. Let’s talk together.”
“Stop acting like a baby”	“That really set you back, didn’t it?”
“You’re old enough to handle this on your own.”	“Let’s handle this together.”

# Toxic Stress: Teaching Children with Trauma

## Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care



"The implementation of a trauma-informed approach is an ongoing organizational change process. A trauma-informed approach is not a program model that can be implemented and then simply monitored using a fidelity checklist. Rather, it is a profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes and skills that continues to deepen and unfold over time." There are practices, however, that teachers can use to infuse a trauma informed care approach in their work. As a teacher you may see children for the longest period of the day, you may even spend more time with a young child than his/her parents. You have a critical role to play in recognizing trauma, building positive relationships with children, helping children feel safe and secure, providing consistent routines and structure, and teaching children social emotional skills. Recognizing the impact of trauma can change the way you view children's behavior and support their development and ultimately their healing.

**Purpose:** This checklist is a list of practices that will help guide your thinking about how to support the social emotional development of young children who have experienced trauma. This list of practices is not exhaustive nor is it meant to be a substitute for treatment or counseling for children and families. Many of these practices are part of the Pyramid Model (i.e., the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool), while other practices may not be explicitly described in the Pyramid Model practices yet they align well with Pyramid Model practices that you may already be using. Practices such as these can make a big difference in the life of a child and his/her family.

**How to Use the Checklist:** You can use this list of practices to reflect on your current practice as well as to consider new practices you may want to adopt. Choose two or three practices to implement in your class; even if you are already using some of these practices, you may choose to enhance and improve your practice by selecting new ones. Finally, you may develop additional new strategy/strategies for each category.

**Instructions:** First, read all the items in the checklist below. Next review each section one at a time. Make a check in the second column if you feel engage in the practice consistently. Make a check in the third column if you want to improve upon or enhance this practice. Choose no more than one practice in each section of the third column (i.e. choose one practice you want to concentrate on in the nurturing and responsive relationships section). Note that the practices in gray are practices that relate to working with families and other primary caregivers.

Two of my favorite resources. One is a checklist from the Pyramid Model Consortium and the other is a summary from a book I read entitled **Trauma & Young Children.**



## 11 Guiding Principles for Teaching Children with Trauma

*Trauma & Young Children: Teaching Strategies to Support & Power* by Sarah Erdman & Laura J. Coiker with Elizabeth C. Winter, pp 27-39

1. **Recognize that all children will benefit from a trauma-informed approach.** Providing the same social & emotional supports to all children in your classroom will help ensure that no child who has experienced trauma will slip through the cracks. Every child will be enriched by your sensitive asset-building teaching.
2. **Use a strengths-based approach to teaching.** Instead of focusing on what a child is lacking, build on what the child knows and can do. Children will learn to assess what they do well and then use these strengths & talents to build and bridge knowledge.
3. **Recognize, appreciate & address differing influences on children's experiences with trauma.** A key part of individualizing your approach and making use of trauma-sensitive guidelines is to view children's experiences through the lenses of race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, disability and gender.
4. **Embrace resilience as a goal for every child.** 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.
5. **Help children learn to regulate their emotions.** According to resilience researcher Andrew Shattle, emotional regulation is the most important ability associated with resilience. Try mental "hook-ups"- physical exercises designed specifically to help children calm down during meltdowns or periods of high anxiety. Have a calming area in the classroom to help children release intense feelings by squeezing balls and other pliable toys, playing with sensory materials, doing deep breathing exercises, reading books about characters who have similar emotions, listening and moving to music, or rocking tenderly with you.
6. **Use positive guidance when dealing with children's challenging behaviors.** Punishment, suspension, and expulsion are inappropriate for *any* young child. Rather than time-out, offer "time-in." Reframe your thinking. The child is not trying to grate on your nerves or intentionally misbehave. They are dealing with fears, and their brains are in survival mode. This state leads many children to act out in ways that disturb others.
7. **Be a role model to children on how to act and approach learning.** Children look to you for guidance, inspiration, and validation- and for assistance in maneuvering the complexities of life.
8. **Help children turn negative thinking around.** Optimism can be learned, no matter how innately pessimistic a person may be or how negative their life circumstances have been. You can help them develop thinking that is realistically optimistic by gently disputing their negative thinking and showing them when it's not rooted in fact.
9. **Enrich children's lives with art, music, and dance.** The arts enrich the soul and bring beauty to life. The arts serve a major educational and therapeutic value as well. Children communicate through their artwork, music, dance, and movement. For many children, it's easier to express their emotions through these avenues than it is through talking. For children with a history of trauma, the arts may offer restorative powers.
10. **Look beyond children's traumas and celebrate the joys in life.** Children who have been traumatized are children first, and they are due the same aspirations and high expectations that every child in your program is due. Help children find activities and experiences that let them feel good about themselves and their place in the world.
11. **Remember that you don't have to have all the answers.** The most knowledgeable and confident people know their limitations and willingly admit to the need to learn more. If you don't have the training or experience, seek advice, consult with the child's family.]



# Teaching Children With Trauma

## Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care



"The implementation of a trauma-informed approach is an ongoing organizational change process. A trauma-informed approach is not a program model that can be implemented and then simply monitored using a fidelity checklist. Rather, it is a profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes and skills that continues to deepen and unfold over time." There are practices, however, that teachers can use to infuse a trauma-informed care approach in their work. As a teacher you may see children for the longest period of the day, you may even spend more time with a young child than his/her parents. You have a critical role to play in recognizing trauma, building positive relationships with children, helping children feel safe and secure, providing consistent routines and structure, and teaching children social emotional skills. Recognizing the impact of trauma can change the way you view children's behavior and support their development and ultimately their healing.

**Purpose:** This checklist is a list of practices that will help guide your thinking about how to support the social emotional development of young children who have experienced trauma. This list of practices is not exhaustive nor is it meant to be a substitute for treatment or counseling for children and families. Many of these practices are part of the Pyramid Model (i.e., the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool), while other practices may not be explicitly described in the Pyramid Model practices yet they align well with Pyramid Model practices that you may already be using. Practices such as these can make a big difference in the life of a child and his/her family.

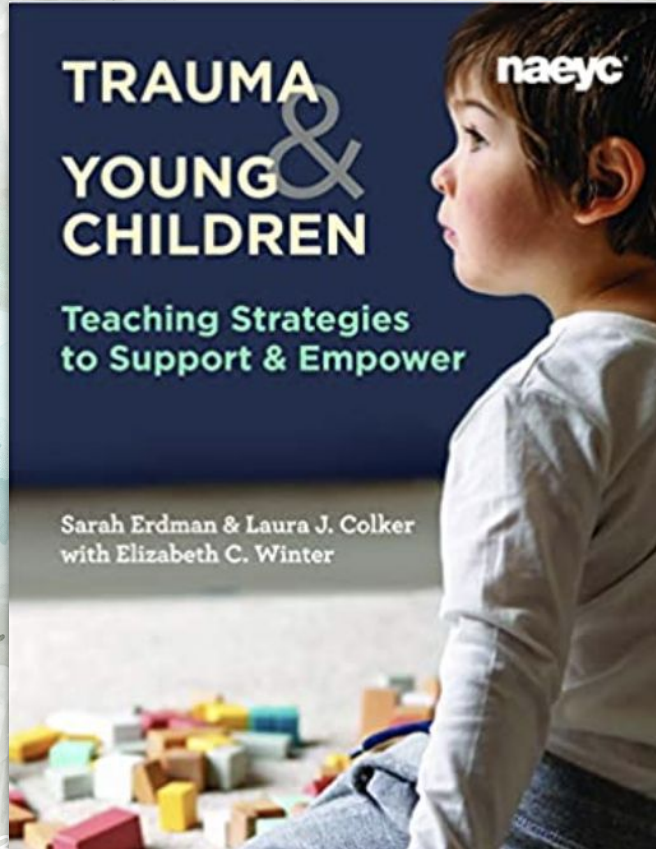
**How to Use the Checklist:** You can use this list of practices to reflect on your current practice as well as to consider new practices you may want to adopt. Choose two or three practices to implement in your class; even if you are already using some of these practices, you may choose to enhance and improve your practice by selecting new ones. Finally, you may develop additional new strategy/strategies for each category.

**Instructions:** First, read all the items in the checklist below. Next review each section one at a time. Make a check in the second column if you feel engage in the practice consistently. Make a check in the third column if you want to improve upon or enhance this practice. Choose no more than one practice in each section of the third column (i.e. chose one practice you want to concentrate on in the nurturing and responsive relationships section). Note that the practices in gray are practices that relate to working with families and other primary caregivers.

## Checklist of 38 Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development & Trauma-Informed Care

- Nurturing & responsive relationships (foster relationships that emphasize attachment, trust, collaboration & empowerment)
- Create a safe learning environment using positive directions & rules
- Create calm predictable transitions
- Help children regulate their emotions and express their feelings appropriately
- Intensive interventions that consider the child's experiences

## 11 Guiding Principles for Teaching Children with Trauma



1. Recognize that all children will benefit from a trauma-informed approach.
2. Use a strengths-based approach to teaching.
3. Recognize, appreciate & address differing influences on children's experiences with trauma.
4. Embrace resilience as a goal for every child.
5. Help children learn to regulate their emotions.
6. Use positive guidance when dealing with children's challenging behaviors.
7. Be a role model to children on how to act and approach learning.
8. Help children turn negative thinking around.
9. Enrich children's lives with art, music, and dance.
10. Look beyond children's traumas and celebrate the joys in life.
11. Remember that you don't have to have all the answers.

# Trauma Informed Recommended Practices

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017) consist of:



- ▶ Implementing a multi-tiered approach that acknowledges the importance of providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and more intensive and focused prevention and intervention for children who have social, emotional, or behavioral support needs;
- ▶ Prioritizing the establishment of nurturing and responsive relationships with all children and their families;
- ▶ Offering children predictable routines;
- ▶ Teaching children social, emotional, and behavior regulation skills;
- ▶ Responding to challenging behavior by seeking to understand the behavior and use prevention and instructional strategies to address behavior; and
- ▶ Eliminating the use of exclusionary or punishment responses to challenging behavior (i.e., time-out, suspension).

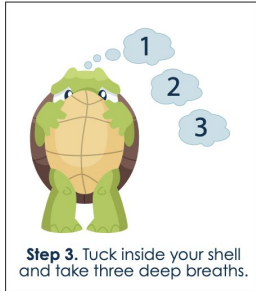
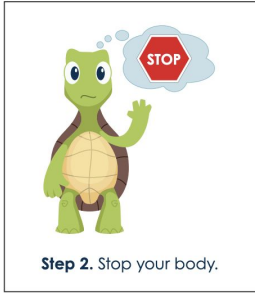
# *Emotional Literacy*

## Managing Anger & Impulse Control

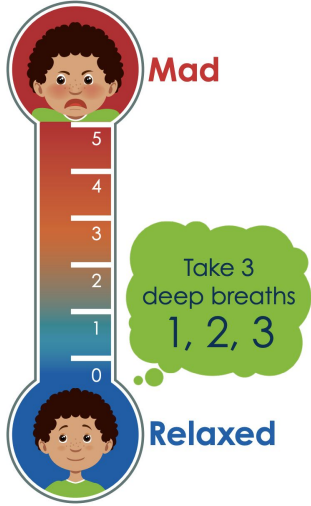
- Before children can learn to problem solve social problems, they must learn to control anger and impulse
- This involves 3 concepts:
  - Recognizing anger in oneself and others
  - Knowing how to calm down
  - Expressing anger in appropriate ways

# Additional Resources

## NCPMI The Turtle Technique



## Relaxation Thermometer



## Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower



Blow the pinwheel

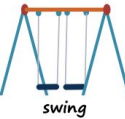


## Help Us Calm Down

Strategies for Children

Try these strategies with your child! The more you use a calming strategy and practice the strategy with your child, the more likely they are to use the strategy when experiencing anger, stress, sadness, or frustration.

### I can...



## Have a Calming Center or Corner

It needs to be a place children can go when he/she chooses to or one you can support him/her at as he/she gets to a calm state.

It's a safe place, a positive place.

It is NOT to be another name for Time Out.



## Calm Down Kit

- Bubbles (breathing deeply)
- Straws (counting to 10)
- Bouncy ball, Play-doh (getting energy out)
- Paper, Pencils, Crayons (drawing feelings)



## Add a Zen Garden

Rocks, shells, toy turtles and raking sticks in a box.



This zen garden is from  
[letthechildrenplay.net](http://letthechildrenplay.net)

Children can soothe any stress by raking sand and arranging stones and shells.



This zen garden from [education.com](http://education.com)



A watercolor illustration on the left side of the slide. It features two pink flowers with prominent stamens, surrounded by green foliage and several bees. The style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a mix of colors including pinks, greens, and browns.

# Thanks!

**What comments or questions do you have?**

**You can find me at:**

**[bjenkins@nwaea.org](mailto:bjenkins@nwaea.org)**



## *Credits*

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome slides resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)