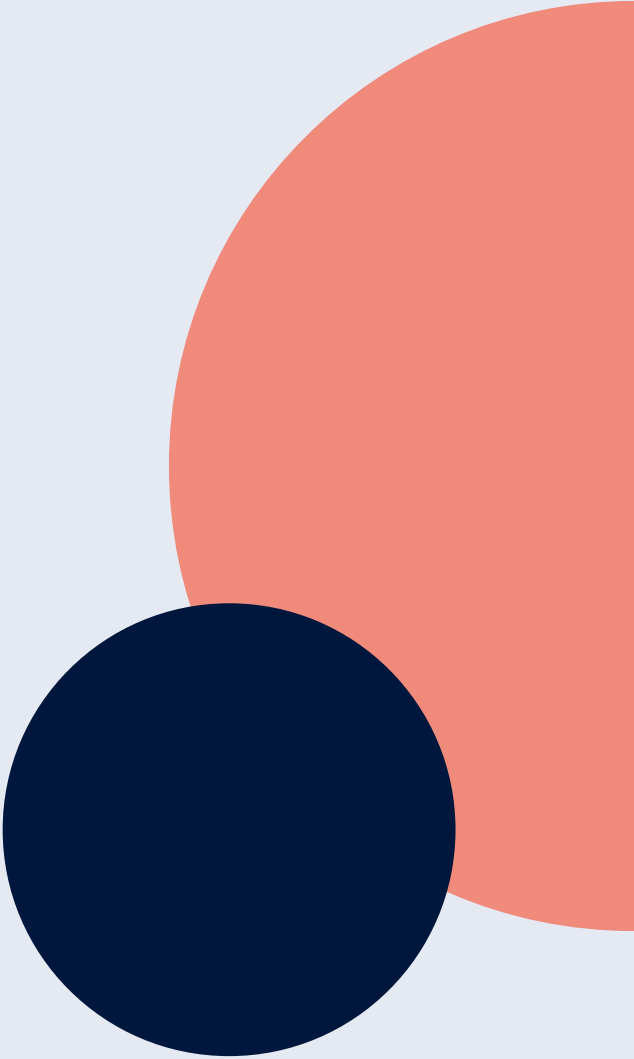


Finally, Something For Me: A Staff-Focused Intervention to Increase Self-Regulation and Amplify Trauma-Informed Care

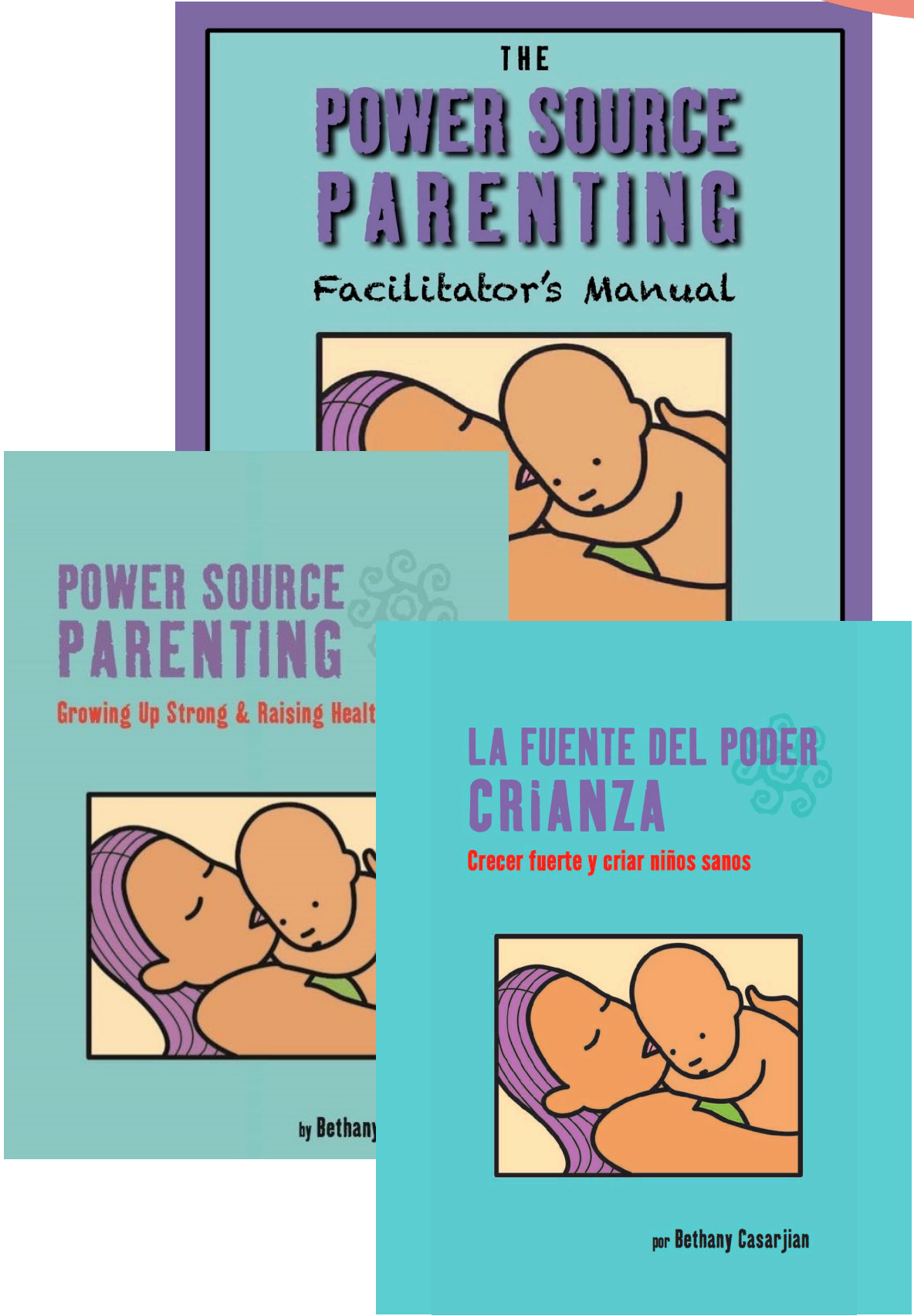
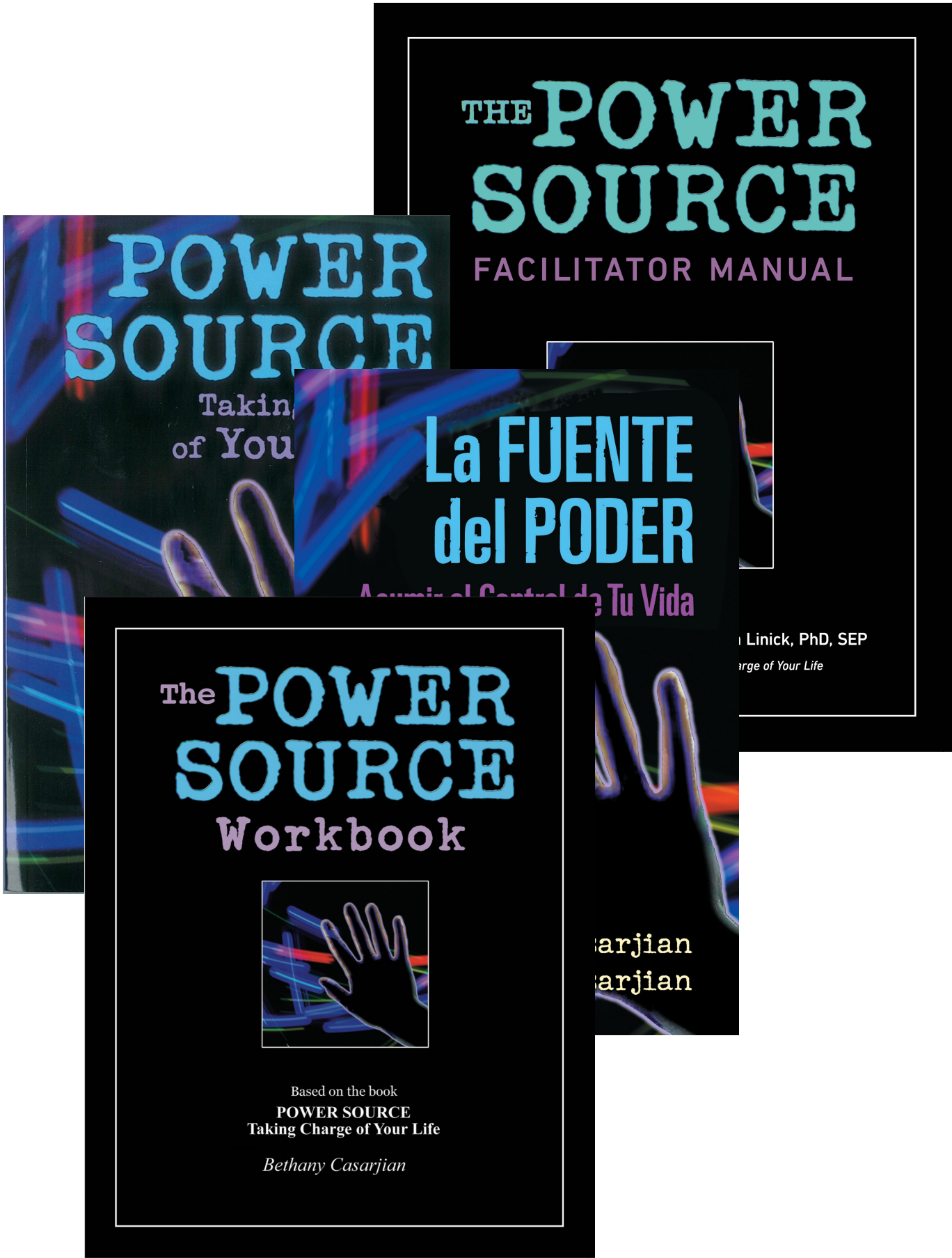
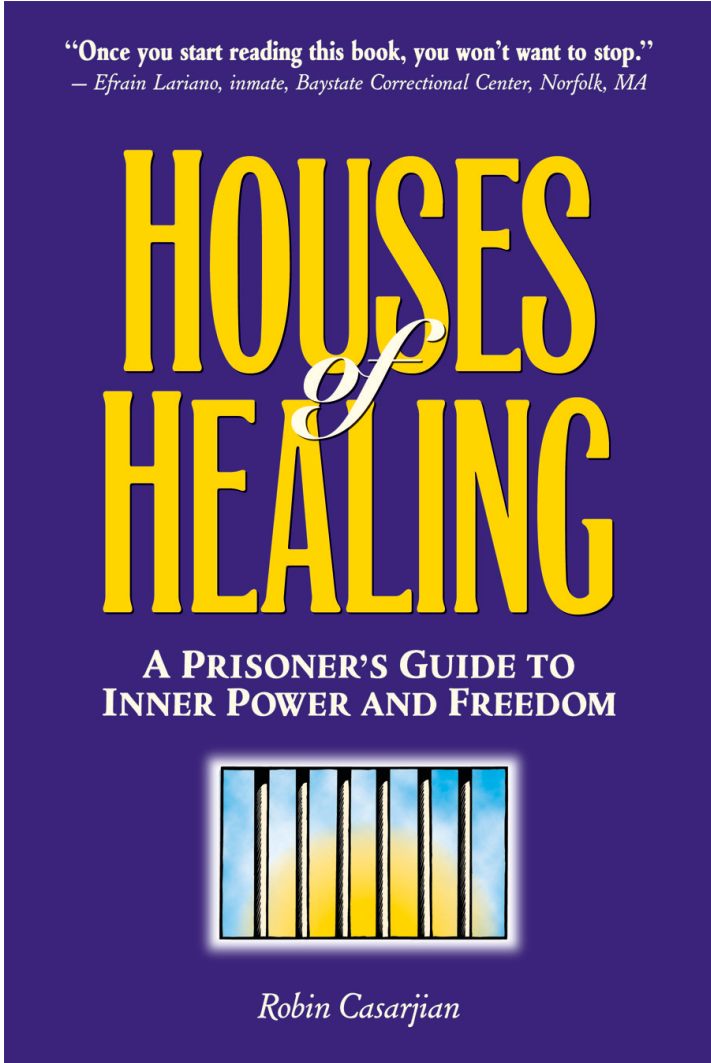


Beth Casarjian, Ph.D.
Jess Linick, Ph.D.
The Lionheart Foundation
www.lionheart.org

The Lionheart Foundation

For over 30 years, we've developed innovative, evidence-based, social and emotional learning programs to empower those whose lives have been impacted by trauma, system-involvement, and opportunity barriers.

How It Started...



Power Source at Rikers

- Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program focused on increasing self-regulation and decreasing risk-taking behaviors
- 267 Incarcerated
- Largest US RC incarcerated y
- Participating i attention and stressful (tra
- The Control (

EQ SKILLS		
The ability to identify and label feelings	Impulse control	Problem solving (alone and with others)
Managing emotions, especially difficult ones like anger, stress and frustration	Persistence – Staying at tasks that are challenging or boring	Seeing the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
Using humor to connect with others	Having empathy for others	Responsible decision making
Regularly using self-care skills	Patience with myself and others	Initiation – Starting things that require effort
Using self-soothing skills – calming down after being triggered	Understanding what behavior is appropriate in different settings	Assertiveness skills (getting what I need in a good way)
Forming healthy relationships	Reading the emotions and needs of others	Taking responsibility for the harm one has caused
Communicating effectively with others	Setting realistic and positive goals	Able to forgive myself and others

intervention with

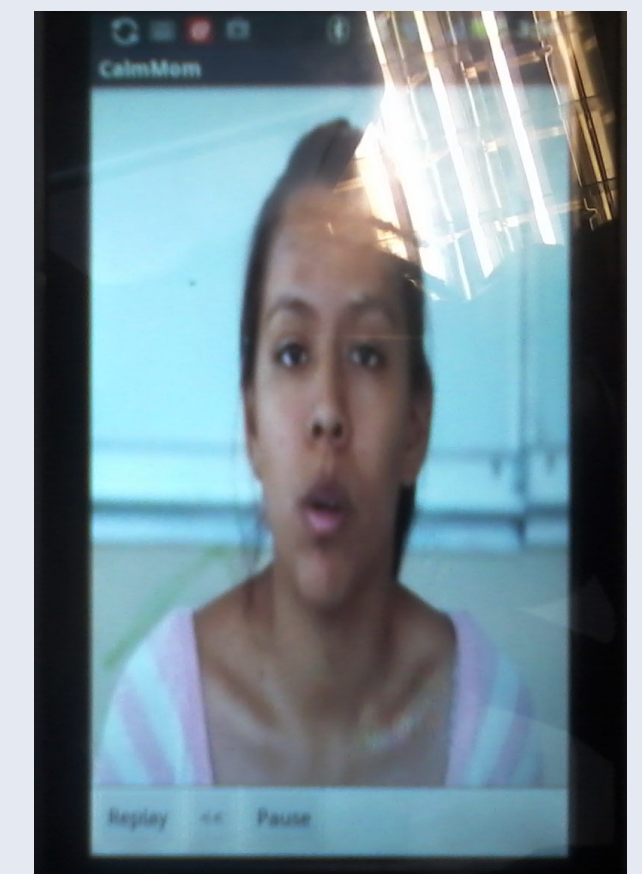
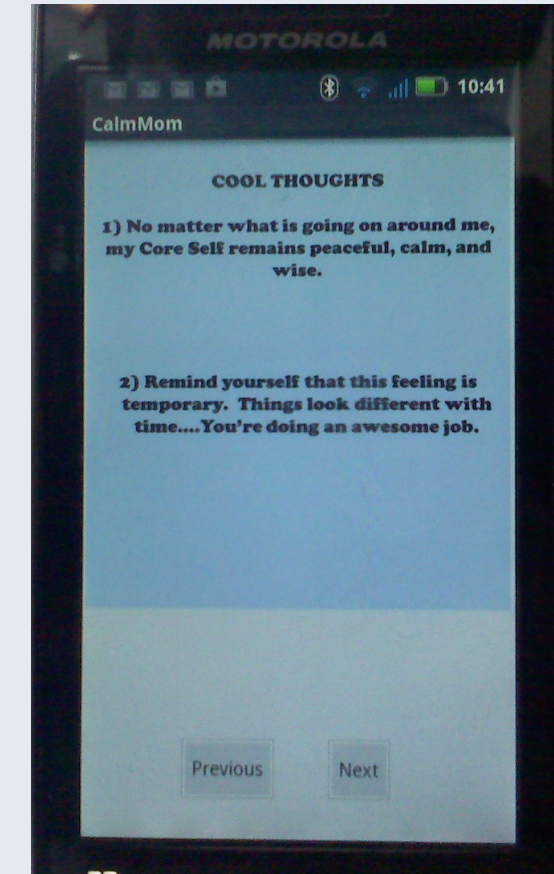
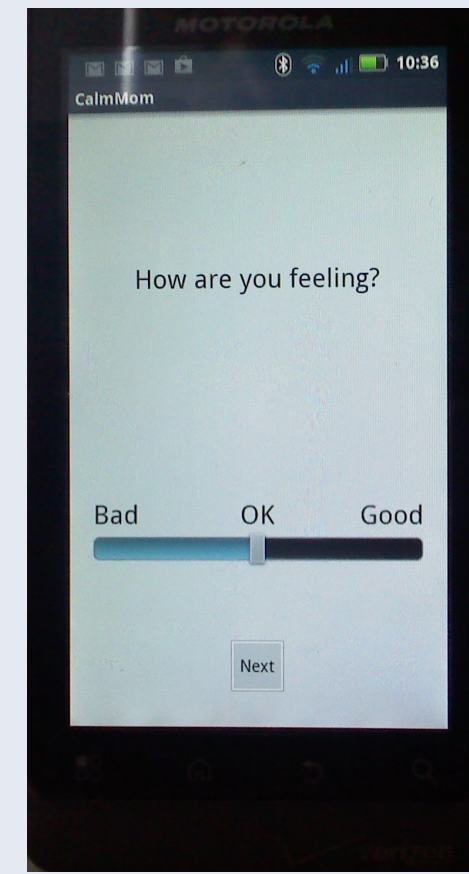
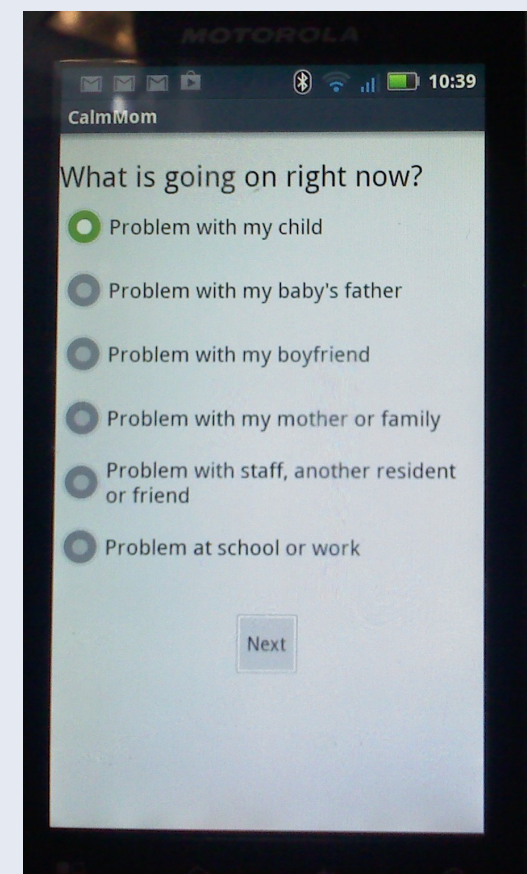
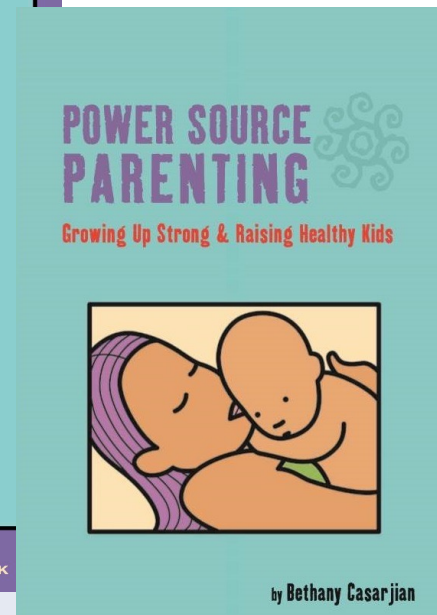
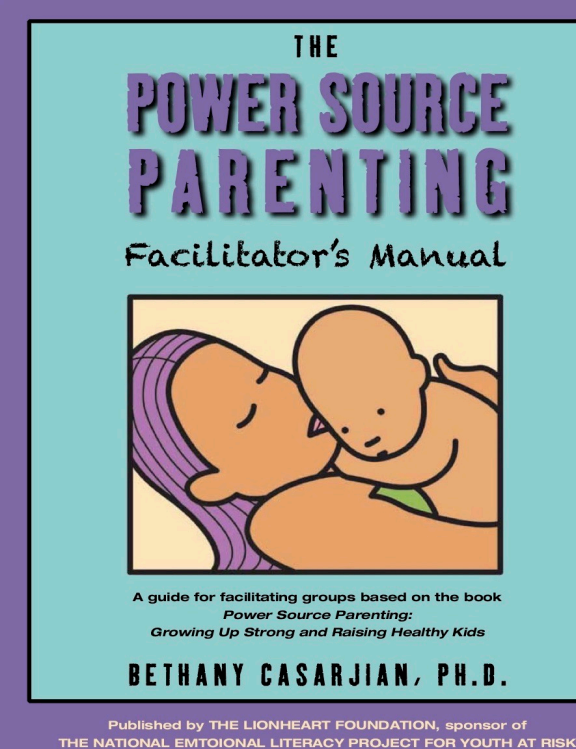
ments in
this highly

Relationships Weren't the Icing

'Facilitator Presence' Training

- **Relationship Focused:** attuned, warm, present, flexible, predictable
- **Relentless Positive Regard:** youth felt seen, worthy, valued, heard, cared for
- **Regulated:** all had a mindfulness practice – provided a deep self-awareness and self-regulation foundation

2013 NIH R34 : Ambulatory Autonomic Activity Monitoring Among At-Risk Adolescent Mothers



"If you really want to help this place, you should create a program like that to help staff with OUR stress."

So, What Was Out There to Support Staff?

"The extent to which a **system is trauma-informed** depends on the **moment-to-moment, day-to-day behavior** of its personnel."



**We spent 8 years developing EQ2... learning
about the needs and strengths of staff**





Hearing from Staff Directly

**"It's hard to stay calm when everyone
is dropping "F" bombs on you."**

-Angela, 2 years direct care experience

**"I was asked to do clinical things that
I didn't have the skills for."**

-Gerald, 6 years direct care experience



Hearing from Supervisors

**"I was really good at my direct care job.
But when I got promoted to be a
supervisor, that was a different story. I
had no idea what I was supposed to do"**

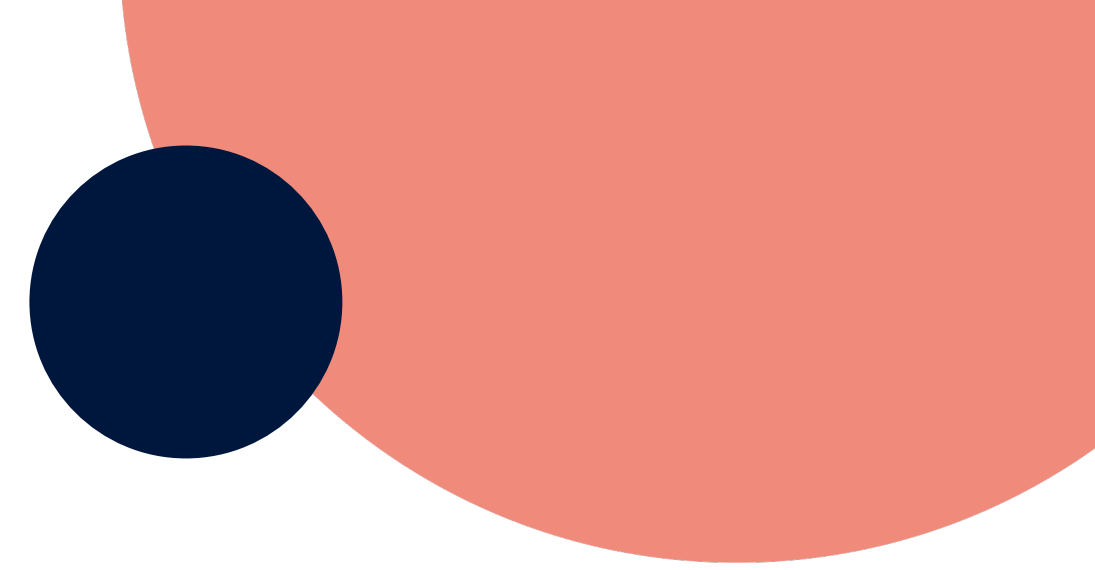
-David, 2 years supervision experience

Hearing from Researchers

"All the evidence-based practices, system design features, and policy initiatives have no value without "frontline" staff who translate these into literally thousands of micro-interactions everyday."



Also Looked at Assumptions in TIC

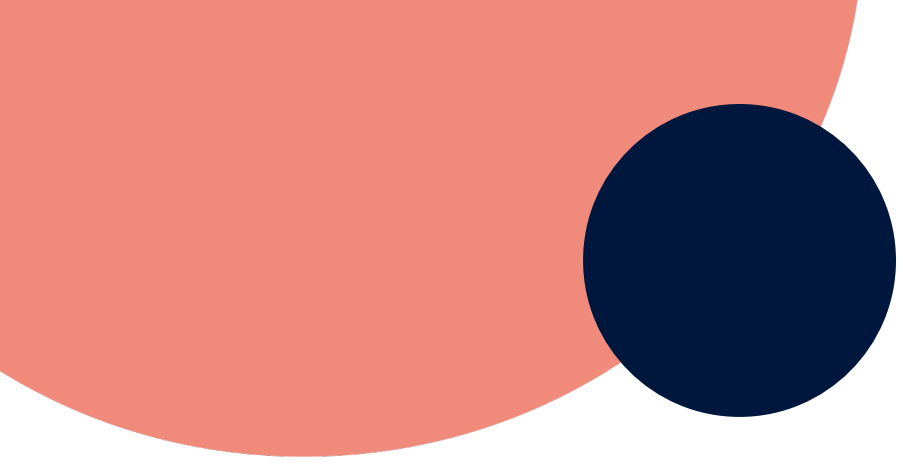


- Underestimate how dysregulating (on a neurobiological level) youth challenging behavior can be for staff.
- Assume that staff come to these roles equipped with the self-regulation and SEL skills required to implement higher-order TIC.

More Assumptions

- Overlook staffs' trauma histories which can heighten our stress reactions to triggers.
- Assume that staff 'childrearing beliefs' are in alignment with the principles of TIC.
- Directives like "get calm first" or "don't take it personally" ineffective – not teaching the skills staff need.





Changing Staffing Needs

- Age of workforce significantly younger-- less child working experience.
- Problem solving challenges.
- Staff are coming with significant levels of adversity and trauma (Estimates of around 80% Esaki, 2013. Purdue ACE study).

Lionheart/Purdue ACE Study: Percentage of Number of ACEs Reported

0-4 ACEs	62.9%
5+ ACEs	37.1%

Mean	4.08
Median	4.00

91% reporting at least one ACE

- **Most common ACEs:**

- **Parental separation (54%)**
- **MH Disorder in home (45%)**
- **Emotional abuse (43%)**
- **SUD in home (43%)**
- **Bullying (42%)**

(N = 70)

What is EQ2?

A self-regulation and support program that equips staff with the skills they need to work effectively with youth, while building the resilience to buffer them from STS, their own ACEs, and burnout.

Risking Connection

**TI System
Approach**

**TF-CBT
Power Source
ART, DBT**

**Target
PBIS
CBT, CPS**

**Youth
Focused
Interventions**

**Ukeru
TCI
CPI**

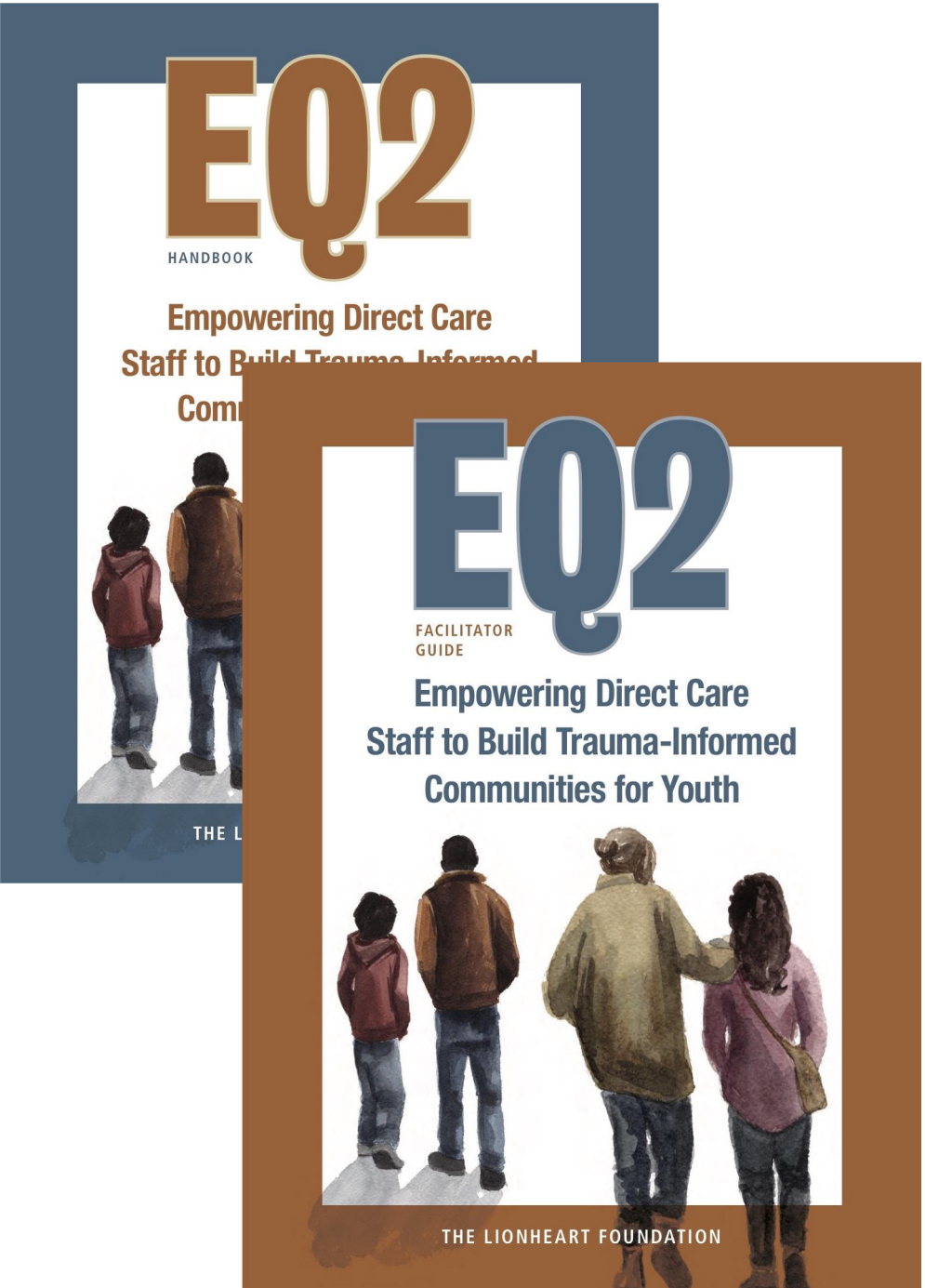
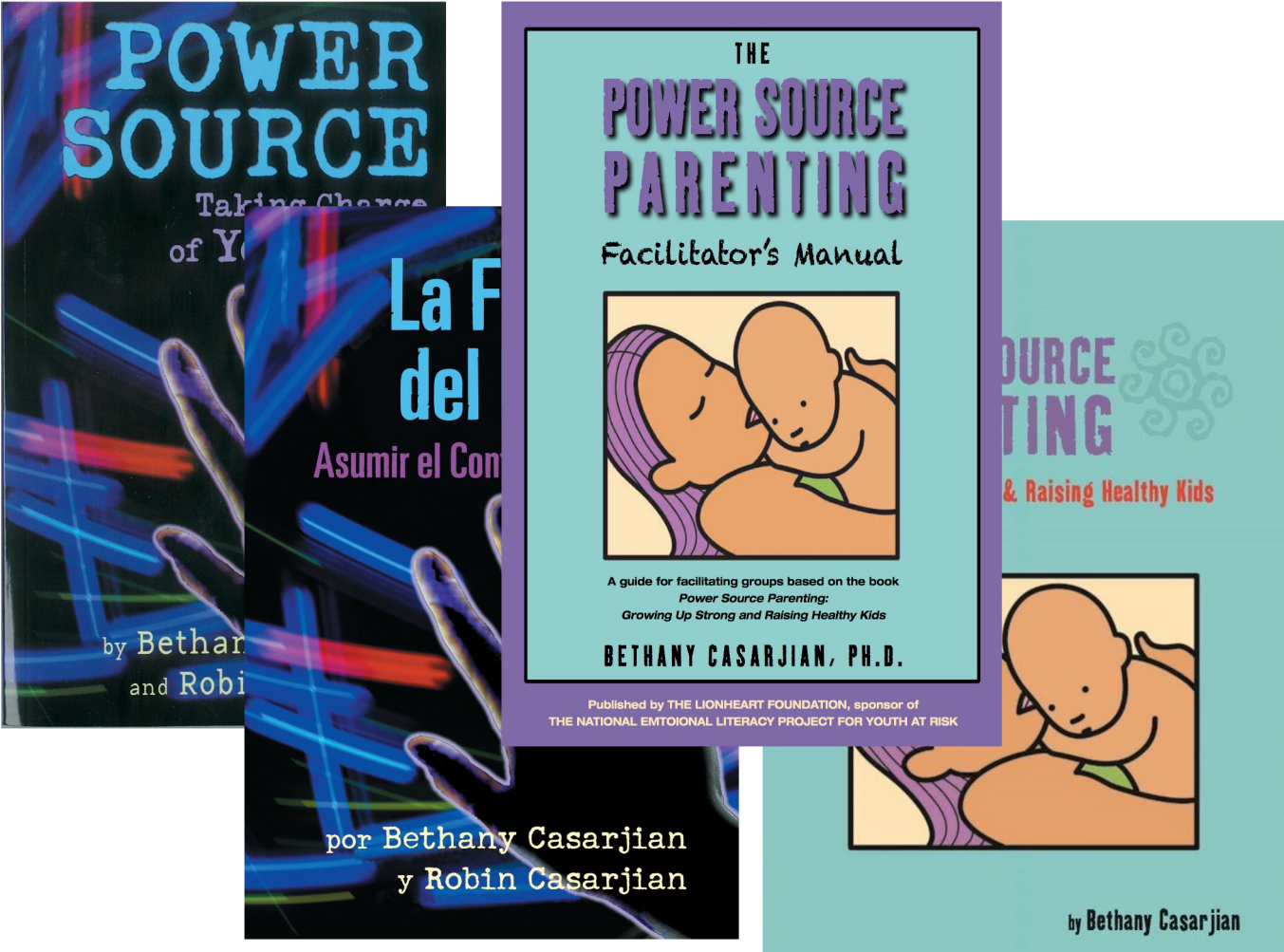
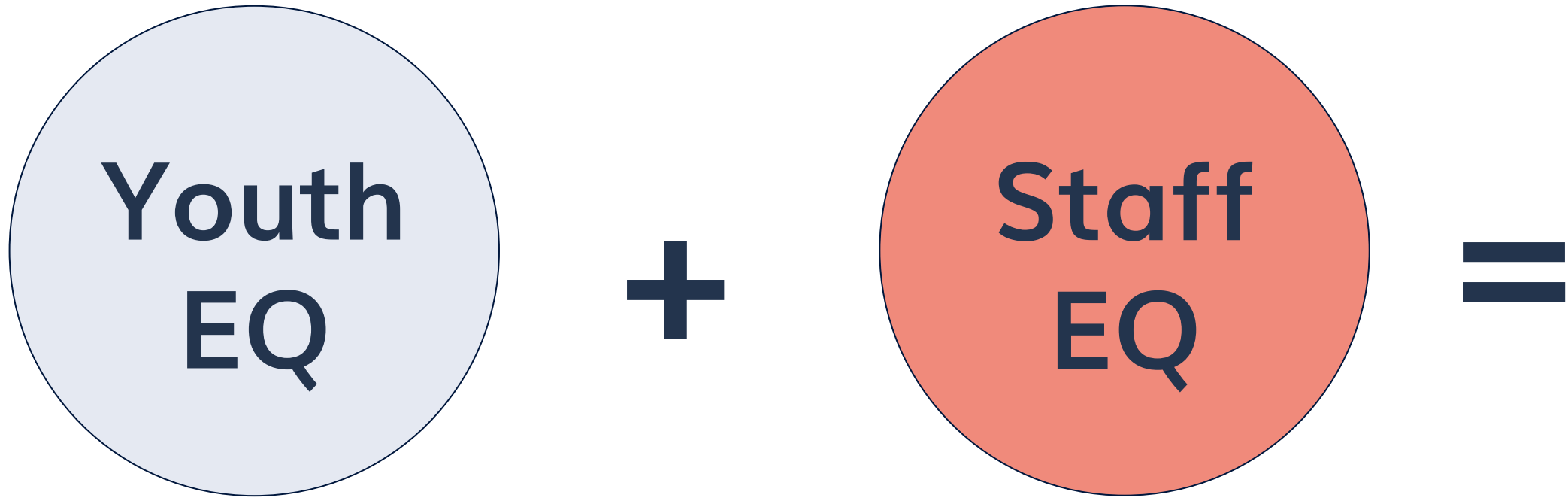
**HWC
Mandt
SCM**

**Crisis Prevention and
De-escalation Models**

EQ2

Staff Self-Regulation

What Does EQ2 Mean?



EQ SKILLS X 2

The ability to identify and label feelings	Impulse control	Problem solving (alone and with others)
Managing emotions, especially difficult ones like anger, stress and frustration	Persistence – Staying at tasks that are challenging or boring	Seeing the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
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Forming healthy relationships	Reading the emotions and needs of others	Taking responsibility for the harm one has caused
Communicating effectively with others	Setting realistic and positive goals	Able to forgive myself and others



**In the Chat... What Self-Regulation
and Relational Skills Do Staff
Sometimes Struggle With?**

EQ2 Foundational Belief

What has been hurt
through relationship
has to be healed
through relationship.



(Interpersonal Neurobiology states The Brain is a social organ and is fundamentally shaped by our interactions with others, positive and negative.)

Staff are the Secret Sauce to TIC

PROVIDE SAFE
AND SECURE
RELATIONSHIPS

HELP YOUTH
DEVELOP A
POSITIVE AND
COHESIVE IDENTITY

BEAR WITNESS
TO THEIR HARMS
AND HELP YOUTH
HEAL



SENSITIVE AND
ATTUNED
CAREGIVING CAN
ALTER ATTACHMENT
STATUS

INSTILL HOPE

MODEL AND
TRANSMIT CRITICAL
SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Put Another Way:

"We could get a child to eat beans by achieving a cognitive insight about their protein value, or by rewarding their consumption and punishing them when they are left on the plate, or by putting them through bean-eating many hundred times; but the best and easiest way comes about when the child likes us, wants to copy us, and sees us eat beans."

EQ2 Foundational Belief

Self-Regulation
Precedes Co-
Regulation



7 Key Principles of Self-Regulation

1. the foundation for lifelong functioning.
2. the act of managing cognition and behavior.
3. influenced by individual and **external factors**.
4. **can be strengthened and taught like literacy.**
5. **dependent on co-regulation provided by caregivers.**
6. **develops over an extended period from birth through adulthood.**
7. disrupted by prolonged or pronounced stress and adversity including **poverty and trauma**.

Our Trauma Histories Can Hurt Our Self-Regulation

- 40% stated their own histories of adversity led them to the field (Lee et al. 2017)
- History of childhood maltreatment found to be a significant predictor of **work-related secondary traumatic stress**. (Nelson-Gardell & Harris 2003)
- Our own trauma and relationship histories can influence how we manage highly emotionally charged situations... **Survival Brain**.

A System-Wide Self-Regulation Framework

- Agencies **explicitly teach** and encourage self-regulation
- Supervisors **model** mindful responses to stressful events
- **Provide praise** when staff manage challenges in a self-regulated manner (Ford and Blaustein, 2013)
- The establishment of workforce descriptions making it **clear that staff's role** is to model self-regulating behaviors (Sichel, 2019)



What is Co-Regulation?

- An “exchange of calm” that occurs between two (or more) people (or living beings)
 - *“Co-regulation is dyadic, dynamic, and holistic.”* - Bornstein and Esposito, 2023
- Co-regulation for youth means helping them learn how to regulate their own emotions by showing empathy and modeling calmness.
- Co-regulation does not mean we don’t have emotions! It means actively managing our own emotions to help youth learn to manage theirs.
 - *“I stop and breathe and youth see me doing that, then they start doing it.”*

Co-Regulation Happens When One Nervous System Balances Another



When Our Cup is Too Full, Our Ability to Co-Regulate is Diminished



stress with a supervisor

understaffed agency

stress at home

financial concerns/2 jobs

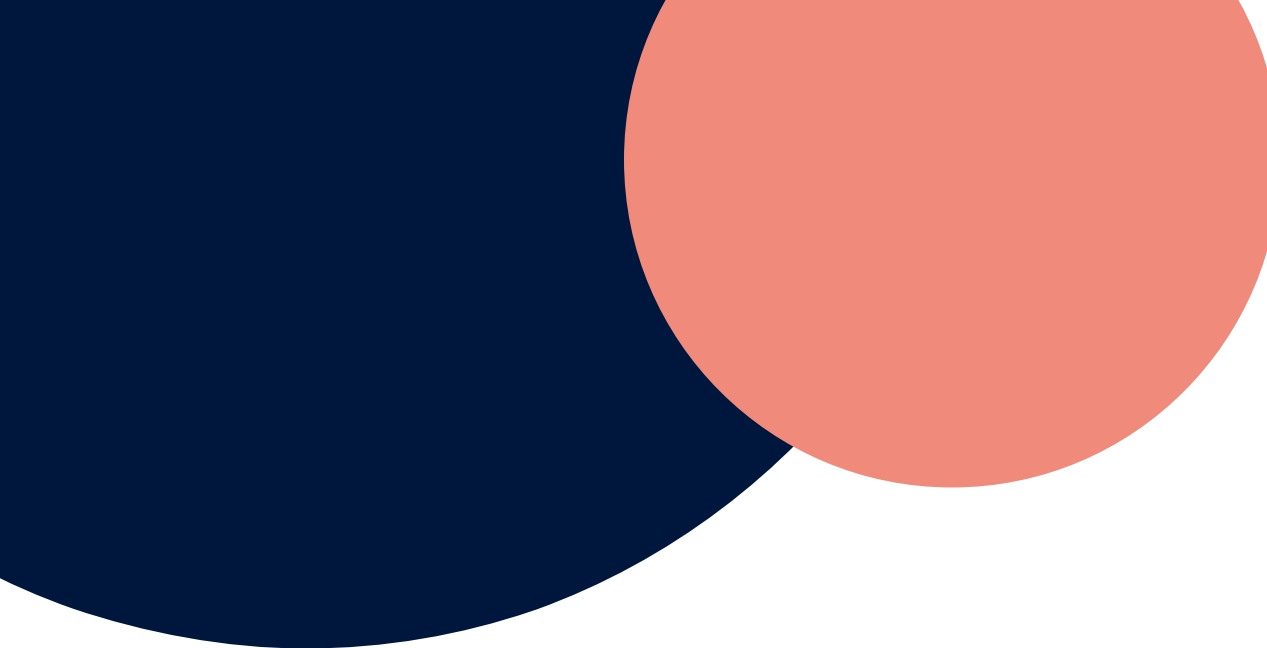
health issues

conflict with co-worker

sick child or family member

own personal trauma

secondary traumatic stress



Self-Regulation Precedes Co-Regulation

- **“When the teen started to become very riled, I was able to stay calmer and help her work through the problem.”**
- **“I was dealing with a child and I was able to stop and breathe and not stress myself. This helped me be able to help the child.”**



EQ2 Content

Section 1 – Becoming an Emotion Coach

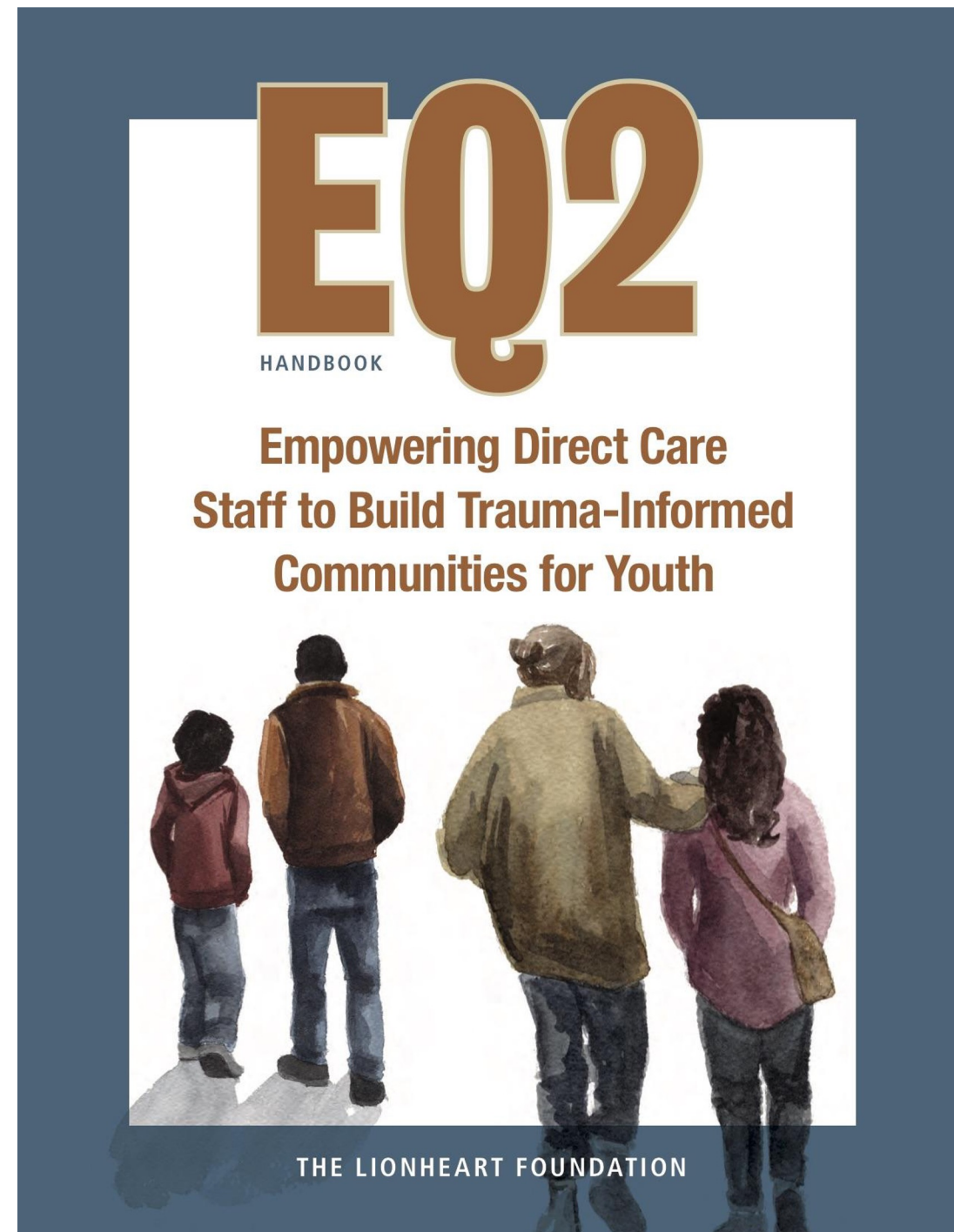
Section 2 – Understanding Trauma

Section 3 – Building EQ2 Relationships

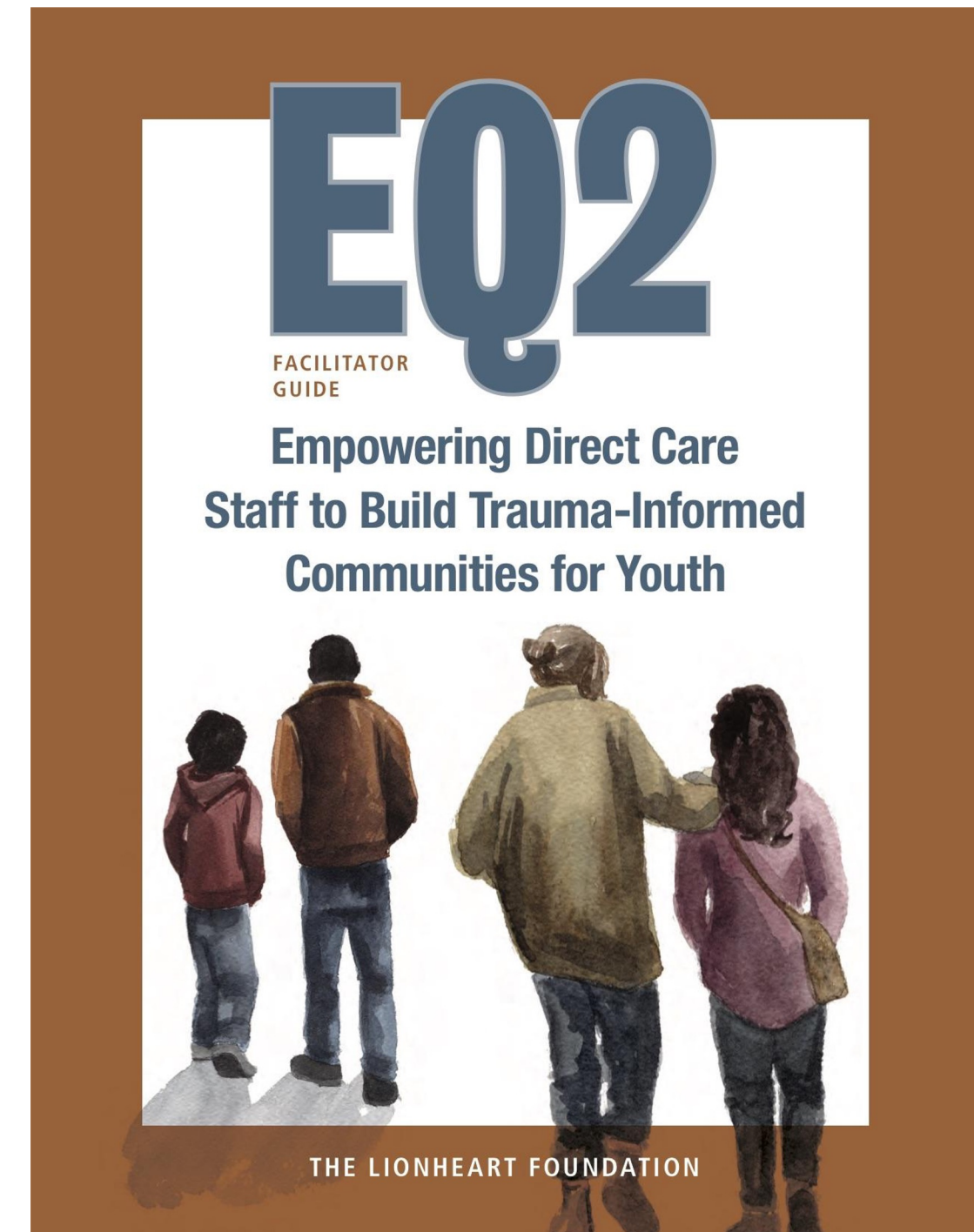
Section 4 – Where We Come From

Section 5 – Preventing Crisis

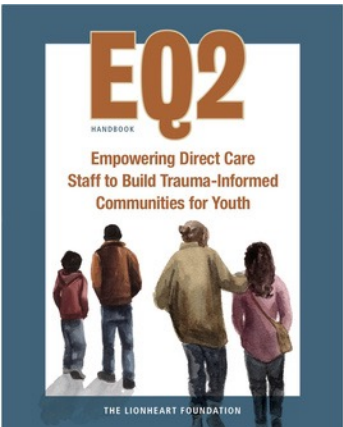
Section 6 – Repairing Relationships



EQ2 Handbook for
Direct Care Staff



EQ2 Facilitator Guide
for Facilitators



Practicing Stop, Breathe, and Choose...



...A Cool Thought And A Good Move

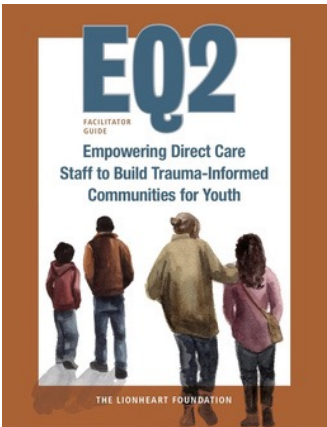
A youth behavior that can trigger me is:

Write 2 Cool Thoughts and 2 Good Moves that could help you deal more effectively with this trigger.

Cool Thoughts	Good Moves
1.	1.
2.	2.

IN A CIRCLE, SHARE:

- Your Cool Thoughts to help deal with challenging behavior.
- The Good Moves you wrote down.
- Any situation in the last week where using Stop, Breathe, and Choose would have been helpful.



Practicing Stop, Breathe, and Choose...



...A Cool Thought And A Good Move

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- Any situation in the last week where using Stop, Breathe, and Choose would have been helpful.

Point out that an important part of being an Emotion Coach is modeling for youth how to deal with stress, anger, and frustration in safe and healthy ways. Youth will more likely use Stop, Breathe, and Choose if they see us using it.

It's not unusual for participants to initially confuse thoughts (Cool Thoughts) and actions (Good Moves). If this happens, say something like, "That's a great Cool Thought... something you can tell yourself to help lower your stress or de-escalate. Now what's a Good Move... something you can DO to stay calm?"

If you are running low on time, ask for one or two volunteers to share their answers.

EQ2 Online Facilitator Training



The EQ2 Facilitator Training

The EQ2 Online Facilitator Training is a 6-Module online course that supports facilitators in the implementation of the EQ2 program with direct care staff, providing the necessary training and resources to lead effective and high-impact groups.



EQ2 Resources

This area of the Facilitator Training is set up as an easy to find repository for all the resources made available to you as a part of your EQ2 program, including: the PDF's from the EQ2 Facilitator Training Program for download or print; all of the recorded meditations from the [EQ2 App](#); and all of the videos from the EQ2 App.



Becoming an Effective EQ2 Supervisor

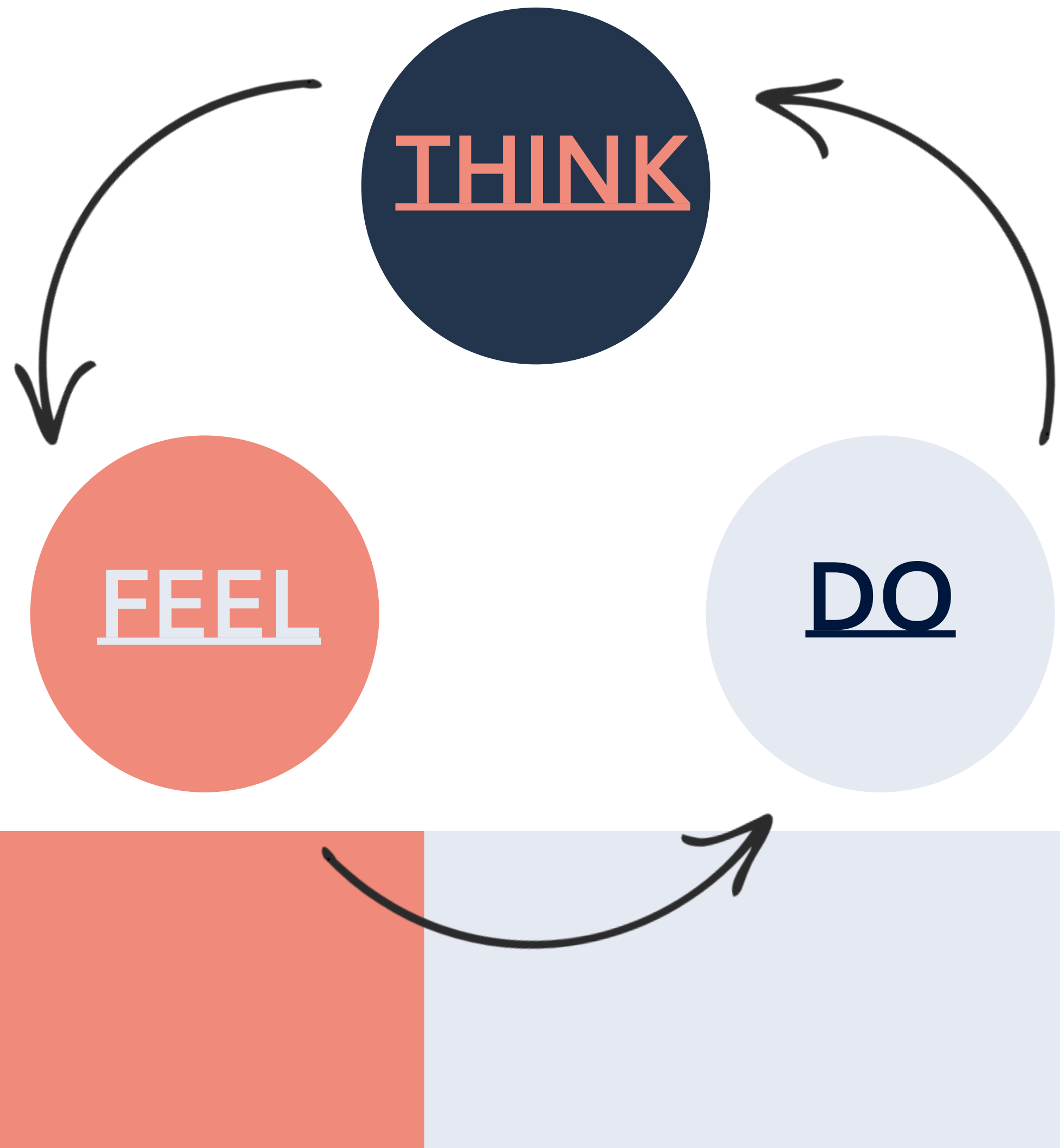
In this portion of the EQ2 Training, we offer you tools, tips, and tricks to become the best supervisor you can be. Using what we call the Three E's of Effective Supervision, Embody, Equip, and Engage, we'll provide a simple road map to take your supervisor game to the next level!

What Makes EQ2 Work?



1. **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** approaches to help staff reframe challenging situations and respond in more therapeutic, trauma-responsive ways.
2. **Mindfulness Practices** to increase staff self-awareness, self-regulation, and resilience.
3. **Circles** to support staff and reduce Secondary Traumatic Stress, burnout, and turnover.

What Makes EQ2 Work #1: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



Stop, Breathe, and Choose

- One Simple, Repeated, Self-Regulation Strategy for staff to learn in “cool moments” so that they can use them in “hot moments.”
- Otherwise, we default to what has kept us safe and alive in the past.
- And those reactions are NOT always trauma-informed.



Stop, Breathe, and Choose

Stop: the moment you notice you've been triggered...Pause. (Inhibit a default response.)

Breathe: take three deep breaths, putting all of your attention on your breath.

Choose: a Cool Thought and a Good Move

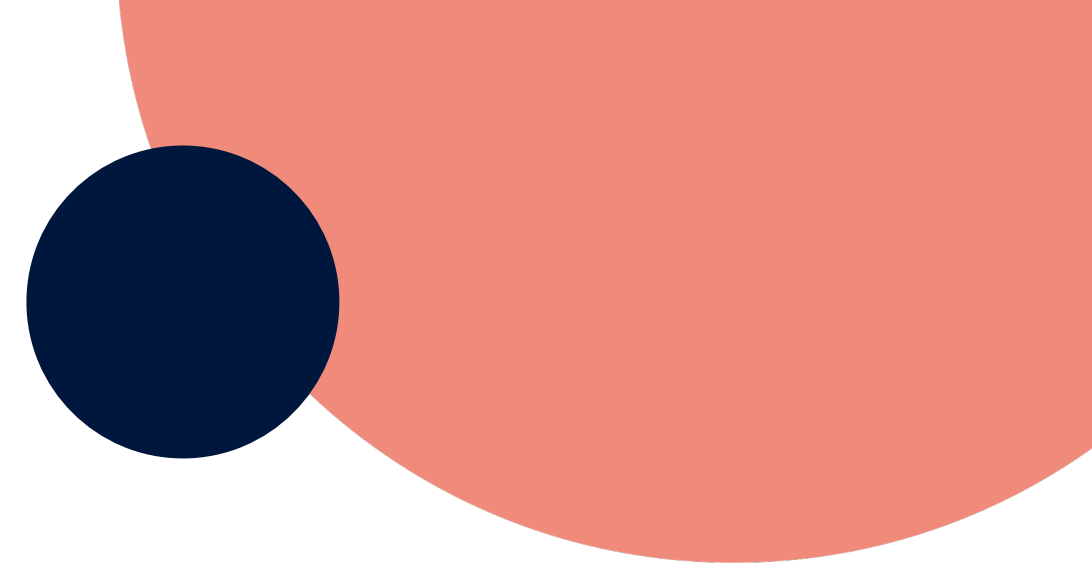
Cool Thoughts: What we say to ourselves. Helps us reframe, gain perspective, feel better.

Good Moves: What we do. Actions we take to deal with the situation in a good way.



Cool Thoughts

- It's not personal. This isn't about me.
- This behavior may have kept them safe or alive in the past.
- It's my job to be the adult.
- Healing takes time. This is a process.
- I can handle this.
- Feel the feelings drop the story.
- Days are like waves. They all pass. Ride it out.



More Good Moves



- Tap Out. If you're really triggered and it's not safe to leave the youth alone, as a co-worker to step in.
- Intentionally ignore behavior that's meant to taunt you or bait you (not the PERSON).
- Fix Your Face. Emotions are contagious.
- Act as if you see the Core Self. (Or really See it).
- Picture them as a baby or a toddler.

Cute Faces Courtesy of: The Home for Little Wanderers (MA)



Using Stop, Breathe, and Choose in Practice

Practicing Stop, Breathe, and Choose...



...A Cool Thought And A Good Move

A youth behavior that can trigger me is:

Write 2 Cool Thoughts and 2 Good Moves that could help you deal more effectively with this trigger.

Cool Thoughts	Good Moves
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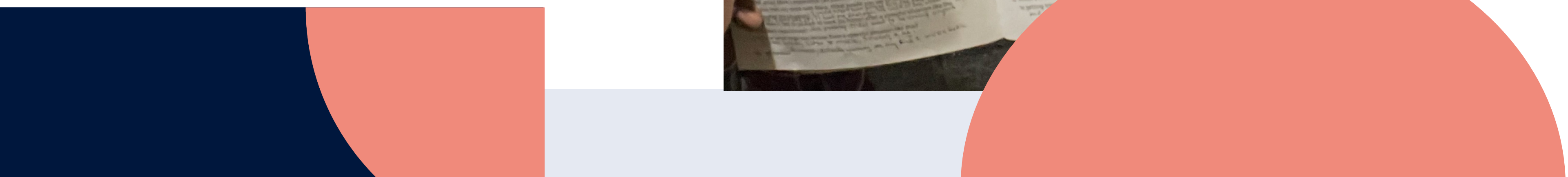
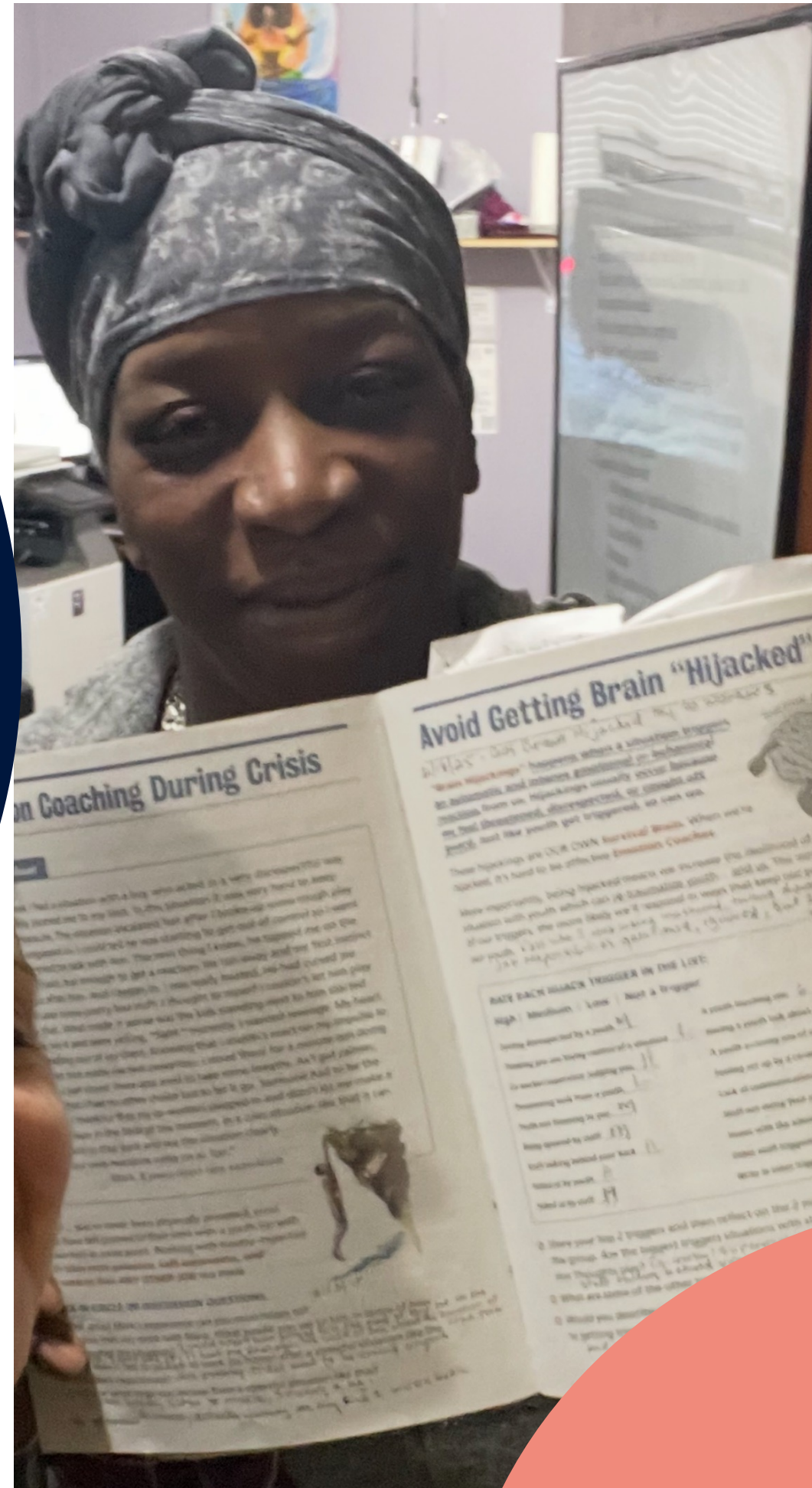
- Your Cool Thoughts to help deal with challenging behavior.
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- Any situation in the last week where using Stop, Breathe, and Choose would have been helpful.

Staff Stress Isn't Just with Youth!

"The other day a co-worker triggered me and instead of reacting like I used to, I took a deep breath and said, "I am getting hijacked. Let me take a second." So I did my breathing and calmed down and we talked it out. I didn't have those skills before and now I use them everywhere. And not just at work. With my own family and children too."

Staff Stress Isn't Just with Youth!

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The What Went Down Between US Worksheet



STRESSFUL EVENT WITH A CO-WORKER : Describe the situation, including what led up to it.

What Feelings Got Triggered? (Circle Answers)

angry annoyed amped up anxious ashamed bored burdened calm
cheated confused concerned defeated depressed disrespected distrubed
edgy empty entitled excited fed up frightened frustrated freaked out
guilty happy helpless hopeful hurt ineffective ignored insulted
intimidated isolated judged lonely mad miserable nervous overwhelmed
pained paralyzed perturbed proud rejected relieved stressed tense
remorseful sad scared spiteful stupid unheard worried other:

What Body Sensations Did You Experience? (Circle Answers)

shallow or fast breathing ringing in your ears clenched jaw sweating
pounding heart dry mouth tightness in chest or neck headache adrenaline rush
knot in your stomach hot face lightheaded or dizzy tight muscles

What Hot Thoughts or Toxic Thoughts did you have about this person or situation that may have increased your stress?

How did you react?

On a scale of 1 (not great) to 10 (awesome) how happy are you with the way you responded? ____

Looking back, what do you think the other person was thinking and feeling in this situation?

What information would you like the other person(s) to know about how this situation is affecting you?

What would you like to see happen to make this situation workable for you?

What's a Cool Thought that might help you reframe the situation?

What Good Moves are you committed to using with this person going forward to handle a similar conflict in a good way?

If any harm was caused, even unintentionally, what needs to be done to repair it?

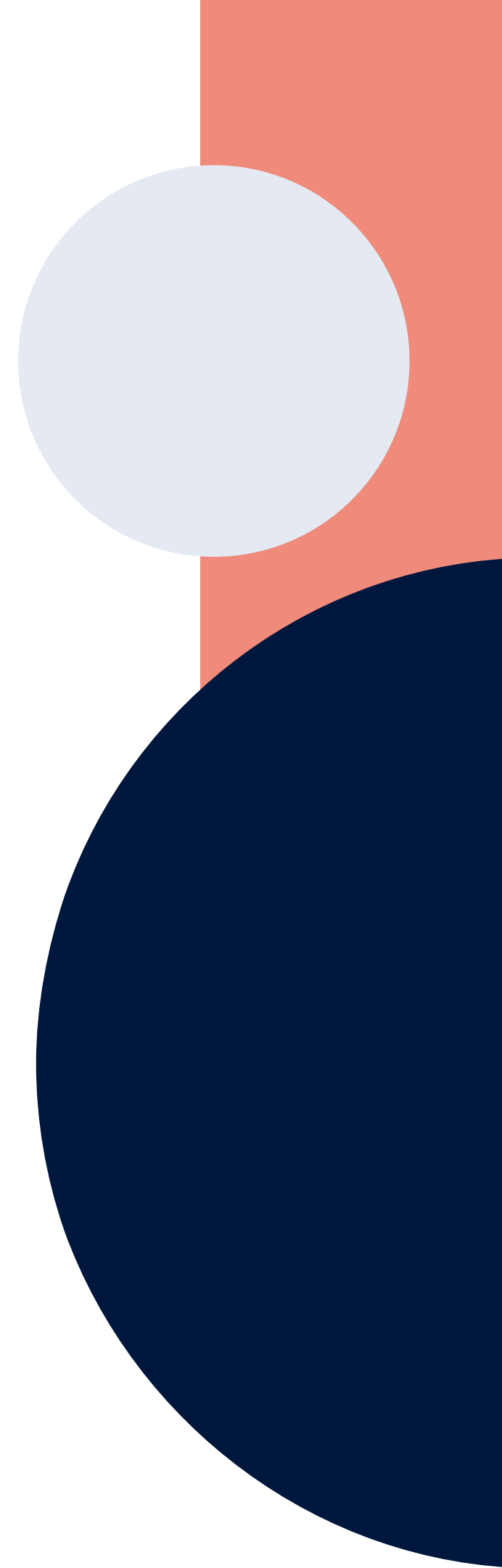
What could your agency or supervisor do to support you with this situation?

What Makes EQ2 Work #2: Mindfulness Meditation

...paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Mindfulness Meditation

- Helps with depression, PTSD, anxiety, stress, and changes the structure of the brain.
- Lengthens our fuse. More time between trigger to response. (Reduces Hijacking)
- Strengthens ability to CHOOSE where our attention goes.
- Promotes **Self-Awareness**. We start to observe our emotions and thoughts instead of just reacting.



Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation Depend on Self- Awareness

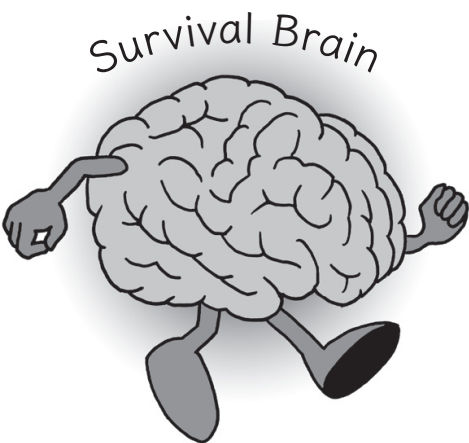
Of Triggers

Avoid Getting Brain “Hijacked”

“Brain Hijackings” happens when a situation triggers an automatic and intense emotional or behavioral reaction from us. Hijackings usually occur because we feel threatened, disrespected, or caught off guard. Just like youth get triggered, so can we.

These hijackings are OUR OWN **Survival Brain**. When we’re hijacked, it’s hard to be effective **Emotion Coaches**.

More importantly, being hijacked means we increase the likelihood of triggering a crisis situation with youth which can re-traumatize youth... and us. The more aware we are of our triggers, the more likely we’ll respond in ways that keep our power and protect our youth.



RATE EACH HIJACK TRIGGER IN THE LIST:

High | Medium | Low | Not a Trigger

- | | |
|--|--|
| Feeling disrespected by a youth_____ | A youth touching you_____ |
| Thinking you are losing control of a situation _____ | Having a youth talk about you to another staff_____ |
| Co-worker/supervisor judging you_____ | A youth accusing you of something you didn’t do_____ |
| Threatening look from a youth_____ | Feeling set up by a co-worker_____ |
| Youth not listening to you _____ | Lack of communication between staff_____ |
| Being ignored by staff _____ | Staff not doing their job_____ |
| Staff talking behind your back_____ | Issues with the administration_____ |
| Yelled at by youth_____ | Other staff triggering youth_____ |
| Yelled at by staff _____ | Write in other triggers_____ |

Emotions Aren't All in Your Head

Brain hijackings can happen fast. But often we get body signals RIGHT BEFORE THE HIJACKING.

Go through the list below and check off warning signs alerting you that you're on the edge of getting triggered.

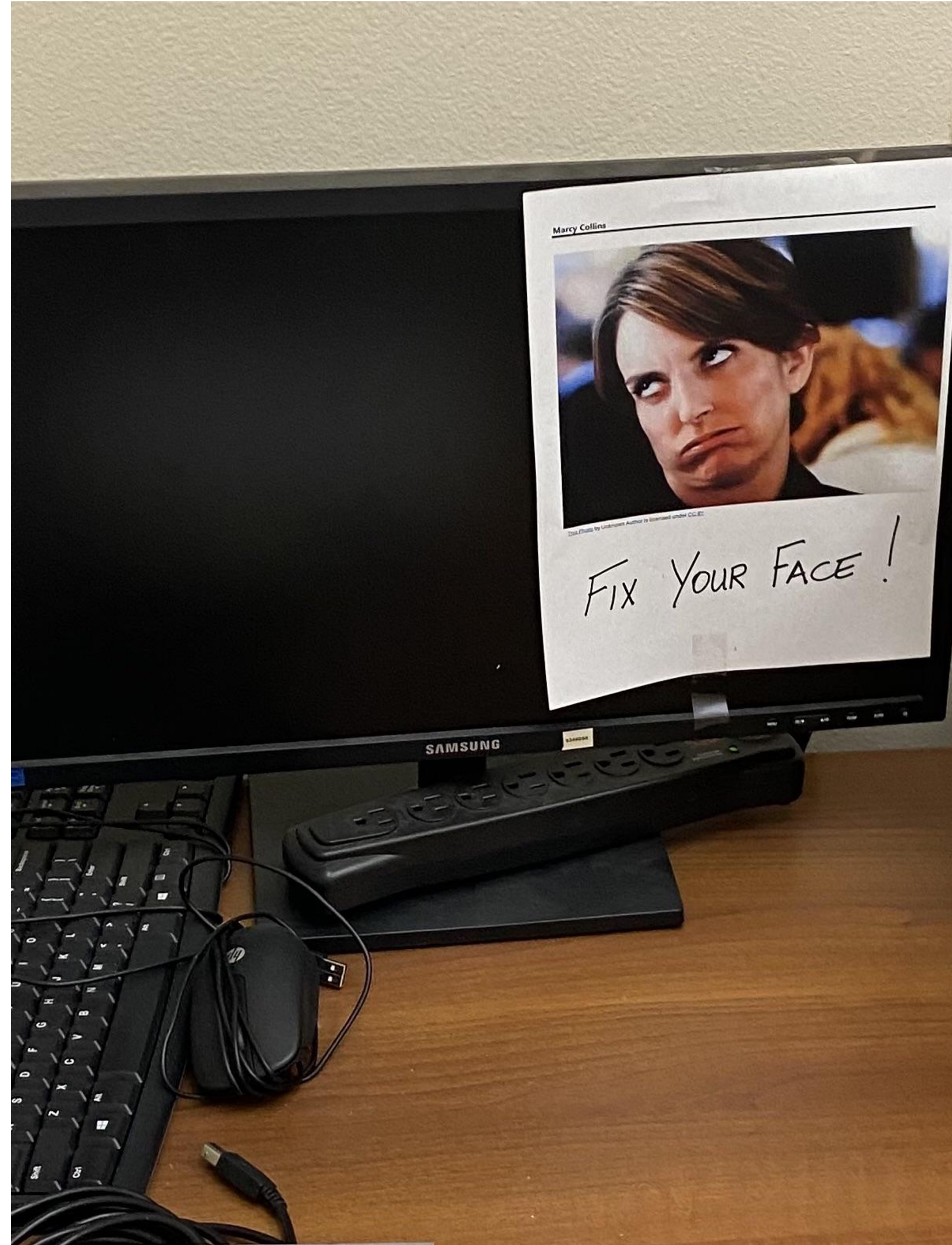
Awareness Of Body Signs

MY HIJACKING BODY SIGNS ARE...

- ☐ Increased heart rate
- ☐ Narrowed or "tunnel vision"
- ☐ Increased adrenaline
- ☐ Rapid breathing
- ☐ Tightness in chest
- ☐ Tensed muscles
- ☐ Mind goes blank
- ☐ Racing thoughts
- ☐ Eyes water (start to cry)
- ☐ Eye twitch
- ☐ Stomachache
- ☐ Clenched fists
- ☐ Roaring sound in ears
- ☐ Tense neck and jaw
- ☐ Feel hot
- ☐ Start to sweat
- ☐ Acid taste in mouth
- ☐ Other _____



Awareness of Affect



Building the GAP Keeps Our Power

In an emotionally charged situation... *slow down* and make the **GAP** bigger.

Meditation
Makes the
Gap Bigger

Our
Triggers



Our
Response

The Gap

Wise choices
are in The Gap

What Makes EQ2 Work #3: Circles

"The Circle is a highly structured intentional space designed to promote connection, understanding, and dialogue in a group."

(Carolyn Boyes-Watson, Ph.D.)



EQ2 Foundational Belief

Embodiment of these skills, practices, and mindsets, requires explicit instruction, practice, and community support.

Shift from
Self Care to
We Care



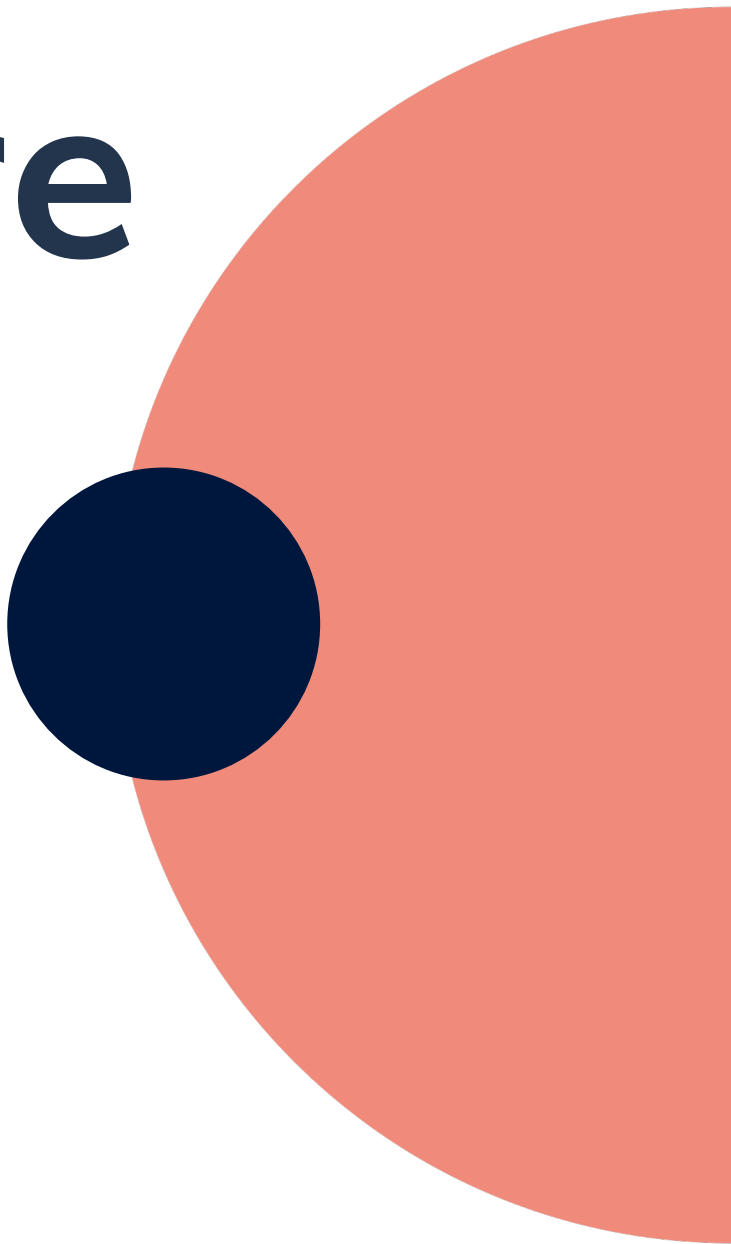
Ignoring Staff Trauma Won't Make It Go Away

Youth will “benefit by increased support to counter ACEs among their providers, including development of restorative organizational cultures.”

(Esaki & Larkin, p. 35)



How Circles Change Culture



Help people feel heard, seen, and validated

- Staff member to staff member
- Between staff members and leadership/administrators
- "Do staff really experience this?"

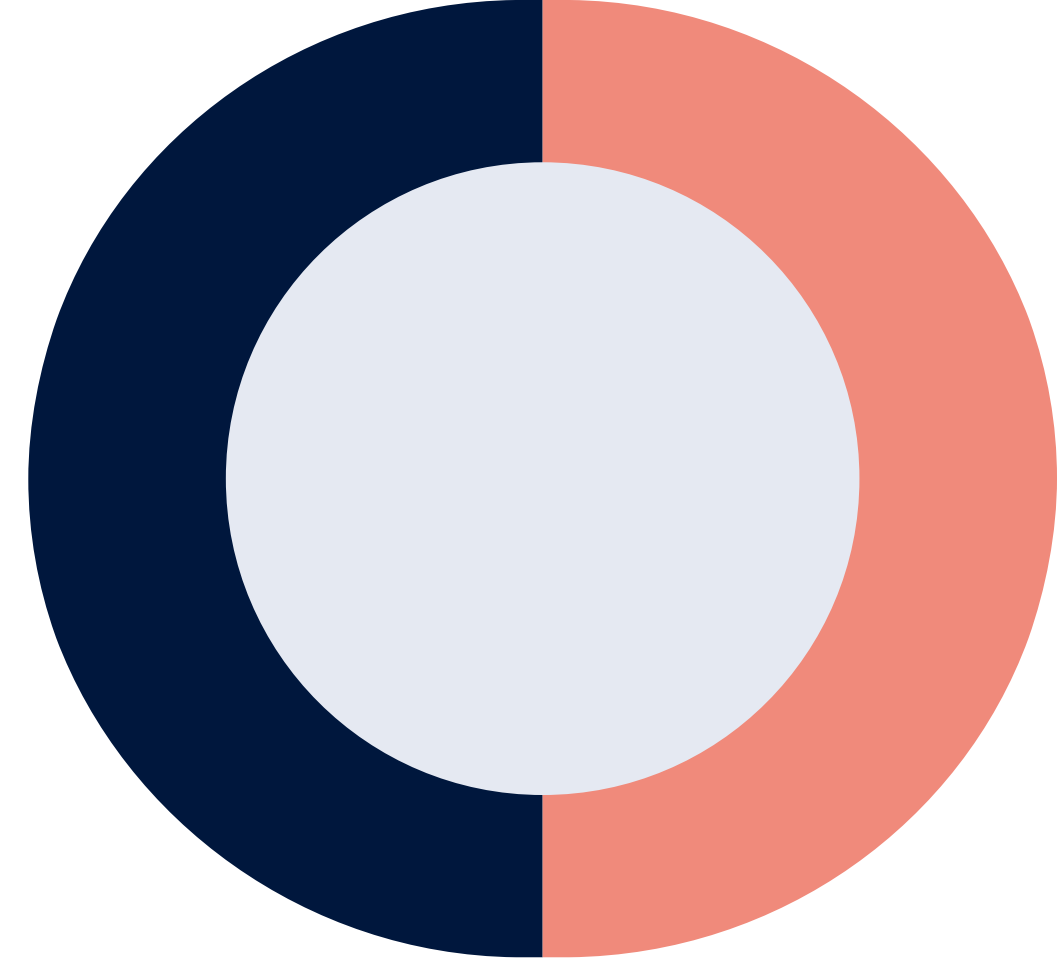
Increases perceptions of psychological safety

- Staff turnover intentions tied to perceptions of physical and psychological safety.
- "I thought I was the only one who felt like this, but now I see I'm not alone."

Transmission of Knowledge and Skills

- "I don't accept apologies from youth because they don't mean it."

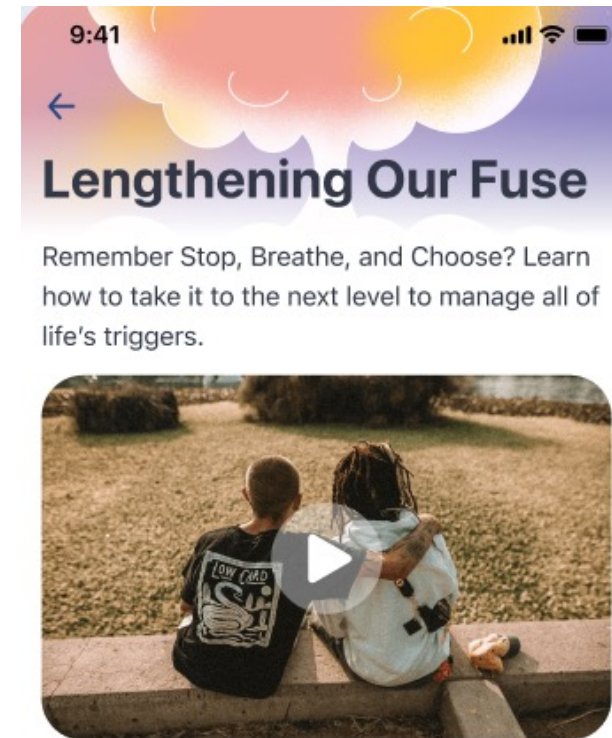
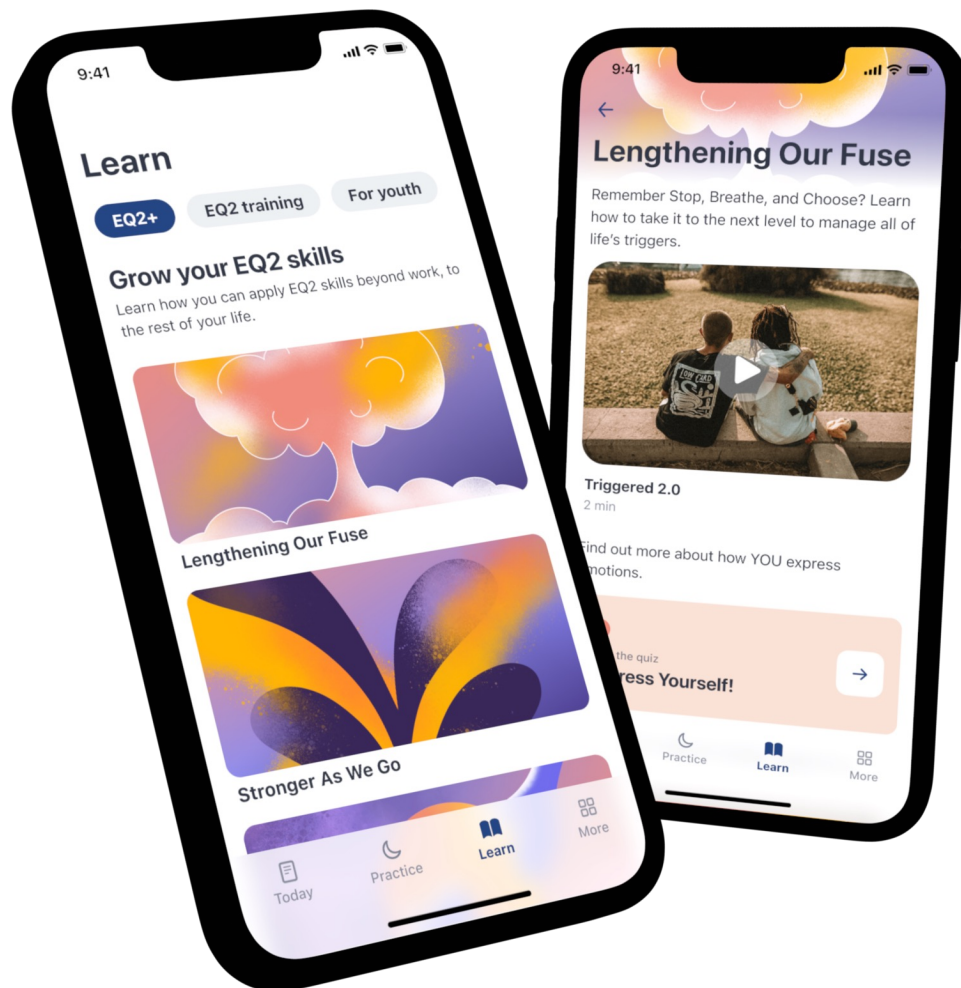
Creating Communities of Support through Circles



On the next page you'll be asked to rate yourself on some specific EQ skills that you need to be an effective Emotion Coach. Be as honest as you can. When you are finished, go around in a Circle and share:

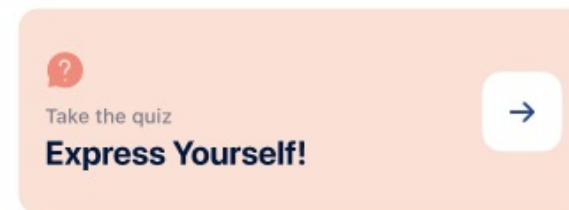
1. One Emotion Coaching skill that is **already a strength** for me: _____
2. One Emotion Coaching skill I would like to **improve**: _____
3. One Emotion Coaching skill that is a **strength** for the person on my right:

EQ2+

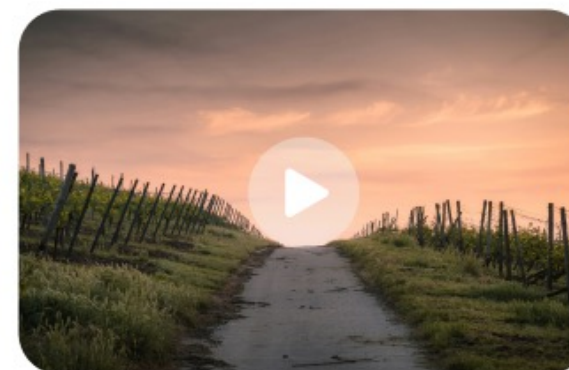


Triggered 2.0
2 min

Find out more about how YOU express emotions.



A practice to help you handle triggers in a good way.



Dragging Out The Pause
Visualization • 6 min

Don't Keep it to Yourself

(Watch the "What's Strong with You?" video on your EQ2 App, before you start!)

In the "What's Strong with You?" video, we ask you to reflect on your **personal strengths**. Reminding ourselves of these qualities like **patience**, **a sense of humor**, or **a call to service** can help us feel more resilient and less burned out.

What's *better* than calling ourselves out on our strengths?... Hearing them from other people.

Share the Wealth

For this exercise, write your name in the space provided. Then, pass the paper to the person on your right. On the sheet of each person, write **ONE STRENGTH THEY POSSESS**. Keep passing the papers until you have written a strength on the sheet of every person in the room. (If you run out of lines, just write on the back.)

Your Name _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Share in Circle or discussion:

- After each of the sheets is returned, in a Circle, read the strengths your co-workers wrote about you out loud. Did anything surprise you? How do these strengths match (or not match) with what you think of as your strengths?
- Choose one or two strengths on your sheet and share how you might use those individual strengths to make your team stronger as a whole?





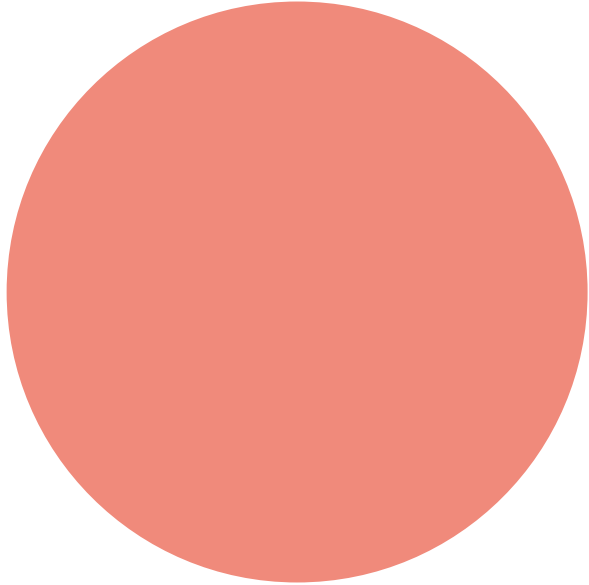
EQ2 Impact

- Buckeye Ranch in OH – 3rd lowest restraint year in the past 23 years, increase in EAP usage.
- ACH in Texas– increase in staff self-regulation skills, perceptions of support from agency, lower use of “on call”
- The Home for Little Wanderers in MA –
 - *“It’s like having a therapist and a supervisor in your pocket.”*
 - *“It’s a proactive approach to staff development.”*
- *“I wanted to quit before the EQ2 group.”* – Lad Lake in WI



Self-Regulation's Impact on Culture

- "Caused me to stop and think before I react."
- "Now I used the skills like Stop, Breathe, and Choose when I'm triggered."
- "This program helped me have more patience when I'm working with youth."
- "EQ2 helped me think Cool Thoughts. It helped me stay calm."
- "I use these skills at home with my own kids now."



Try the EQ2 App!



- 01 Scan QR Code or search for "EQ2: Staff Support"
- 02 Download and click "Get Started"
- 03 When prompted for Agency Code, enter: **RC2025**