

Restorative Approach® Basic Training

PARTICIPANT PACKET

2026 Revision



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www.traumaticstressinstitute.org

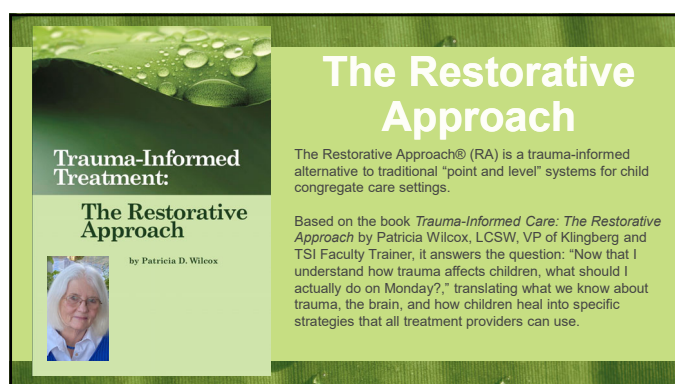
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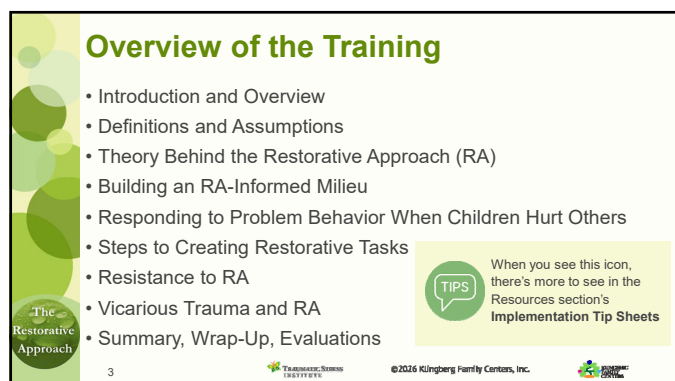
Patricia D. Wilcox, LCSW (2012). *Trauma-Informed Treatment: The Restorative Approach*.
Off the Common Books Amherst MA

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Exercise: My Teenager

Write down the name of a teenager you know in your personal life....

...maybe your child, yourself as a teen, a friend...



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RESTORATIVE
APPROACH

Definitions and Assumptions

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RESTORATIVE
APPROACH

What is the Restorative Approach?

- A blueprint to operationalize trauma-informed care in group care settings – what to actually do
- A method to increase the healing power of the daily moments in programs
- A system for responding when children hurt others (not minor behaviors)
- An alternative to traditional behavior modification systems such as “points and levels”

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RESTORATIVE
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Assumptions

Not Trauma-Informed vs. RA-Informed Milieu

Not Trauma-Informed
Consequences are essential to changing behavior



RA-Informed
Consequences may increase motivation. Healing relationships change behavior



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Assumptions

Not Trauma-Informed vs. RA-Informed Milieu

Not Trauma-Informed
Saying that negative behavior is adaptive excuses the behavior



RA-Informed
Understanding that negative behavior is adaptive helps us figure out ways to change it



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Assumptions

Not Trauma-Informed vs. RA-Informed Milieu

Not Trauma-Informed
Things children want must be earned through good behavior



RA-Informed
Provide good things (activities, connections) as part of life, not just when the child is "good"



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Assumptions

Not Trauma-Informed vs. RA-Informed Milieu

Not Trauma-Informed

Children's behavior is influenced only by their personal experiences

RA-Informed

Children are also influenced by their experiences of racism and oppression

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RESTORATIVE APPROACH





Assumptions

Not Trauma-Informed vs. RA-Informed Milieu

Not Trauma-Informed

If children feel shame about bad behavior, it will motivate them to change

RA-Informed

Children already feel toxic shame. Shame does not change behavior; it makes it worse

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RESTORATIVE APPROACH

Exercise: Dahlia and the Milk

It's a school day and Dahlia is sluggish and half awake. She scatters cereal all over the kitchen counter and leaves the milk out when she goes over to the table to eat. Mary, the morning staff, comes into the kitchen and sees the mess on the counter she just cleaned.

- From a traditional model, what is Mary thinking and what does she say?
- From a trauma (RA)-informed model, what is Mary thinking and what does she say?

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RESTORATIVE APPROACH

The Theory Behind the Restorative Approach

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Principles of Restorative Justice

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The Restorative Approach in Action

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Safety Above All Else

Safety is a prerequisite for play, learning and growth.

Baby Rats Experiment






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BREAK



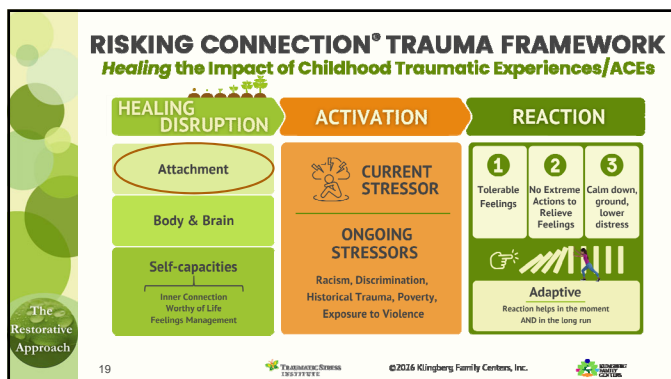

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Healing Attachments




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Healing Relationships

Moment-to-moment healthy interactions with children:

- Change child's expectations about relationships
- Help rewire the brain
- Create connections that clients can internalize over time and use to calm themselves
- Reduce shame and make clients feel worthy of life
- Teach clients feelings management skills

TIPS More ideas in: **Ten Tips for Building Relationships**

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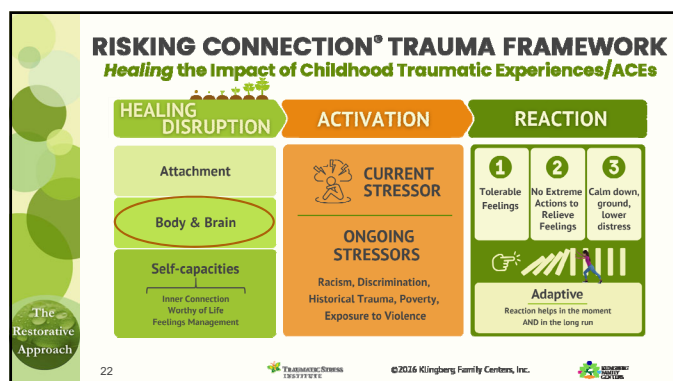
Regulating Brain and Body

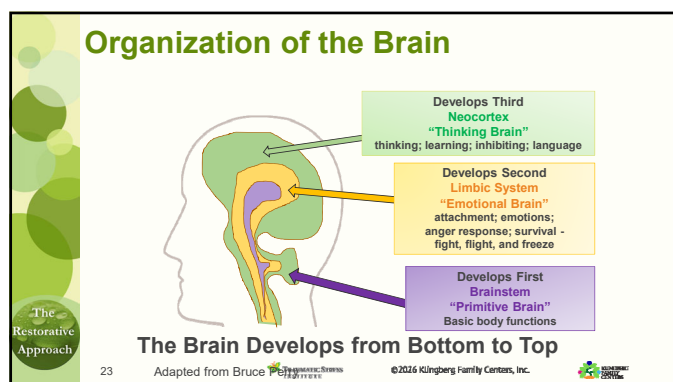
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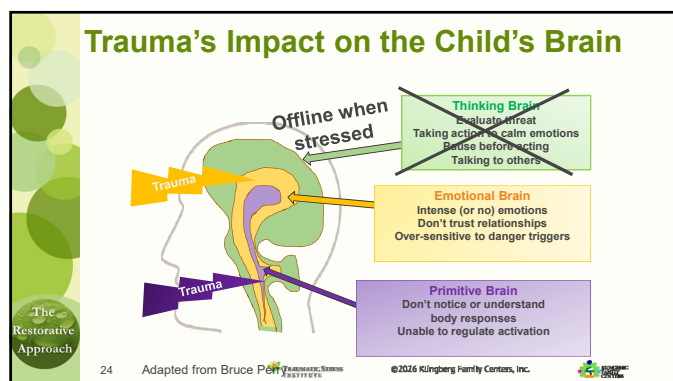
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Trauma's Impact on the Child's Brain: Behavioral Implications

Thinking Brain

- Can't think, problem solve, plan – especially in crisis
- Less access to language

Emotional Brain

- Intolerable feelings take over
- Don't trust relationships
- Misread social cues and threat

Primitive Brain

- Body highly reactive to threat
- Can't inhibit primitive responses

Adapted from Bruce Perry

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Trauma's Impact on Child's Brain: What to Do

REASON
Thinking Brain

- Place less emphasis on thinking, problem-solving, language tasks.

RELATE
Emotional Brain

- RICH relationships
- Calm emotions first
- Build self-capacity skills

REGULATE
Primitive Brain

- Activities that are rhythmic, rewarding, and in relationship
- Empathy, warmth, calm

Adapted from Bruce Perry

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Brain Plasticity

Thinking Brain

Most Plastic
Easiest to Change

Emotional Brain

Primitive Brain

Least Plastic
Hardest to Change

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Strengthening Self-Capacities and Executive Functioning

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RISKING CONNECTION® TRAUMA FRAMEWORK

Healing the Impact of Childhood Traumatic Experiences/ACEs

HEALING DISRUPTION	ACTIVATION	REACTION
Attachment	CURRENT STRESSOR ONGOING STRESSORS Racism, Discrimination, Historical Trauma, Poverty, Exposure to Violence	1 Tolerable Feelings
Body & Brain		2 No Extreme Actions to Relieve Feelings
Self-capacities Inner Connection Worthy of Life Feelings Management		3 Calm down, ground, lower distress Adaptive Reaction helps in the moment AND in the long run

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Skill Building

Self-Capacities

- Inner Connection Skills:**
 - Learn to use transitional objects
 - Practice tolerating separation
 - Challenge beliefs about relationships
 - Acknowledging impact of racism
- Worthy of Life Skills:**
 - Appropriate expressions of shame (drawing, story telling, acting)
 - Experiences of success
 - Take on leadership roles
 - Acknowledge and resist societal devaluing
- Feelings Management Skills:**
 - Learn body awareness of feelings
 - Name feelings to regulate feelings
 - Validate reactions to oppression, learn to channel anger

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Executive Functioning

Executive function includes a number of skills, such as:

- Paying attention.
- Organizing, planning and prioritizing.
- Inhibiting impulses.
- Starting tasks and staying focused on them to completion.
- Regulating emotions.
- Self-monitoring (keeping track of what you're doing and understanding yourself).

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Exercise: Executive Functioning

Punitive Consequences and the Thinking Brain

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Building a Restorative Approach Informed Milieu

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When Children Feel Better, They Act Better

- The Restorative Approach assumes that **when children feel better (as a result of kind interactions), they act better.**
- Traditional milieus assume that **when children feel worse (as a result of blame and punishment), they will act better.**

Creating Safety in the Milieu

“Steel Box with Velvet Lining”

- Firm structure
- Kind and compassionate relationships

More ideas in: **Twelve Tips for Creating Structure and Activities**

Daniel Hughes, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist

Exercise: Creating Safety in the Milieu

How can a program implement a STEEL BOX (firm program structure)?

How can a program implement a VELVET LINING (kind and compassionate relationships)?



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Using the Milieu to Rebuild Brains

Rhythmic Activities

- Targets lower brain
- Mirrors early caretaking of babies
- Mirrors healing rituals
- 3 R's
 - Rhythmic
 - Rewarding
 - In Relationship



TIPS More Ideas in: "Adding Rhythmic Activities to the Milieu"



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Exercise: Using the Milieu to Rebuild Brains

Create an activity using rhythm

Each group will get ONE of the following modalities

• Rap song	• Stretching
• Dance	• Mindfulness exercise
• Drumming	• Yoga pose
• Marching	• Patty cake



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Responding to Problem Behaviors: When Children Hurt Others



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How Does Change Happen?

Think of a time in your life in which you successfully made a change.

Examples: you lost weight, stopped smoking, started exercising, did something else in a new way

- What made it hard?
- What made it possible?

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How Does Change Happen?

Joquim Plays Basketball

A bunch of the guys from the program were playing a pick-up game of basketball. Marvin was mercilessly taunting Joquim about his poor basketball skills, making fun of him every time he missed a shot.

Finally, Joquim had had enough and he turned and punched Marvin. Now Joquim is in trouble, restricted, and about to miss a trip to the movies that he was looking forward to.

- Have you ever been taunted or teased?
- What did you do?
- What does Joquim need to be more like you?

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LUNCH

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Creating a Working Theory for Each Client

A Working Theory Answers these Questions:

1. What has happened to them?
2. What have they learned about other people?
3. What biological changes have they experienced?
4. What skills have they learned to survive?
5. How do those skills help them now?
6. How do those skills now have negative consequences?
7. What skills do they need to learn?
8. How has racism, oppression or othering influenced their behavior?

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Exercise: Creating a Working Theory

Alexandra and Jeffrey




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Creating Restorative Tasks

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What is a Restorative Task?

There are 2 kinds of restorative tasks:

1. Restorative Tasks for Skill Building
2. Restorative Tasks to Make Amends

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Steps to Creating Restorative Tasks

- Manage the negative behavior until all (child and staff) are regulated.
- Return to your Working Theory about the client.
- Create your Restorative Task for Skill Building.
- Create your Restorative Task to Make Amends.

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Manage the Negative Behavior Until All Are Regulated

1. Remember: symptoms are adaptations
2. Stay **RICH**®
3. Stay calm yourself
4. Focus only on calming and grounding (not consequences)

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TIPS More ideas in: **Eighteen Hints for Managing a Crisis**

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Steps to Creating Restorative Tasks

-  Manage the negative behavior until all (child and staff) are regulated.
-  Return to your Working Theory about the client.
-  Create your Restorative Task for Skill Building.
-  Create your Restorative Task to Make Amends.



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Apply your working theory to this event

Use your Working Theory to answer these questions:

1. How does the child's behavior relate to the skills they have learned in the past?
2. What are the child's beliefs and expectations about relationships?
3. How is the negative behavior adaptive? What need does it meet?
4. How might the child meet that need with fewer negative consequences?
5. What deficits in self-capacity skills does the child have now that contribute to the problem behavior?
6. What might be the next small step in self-capacity skills that the child would need to learn in order to act differently?



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Exercise: Return to Your Working Theory

Alexandra and Jeffrey




Steps to Creating Restorative Tasks



Manage the negative behavior until all (child and staff) are regulated.



Return to your Working Theory about the client.



Create your Restorative Task for Skill Building.



Create your Restorative Task to Make Amends.



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A NOTE about All Restorative Tasks

Restorative Tasks Are NOT

- Boring, tedious, and aversive (i.e. a punishment in disguise)
- A task beyond the child's current capability
- Something a staff person creates while still angry about the negative behavior
- A task that does not teach or strengthen skill the child's needs



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Restorative Tasks for Skill Building

WHY?

So that children shift beliefs and learn skills to meet their needs without hurting others.

HOW TO CREATE?

By answering a series of questions



More ideas in: **Creating a Restorative Task to Build Skills**



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Restorative Tasks for Skill Building (cont.)

WHAT?

Anything that contributes to child's understanding of:

- what triggered the event
- what happened inside themselves
- another way to respond to upsetting events
- a pattern of behavior
- how others respond to similar events more positively

Anything that gives the child a feeling of:

- Competence
- Self-efficacy
- Mastery of skills
- Connection to others







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Exercise: Creating a Restorative Task for Skill Building

Alexandra and Jeffrey








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Steps to Creating Restorative Tasks

- 

Manage the negative behavior until all (child and staff) are regulated.
- 

Return to your Working Theory about the client.
- 

Create your Restorative Task for Skill Building.
- 

Create your Restorative Task to Make Amends.





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Restorative Tasks to Make Amends

GOAL:
For the child to make amends to people they hurt and restore the relationship.

ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS:

1. Whom did the child's behavior hurt?
2. Based on your Working Theory, what are important themes evident in the child's negative behavior?
3. How can the child make life better for the person or group of people they hurt? (Integrate Working Theory theme if possible)

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Exercise: Create a Restorative Task to Make Amends

Alexandra and Jeffrey




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BREAK

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Exercise: Applying the Steps to Creating Restorative Tasks to a Child in Your Program

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Common Questions about Restorative Tasks

1. How much is enough?
2. What if the youth won't do it?
3. How do we continue to think of new tasks?
4. What if the tasks aren't serious enough?

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Exercise

Resistance to the Restorative Approach

- Chaos will break out
- Its not the "real world"
- This trauma stuff is just an excuse
- What about consistency?
- It will take too much time
- It's too nice
- "My parents were strict with me..."
- Its harder to learn
- It demands more of your true self

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Vicarious Trauma and the Restorative Approach

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Vicarious Trauma and the Restorative Approach

- The perils of opening your heart
- Meaning in our work
- Special awareness for treaters of color




TIPS

More ideas in: **37 Ways to Manage Vicarious Traumatization**

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Exercise: Life Time Line

- Draw a time line
- Plot key events in your life that were challenges, disappointments, losses, unexpected changes
- What got you through?
- Was there personal growth or positive outcomes?




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Resilience

Developing Resilience:

- Build strong support system
- Nurture a positive view of yourself and of life
- Maintain perspective -- crises are surmountable, problems can be solved
- Stay flexible and curious
- Use humor
- Exercise forward thinking
- Believe in something greater than self
- Stay connected to values
- Be responsible for self-care

SAMHSA 2009: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/schoolviolence/part1chp2.asp>

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Summary

- Current treatment approaches assume consequences are essential to change behavior
- RA holds that relationships, rebuilding brains, and skill-building are more essential
- Programs must build these elements into all aspects of their work
- When children hurt others, they are given restorative tasks to build skills and make amends
- RA requires attending to staff's vicarious trauma

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Evaluations, Closing, and Goodbye

Closing

Write down:

- One characteristic of resilience that you draw on most
- One example of how you use daily life



For More Information, Contact:

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Risking Connection Change Model



Kintsugi Pottery: What is broken can be healed; we all have cracks and imperfections



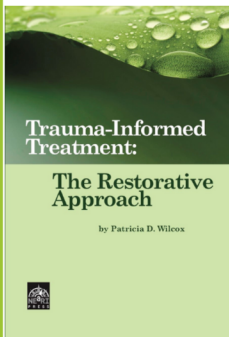
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Restorative Approach®

RESOURCES

2026 Revision



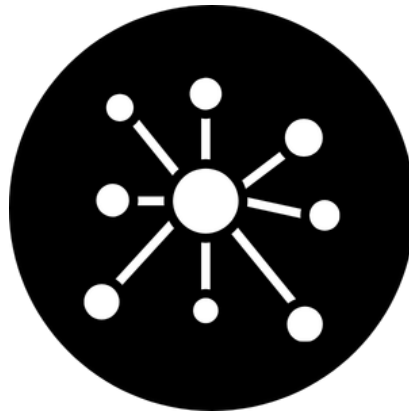
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Restorative Approach Exercises





Exercise: Creating a Working Theory – Alexandra



Alexandra is a 14-year-old-girl who has a history of witnessing domestic violence and several foster placements. She has a history of self-injury, suicidality, and running away (often to check up on her mother). Staff in her therapeutic school has noted that in the last month she's been opening up to a few of them in a new way that she has not before. But, whenever they approach her after a negative behavior, she immediately folds her body and shuts down. Staff have seen her recently spending more time drawing in her journal when upset. Last week, it was announced that one of the therapists (not hers) was being transferred to work in another program. In the last few days, her teacher observed that she was wearing long sleeves even though it was 90 degrees out. When the teacher asked why, she told her to "f off." She eventually revealed that she had been scratching herself with a paperclip.

1. What are the child's beliefs and expectations about relationships?
2. How is the child's negative behavior adaptive? (How does it help meet a need in the moment?)
3. How might the child meet that need with less negative consequences?
4. What strengths and deficits in self-capacity skills/beliefs (inner connection; worth of life; feelings management) does the child have now?
5. What might be the next small step in self-capacity skills/beliefs that the child would need to learn in order to act differently?

Exercise: Creating a Working Theory – Jeffrey



Jeffrey is an 11-year-old-boy who has a history of witnessing of physical abuse and multiple separations from his grandmother, who raised him. Child protective services finally removed him from his grandmother's care when they found for the 3rd time that Jeffrey was left alone at home overnight. He was placed in your group home for his explosive anger and defiant behavior. The staff have noticed that Jeffrey becomes especially defiant during the evening routine – he often refuses to eat his evening snack, will not get into his pajamas, or brush his teeth, and he refuses to go upstairs to bed. Even when staff allow him to sleep in his clothes, he finds other ways to engage them like banging his head in his room or playing his radio so loud it is disruptive to other kids. Recently, staff created a sticker chart to motivate Jeffrey to complete his evening routine. It worked briefly, but soon staff were having long arguments with him over the details of the sticker chart. Jeffrey is a good writer (with a vivid imagination), likes music, but blows up quickly and is easily frustrated.

1. What are the child's beliefs and expectations about relationships?
2. How is the child's negative behavior adaptive? (How does it help meet a need in the moment?)
3. How might the child meet that need with less negative consequences?
4. What strengths and deficits in self-capacity skills/beliefs (inner connection; worth of life; feelings management) does the child have now?
5. What might be the next small step in self-capacity skills/beliefs that the child would need to learn in order to act differently?

Exercise: Return to Your Working Theory



Alexandra is a 14-year-old-girl who has a history of witnessing domestic violence and several foster placements. She has a history of self-injury, suicidality, and running away (often to check up on her mother). Staff in her therapeutic school has noted that in the last month she's been opening up to a few of them in a new way that she has not before. But, whenever they approach her after a negative behavior, she immediately folds her body and shuts down. Staff have seen her recently spending more time drawing in her journal when upset. Last week, it was announced that one of the therapists (not hers) was being transferred to work in another program. In the last few days, her teacher observed that she was wearing long sleeves even though it was 90 degrees out. When the teacher asked why, she told her to "f off." She eventually revealed that she had been scratching herself with a paperclip.

Yesterday, the unit had planned a goodbye party for the departing therapist. Alexandra became rude and starting yelling at the therapist, saying she was no good, a whore, and just in it for the money.

When staff tried to calm her down, she threw a glass (which broke) and ran off the unit. She was gone an hour and a half, but probably stayed on grounds. The party was disrupted because staff had to tag Alexandra, who was on suicide precautions. They finally found her and she came back in.

Looking back at your Working Theory, how do you make sense of this current behavior?

Exercise: Return to Your Working Theory



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Last night, when he was upset about going to bed, Jeffrey started smashing furniture to the ground. He broke two chairs and the TV remote. Accidentally he hit Joe, a staff member, with a chair. The noise and commotion kept the unit up late into the night and Joe was scared for his safety as Jeffrey's behavior escalated.

Looking back at your Working Theory, how do you make sense of this current behavior?



Exercise: Applying a Working Theory to an Event

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Question to consider	Answers
What was the problem behavior?	
What led up to the behavior?	
What was the child feeling?	
How do we understand the child's reaction, given our theory?	
What needs was the child trying to meet?	

Exercise: Creating a Restorative Task for Skill Building



Alexandra is a 14-year-old-girl who has a history of witnessing domestic violence and several foster placements. She has a history of self-injury, suicidality, and running away (often to check up on her mother). Staff in her therapeutic school has noted that in the last month she's been opening up to a few of them in a new way that she has not before. But, whenever they approach her after a negative behavior, she immediately shuts down. Staff have seen her recently spending more time drawing in her journal when upset. Last week, it was announced that one of the therapists (not hers) was being transferred to work in another program. In the last few days, her teacher observed that she was wearing long sleeves even though it was 90 degrees out. When the teacher asked why, she told her to "f off." She eventually revealed that she had been scratching herself with a paperclip.

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Exercise: Creating Restorative Tasks for Skill Building

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Question to consider	Answers
What was the problem behavior?	
What led up to the behavior?	
What was the child feeling? What need was the child trying to meet?	
What would we want the child to do instead when they feel this way or has these experiences?	
What skills and/or beliefs would the child need in order to be able to do this alternative behavior?	
What tasks can we create (preferably with the child) that will help him strengthen the positive beliefs and learn and/or practice the needed skills?	





Ideas for Restorative Tasks to Build Skills

Tasks to Build Attachment and Change the Child's Template for Relationships

Goal of tasks: Increase sense of trust, explore barriers to trust; Learn and practice effective friendship skills, experience positive peer interactions; Explore family issues and positive ways to impact or endure them

Characteristics of tasks: Connection with others, reliability, exploration of trust and barriers, require sharing of thoughts and feelings

Examples:

- Read books about friendship and trust
- Make poster, write essay on "what is a friend?"
- With staff, make lists of people I trust and why, people I don't trust and why
- Write or talk about subject of: am I trustworthy?
- With staff talk about ten things that make it hard for me to trust people
- Share with music, customs, dress of your culture with a peer
- Talk or write about how I decide how much to trust someone
- Talk with staff about experiences with race
- Ask if child feels they have a wall built around their heart. If so, talk about what it looks like, how thick, does it have doors and windows, draw a picture of the wall. Make no attempt to judge wall or to say it should be more open. Make it clear that wall was developed for a good reason.
- Participate in a cultural event (with staff or peer)
- List - promises made to me and kept. Promises made to me and broken
- Talk with another child (with staff) about what you were feeling in a situation
- Do rhythmic and/or fun activities with other people
- Do projects with others that benefit others
- Perform a song and/or dance for the group



Tasks to Build Brains, Regulate Nervous System and Increase Executive Functioning Abilities

Goal of tasks: Learn specific skills, strategies and tips that help with flexible thinking, seeing others' perspective, staying focused, planning, impulse control

Characteristics of tasks: involve practicing a strategy in specific situations, or learning from others strategies they use

Examples:

- Make lists of things to do
- Develop a day planner
- Read/ write/tell stories about how someone solved a problem
- Research a hero in your culture or another culture Practice a stop-and-think strategy (curriculum)
- Play focus games (noticing what changed on a table, etc)
- Play cooperative games
- Write/tell stories from another person's point of view
- See Harvard resource (<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence/>)
- Write your history with race
- Goal setting and monitoring
- Music performance
- Research how a person in a different culture solved a problem or overcame an obstacle
- Narrative, journal, self-monitoring
- Play chess



Tasks to Build Self-Capacities: Inner Connection

Goal of tasks: Develop ability to remember that the other person exists and cares about you even when he or she is not physically present

Characteristics of tasks: include transitional objects and reminders of people child cares about

Examples:

- Write a letter to the person
- Call their voice mail
- Keep a journal which you will share with the person
- Make a poster with names/pictures/sayings of people who have loved you
- Find or create symbols of strengths in your culture Write a story about someone who loved you in the past and what he/she would wish for you
- Find music that reminds you of people you love
- Plan a future activity with someone you care about
- Make a poster/list/picture of people in your culture that you have a connection with and admire
- Make a collage of characteristics of people you have cared about that you would like to have



Tasks to Build Self-Capacities: Feeling Worthy of Life

Goal of tasks: Develop sense of achievement, self-worth, earn praise from others, learn that it is possible to work out problems and rebound from them

Characteristics of tasks: observable achievement, worthwhile, service to others, learn/practice useful skills, work out a difficulty with someone, solve a problem

Examples:

- Cleaning
- Repairs
- Making and serving food
- Making sign telling steps of a task or giving instructions
- Helping staff or child with task
- Sorting a closet
- Teaching a skill to another child
- Talking over what happened and how it felt to the other person
- Playing a game with a peer
- Supported problem solving with peer
- Discuss and identify stereotypes of your group in the media
- Reading book on friendship and giving report to group
- Write about or discuss a member of your group that you admire
- Making poster of “what makes a good friend”
- Write story about the day a boy made a friend
- Practice specific personal effectiveness skills (use DBT handbook)
- Identify media with positive presentation of your group
- Play a cooperative game with a friend for a half hour
- Choose a peer and work together on a project to beautify the unit
- Interview three peers about likes and dislikes, present at meeting
- Make a collage of messages and ideas your family has taught you
- Shadow a peer and get to know him or her
- List (or discuss) ways your group has been defined
- Role play with a staff problem solving strategies
- Collage of “My Family Now and How I want It to Be”
- Letter to family
- List of good and bad things about my family
- Pictures of family at different stages
- Decorate your space with representation of your group
- List of “ways I can get along better with my family and who will help me”
- Invite family member to recreational activity
- Contribute to beauty or functionality of common space
- Take a leadership role in planning an activity or dealing with an issue



Tasks to Build Self-Capacities: Feelings Management

Goal of tasks: Learn emotion management, self-observation and distress tolerance, Learn and practice anger management, explore causes of anger, develop ability to share vulnerable feelings with others; practice self-care, self-soothing, crisis management, how to get through difficult times, how to ask for and receive support from others; develop hope for the future

Characteristics of tasks: Contain opportunities to learn/practice self-monitoring skills and distress tolerance skills; Contain opportunities to develop and practice (through role play) specific skills, exploration of reasons for anger, increased comfort with vulnerability, ability to ask for help; Contain opportunities to learn and practice ways to take care of oneself, contain opportunities to connect with others and get support, a sense that the future may be better

Examples:

- Develop scaling card for emotions, practice using
- Develop list of ways to handle emotions
- Make poster for room of these skills, practice using one of them
- Explain to another child how to calm yourself down
- Keep a mood chart for a week
- Use DBT Diary card to track events leading up to events
- Role play other ways to express anger
- Collage of all the things that make me angry
- Poster for room or unit entitled “what to do when you are mad”
- Write story “The Girl Who Got Mad”
- Make list of “100 things that make me mad”
- Make thermometer of how anger feels when it starts, levels of anger, use to specify current level
- Role playing working out of difficulties
- Draw picture of anger
- Draw circle which depicts events leading up to anger, how I look on outside, what is happening inside, and goes through whole sequence of events
- Talk to others about times they felt afraid and what they did

- Ask others, especially those admired, about times they have felt scared or confused or overwhelmed
- Make poster about “how a guy/girl can be strong” that included ways other than by violence
- Make list of ways to distract oneself using all five senses
- Make poster for room: Things to do when I get bad news or am worried
- Explain to another child how to tolerate bad times
- What have you been taught about how to be a strong man/woman in your culture
- Make a soothing toy or blanket, and make one for a friend
- Spend time with staff talking about how to get through bad times
- Explore experiences with authority
- Practice three self-soothing skills
- Make and use a crisis kit
- Discuss with a staff how anger has been expressed in your family
- Spend time outside in nature
- Have an individual or group discussion about what it takes to survive in a dangerous world
- Engage in positive physical activity
- Do something for others
- Make a CD with soothing or uplifting music and make copies for peers
- Define strength in your culture
- Write a list of dreams, hopes, goals
- Write a list (make a collage) of ten things I have accomplished or learned in the last year
- What would you say to a younger relative that was going through a bad time? Write or tell a story about it



Exercise: Creating Restorative Tasks to Make Amends

Alexandra

Yesterday, the unit had planned a goodbye party for the departing therapist. Alexandra became rude and starting yelling at the therapist, saying she was no good, a whore, and just in it for the money. When staff tried to calm her down, she threw a glass (which broke) and ran off the unit. She was gone an hour and a half, but probably stayed on grounds. The party was disrupted because staff had to tag Alexandra, who was on suicide precautions. They finally found her and she came back in.

Jeffrey

Last night, when he was upset about going to bed, Jeffrey started smashing furniture to the ground. He broke two chairs and the TV remote. Accidentally he hit Joe, a staff member, with a chair. The noise and commotion kept the unit up late into the night and Joe was scared for his safety as Jeffrey's behavior escalated.

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Question to consider	Answers
Whom did the child's behavior hurt?	
What are important treatment themes evident in the child's behavior?	
How might bias, experiences with racism or being treated as "other", be a barrier to making amends?	
How can the child make life better for the person (or group of people) they hurt?	
How could you help the child if you felt their experience of bias or racism was a barrier to making amends?	



Ideas for Restorative Tasks to Make Amends

Tasks to make amends for damage done **to an individual**

- Talk with them about how the experience felt for them
- Write the story of the event from their point of view
- Make a poster or card for the (drawing, collage) to explain what happened and how you were feeling before the event
- Write a letter
- Do a chore for them or with them
- Replace something that was broken
- Make them something - a decoration, food
- Do an activity with them or play a game with them
- Teach them something (like how to play a video game)

Tasks to make amends for damage done **to a group of people (i.e. whole unit, classroom)**

- Decorations
- Share a cultural event with people who were hurt
- Posters illustrating feelings and positive behaviors
- Posters or books illustrating steps to a task, i.e. getting ready for school or unit chores
- Make food for unit
- Listen to each other's music, discuss what you like about it
- Cleaning
- Weeding
- Setting out a treat for each child
- Create a decoration for the living space or someone's room
- Doing a presentation on something in a community meeting, such as the dangers of smoking or why we should not pull fire alarms
- Lead an activity
- Make cultural food to share with peers
- Teach something to younger children, or read to them
- Clean the van
- Repair something you broke. If you cannot repair it, do something nice for the people who do have to repair it (like bake cookies for the maintenance staff)



Questions to Consider to Understand Behavior (formerly “Applying to a Child in Your Program”)

Create a Working Theory

1. What are the child’s beliefs and expectations about relationships?
2. How is the child’s negative behavior adaptive? (How does it help meet a need in the moment?)
3. How might the youth’s experience of racism or treated as “other” affect their negative behavior?
4. How might the child meet that need with less negative consequences?
5. What strengths and deficits in self-capacity skills/beliefs (inner connection; worthy of life; feelings management) does the child have now?
6. What might be the next small step in self-capacity skills/beliefs that the child would need to learn in order to act differently?



Create your Restorative Task for Skill Building

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Question to consider	Answers
What was the problem behavior?	
What led up to the behavior?	
What was the child feeling? What need was the child trying to meet?	
What would we want the child to do instead when they feel this way or has these experiences?	
What skills and/or beliefs would the child need in order to be able to do this alternative behavior?	
What tasks can we create (preferably with the child) that will help him strengthen the positive beliefs and learn and/or practice the needed skills?	



Create your Restorative Task to Make Amends

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Question to consider	Answers
Whom did the child's behavior hurt?	
What are important treatment themes evident in the child's behavior?	
How can the child make life better for the person (or group of people) they hurt?	
What bias, experience with racism, othering may be a barrier to making amends?	





Responding to Staff Resistance

Common Concerns and Suggested Responses

If we stop giving severe consequences, chaos will break out.

Example: "These kids will run wild, staff and kids will not be safe, we will not be in control."

- Is the only or main reason the kids don't do bad things because of fear of consequences?
- When a child is emotionally dysregulated does he care about the consequences?
- Relationships have much more power than consequences in influencing behavior.
- Without relationships we have no power over another person
- If a person does not know how to do something, no amount of consequences will make him do it. When he masters the skills, he will want to do better and be able to.

It's not the "Real world." It's not punishing enough; it's too nice.

Example: "These kids need to learn that if they keep doing these things they will end up in jail. No one else is going to be this nice to them. We need to show them that this kind of behavior has to stop! How are the kids going to learn?"

- If the kids could handle the real world, that's where they would be.
- In the real world there is the concept of a learning phase- like, in early Little League they don't have a strike out rule. It gives kids a chance to learn skills and develop confidence
- If punishment would change them, you would think they might have changed by now. They have certainly been punished enough.
- They already know that doing these bad things (like hitting people) will get them in trouble and that their lives would go better if they did not do them. What they do not know is HOW to not do them.
- They need to learn skills that will enable them to react differently.

All this stuff about trauma is just an excuse.

Example: "The kids have to learn to take responsibility for their behavior. They can't keep using their past as an excuse." Trauma is never an excuse for behavior, it is always an explanation.

- The kids are doing the best they can. They have to learn to do better if they are to have a life worth living.
- The biology of these children has been changed by their experiences, and so they may be hyper-reactive and have difficulty relaxing.
- Shame interferes with taking responsibility for mistakes. Instead of thinking “I did something wrong” the child thinks “I am a totally worthless and hopeless person” and so tries to escape those feelings.
- Children will act better when they feel better.
- They need specific skills, achievements and positive experiences to be able to meet their needs in more positive ways.

What about consistency?

Example: “What will the kids say if we do one thing for one kid, and a different thing for another that does the same behavior? They will say that is not fair! And what about inconsistencies between staff? If the consequences aren’t the same for everyone, one staff will be more lenient and one stricter.”

- Consistency meaning sameness is in fact unfair. The clients differ so much in maturity, ability, skills, and issues. One cannot write well, one can- so if the task was to write an essay it would be much harder for the first one. Each child is at a different place in learning, and the task needs to be aimed at where they are and what their next steps are.
- However, staff does need to be able to explain to each other their rationale for a task and for the severity/ lack of severity of the task. The team should be able to discuss choices and challenge each other.
- The kids will give this objection up after a while if staff say calmly: “we treat everyone individually here, and try to give each person what they themselves need.”

It will take too much time.

Example: “I barely have time for what I do now. We do not have the staffing to be talking to these kids or getting to know them all individually”

- Restraints, seclusions, and point sheets take a lot of time. If these decrease, more time is freed for interaction with the children.
- Task can be done in groups- such as weeding together.
- Power struggles eat up a huge amount of staff time. When we adopt a “working together to solve the problem and get the child what he needs” approach things move much faster.
- A strong relationship makes everything go more smoothly.



"My parents were strict with me..."

Example: "My mother was always strict with me, and if I disrespected her she would slap me across the head. If I did something wrong you don't even want to know what she would do. I'm not saying we have to hit the kids, but it was my mother's strictness that saved me from what I saw on the streets."

- Staff are often referring to strictness within the context of an enduring, loving relationship. This is very different from strictness from a staff member in your 14th placement.
- The person with the loving and strict mother always has that voice in their mind, that inner connection, to guide them. The child who has been moved between many caretakers does not have that.
- Along with strictness families often teach the skills necessary to effectively manage the world. This is what these kids are missing.

It's harder to learn.

Example: "I can see experienced staff maybe doing this but how are new staff going to learn it if there are no guidelines and we treat every kid differently? The kids will use the lack of clear rules to play new staff."

- This is true, and so specific new employee orientation has to teach this way of thinking.
- New employees should be taught a foundational trauma course
- If the team can talk to each other and help each other, they can guide a new employee until the approach is more natural.
- Big decisions, responses to large events, should be decided by the team and not individually.

It demands more of your true self.

Example: "You have to be real with the kids in this new way of working. You have to be who you actually are. Then, when they continue to attack you or not change, it hurts all that much more. It even hurts more to say goodbye when they leave!"

- This is true. That is why the work becomes more interesting, more involving, and more growth producing.
- Understanding the meaning behind the child's actions helps us not take it as personally.
- It is important to pay attention to vicarious traumatization, and have regular forums to discuss how the work is affecting the employees.



Implementation Tip Sheets for the Restorative Approach







Ten Tips for Building the Relationship

1. Get to know the child. What is his favorite color? Has he ever had a pet? What are his likes and dislikes?
2. Understand the child's past. Make a time line with them, focusing on everyday things like the color of the house they lived in and something good that happened there.
3. Be trustworthy. Keep your promises, and if you can't, apologize and make it right.
4. Pay attention. Listen to the child, and put away other distractions like phones.
5. Validate. Say you understand how they could feel that way.
6. Do fun things together.
7. Identify common interests.
8. Mention that you thought of the child on a weekend when you heard their favorite singer or things like that.
9. Write a journal back and forth together.
10. Do art projects together, listen to music together. Ask the child to play you her favorite songs and tell you what she likes about them.



Fourteen Tips for Building Brains

1. Use repetitive, rhythmic activities such as peek a boo, hand-clapping activities, tossing a tennis ball back and forth, throwing wadded up paper in a garbage can repeatedly like shooting baskets, throwing a ball against the wall, making up songs, rocking, batting a balloon back and forth or developing a beat by drumming on handy objects such as furniture.
2. Provide rewarding, pleasurable activities done with other people.
3. Create narratives (stories, memories, time lines, books, drawings) of the client's and family's life.
4. Engage in attuned interactions, in which your attention is on the child and conversation goes back and forth, and you stay connected to his or her mood.
5. Offer activity groups that build skills and provide fun.
6. If you know how incorporate yoga, meditation, and mindfulness.
7. Play a game with the child, establish a back-and-forth movement between yourself and the child.
8. Support the child to be successful in the game, play at their level.
9. Laugh.
10. Keep the beat.
11. Use music, games and play to facilitate transition.
12. Notice any child who is having difficulty and engage them in a contest or song or beat.
13. Help child develop awareness of own emotions and their stages and develop tactics for each stage.
14. Teach grounding techniques using the five senses to come back to the present.



Twelve Tips for Creating Structure and Activities

1. Maintain a reliable and predictable schedule when possible.
2. Have large signs, visual reminders with pictures, etc. to let youth know the schedule.
3. Talk about any changes to the expected. Understand this is much scarier than you would imagine.
4. Give repeated warnings in anticipation of transitions.
5. Structure for success.
6. Offer many different levels of participation.
7. Validate anxiety while coaxing participation. Offer many supports. Reassure.
8. Start some Youth Leadership activities: a student council, a unit group to decide unit activities, youth-to-youth mentoring, older kids teaching younger, etc.
9. Use sensory interventions, such as rocking chairs, weighted garments, blankets and fur, soft music, or aroma therapy.
10. Add yoga and meditation to your offerings.
11. Institute a program where the kids engage in some social action to help others, such as collecting food for a food bank, or volunteering at a Senior Center.
12. Buy night lights for all kids who want them.



Adding Rhythmic Activities to the Milieu

Scheduled and free recreation time can include as many rhythmic activities as possible.

These include:

- Dance
- Wii dance
- Music
- Rapping
- Clay
- Throwing balls
- Rocking
- Swimming
- Pets
- Gardening
- Exercise
- Children's games (Duck, Duck Goose; Mother May I)
- Jump rope
- Hopscotch
- Side by side walking
- Bouncing on "Swiss ball" (exercise ball)
- Quick shoot basketball setups where you can repeatedly shoot baskets over and over
- Toy where you put 1 foot in a ring, whip it around as you jump over with other foot
- Hula hoop
- See-saw with another person
- Swings with two-person possibilities – seats opposite each/see saw-ish seats
- Swinging with one person pushing
- Two square game with another person
- Trampoline (with safeguards)

Role of Staff

- Presents activities
- Staff maximizes pleasure and joy in game
- Play game with child, establish back-and-forth between themselves and child
- Structure for success
- Support the child to be successful in the game, play at their level
- Laugh
- Keep the beat

Unscheduled Times, In Between Times

Whenever nothing is going on, the children are just sitting around, or there is free time, staff can use activities involving rhythm. These can also be done with one child or a few children.

- Peek-a-boo
- Hand clapping activities
- Tossing a tennis ball back and forth

- Throwing wadded up paper in a garbage can repeatedly like shooting baskets
- Throwing ball against the wall
- Make up songs
- Rocking
- Bat a balloon back and forth
- Developing a beat by drumming on handy objects such as furniture

Role of Staff

- Starts back and forth, often without words or asking, just start
- Maximizes pleasure and joy
- Engages with child, establish back-and-forth between themselves and child
- Play at child's level
- Laugh
- Keep the beat

Transitions

Rhythmic activities and playful fun can help children manage transitions. Examples are marching from place to place while singing; using a playful countdown to create readiness for a transition; making up a song about what is happening; everyone in a line holding onto a rope; using a drum or musical instrument to announce and facilitate transitions.

Role of Staff

- Anticipate transitions
- Give several warnings
- Use music, games and play to facilitate transition
- Notice any child who is having difficulty and engage them in a contest or song or beat
- Maximizes pleasure and joy
- Laugh
- Keep the beat

Wake Up and Bedtime

Waking up and going to bed are high stress times for traumatized children. Many biological families find that using rituals and routines to support the child during these times significantly improves the day.

Mornings:

- Use gentle repetitive positive phrases and songs to wake children up
- Give several warnings
- Mention positive parts of the upcoming day
- Have a routine



Evenings:

- Use lullabies
- Read stories
- Play soft music in the unit
- Use night lights

Role of Staff

- Understand difficulty of these times
- Engage child in the idea that this is a lovely day
- Offer soothing and calm in the evening
- Offer evidence that adults will be nearby and that the child is safe
- Maximizes pleasure and joy
- Show pleasure and delight to see the child

When a Child Begins to Be Upset

When staff notice that a child is beginning to be upset, they should move quickly (when possible) to bring the child closer to them and if possible away from the other children. It may be helpful to ask the child what is wrong and validate his feelings. However, the child may not know what is wrong. This is a good time to draw the child into some back and forth activity, such as rolling a ball between the staff and the child. The thought should be: how can I use my body to help this child bring his body back into regulation? How can I bring the child into my calm rhythms? Once the child is calm, discussion can take place about what to do next.

Examples:

- Roll a ball back and forth
- Bat a balloon back and forth
- Hold both hand and rock back and forth
- Sit together on a double rocking chair
- Walk side by side, match strides
- Match breathing

Role of Staff

- Be alert for which child is beginning to be upset
- Stay calm yourself
- Draw the child into a calm rhythm, usually without words
- Validate
- Reassure child of safety
- Offer hope



Eighteen Tips for Managing a Crisis

1. Ask "What's the matter?"
2. Repeat what the child says: "So you are feeling that...."
3. Say that you can understand how the child might feel that way.
4. Ask for more details.
5. Again, repeat and validate.
6. Stay calm yourself.
7. Bring in someone the child is connected to.
8. Offer hope that things won't always be this hard.
9. Talk about something neutral: compliment a bracelet, remember something you did together.
10. Watch your body language. Don't stand over the child or be threatening.
11. Use a soft voice.
12. Breathe deeply and slowly yourself without commenting on it.
13. Express caring.
14. If you get caught up in a power struggle and can't get out, ask for help.
15. Be patient. You can wait out many crises, they get worse if you try to hurry compliance.
16. Be compassionate.
17. Listen and repeat.
18. Validate some more.



Thirty-Seven Ways to Manage Vicarious Traumatization

1. Have team discussions of what is going on and how it is affecting us as people
2. Connect with anyone who has been hurt and express your concern
3. Make sure that supervision is happening
4. Is our environment too noisy?
5. Can we add music?
6. Can we make the space more pleasant, add decorations?
7. Recognize staff for special effort
8. Plan fun staff activities like pot luck lunches
9. Continue to talk about anything that is going on, with compassion and respect, recognizing that everyone is doing the best they can
10. Remind yourself of your role with your clients, that you do not have infinite power, and that you are only a part of their healing journey.
11. Listen responsively to your client's stories without making them your own or visualizing them too vividly.
12. Remind yourself of your specific role as a treater, and do not expect yourself to solve all the clients' problems.
13. Remind yourself of the power of the therapeutic relationship and do not expect yourself to also take on other roles in the client's life.
14. Have some time in your life in which work does not intrude.
15. Have support around the limits of your responsibility and your ability to change your clients.
16. Utilize mindfulness practices
17. Use journaling and other creative expressions to increase self-awareness.
18. Participate in therapy for yourself.
19. Seek out on-going training.
20. Notice when you become cynical and hopeless about your work and challenge your negative beliefs.
21. Have and use support at work.
22. Create a balance in your day through scheduling of cases and including breaks for connection and renewal.
23. Take time off and vacations.
24. Stay home if you are sick.
25. Receive regular supervision that includes discussion of your reactions to your work.
26. Use techniques such as breathing, connecting to items around me, and remembering your resources to manage painful client interactions.



27. Include in your space some items such as pictures and objects that remind you of people that you love and good things that you have experienced.
28. Stay in the present while listening to painful stories, and remember that your client has survived and now has your support.
29. Use your breathing and physical sensations to stay in the present.
30. Remember that you are only one part of the client's journey, and you do this work in a community of other healing people.
31. See your clients as resilient and as having the resources to heal.
32. Notice your client's strengths and resiliencies.
33. Process painful work-related experiences creatively through movement, writing, sculpture making music or art or designing a garden.
34. Connect to a community.
35. Have a spiritual connection with something larger than yourself, whether that be: the best of all that is human, nature, history, or a spiritual entity such as God, Yahweh, Allah, the Goddess or any other practice such as prayer or meditation.
36. Regularly take time to think or talk about the rewards of your work.
37. Take time to talk about or think about the painful feelings you have at work and the lessons or wisdom you receive from them.



Using Our Milieus to Heal Oppression:

Ideas to add an emphasis on social justice to our day-to-day treatment

1. **Talk about it:** Acknowledge the presence of racism and other forms of oppression in our world, such as bias and discrimination toward those whose identities are historically marginalized, including LGBTQIA+, those with different abilities, refugees and immigrants, etc. Don't let it be the "elephant in the room."
2. **Validate:** When a client brings up an instance of racism, do not offer alternative explanations or diminish the importance. Acknowledge that this client's life experiences lead them to the assumption that racism is influencing events, and that may well be what is going on in this situation.
3. **Acknowledge:** When a client accuses someone of racism, acknowledge the possibility and explore it further – even if you are the one being accused.
4. **Pay attention:** When enjoying media (TV, movies, social media, etc.) point out any incidents of stereotyping that you notice. Discuss.
5. **Be curious:** Individually and in groups, discuss client experiences with oppression and how it affected them, what supports they were able to find. What have they learned from their family and other sources about their groups and other groups?
6. **Participate:** When appropriate, bring clients to community events that celebrate various cultures.
7. **Decorate:** Make sure your spaces are decorated with multi-cultural images.
8. **Inquire:** At intake and from then on, inquire about your client's (including the family's) experiences with oppression and how it has affected their lives.
9. **Develop self-awareness:** With the help of family, friends, co-workers, and multiple external sources, examine your own beliefs and assumptions about your group and other groups. Become aware of your own biases (we all have them) so that you can pause before letting them control your response.



Recommended Reading

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- Miller, Brian C. *Reducing Secondary Traumatic Stress* Routledge, March 2025
- Perry, Bruce & Szalavitz, Maia (2007). *The boy who was raised as a dog: And other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook -- What traumatized children can teach us about loss, love, and healing*. New York: Basic Books
- Saakvitne, Karen, et al. (2000). *Risking connection: A training curriculum for working with survivors of childhood abuse*. Lutherville, MD: Sidran Press.
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- Van der Kolk, Bessel (2010). *The Body Keeps the Score*. New York: Penguin.
- Wilcox, Patricia (2012) *Trauma-Informed Treatment: The Restorative Approach*. Florence, MA: Off the Common Books.



Restorative Approach Basic Training Evaluation

Date:					
Please rate the following items on the degree to which they apply					
	Low (1)			High (5)	
1. The content met my needs	1	2	3	4	5
2. The materials were useful	1	2	3	4	5
3. The benefit of the information relative to cost and time spent	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Environment					
Please rate the facilities in the following areas:					
1. Temperature	Too cold 1		OK 2 3	Too hot 4 5	
2. Size of room	Cramped 1		OK 2 3	Too big 4 5	
3. Ease of access	Hard 1		OK 2 3	Very Easy 4 5	
Trainer #1 Name:					
	Low (1)			High (5)	
1. Spoke clearly and understandably	1	2	3	4	5
2. Generated audience participation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Showed knowledge of and passion for subject	1	2	3	4	5
4. Exemplified RICH –Respect, Information, Connection and Hope	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
Trainer #2 (if applicable) Name:					
	Low (1)			High (5)	
1. Spoke clearly and understandably	1	2	3	4	5
2. Generated audience participation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Showed knowledge of and passion for subject	1	2	3	4	5
4. Exemplified RICH –Respect, Information, Connection and Hope	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					



Course Objectives					
Please rate degree to which course met these objectives					
Participants will:	Low (1)				High (5)
1. Learn the theory and assumptions underlying the Restorative Approach.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Learn how an RA-informed milieu can create safety and rebuild brains.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Learn the steps to creating Restorative Tasks when children hurt others.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Learn the impact of using RA on vicarious trauma and developing personal resilience.	1	2	3	4	5
Feedback for the future					
Would you recommend this training to a co-worker or colleague? Why or why not?					
What specifically did you like about this training?					
What could we do to improve this training?					