Adult Caregiver Consultation as a School-Based Therapist

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Wediko
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Continuum of Wediko Services

- **Wediko School:** is a residential treatment center in NH that offers clinical and educational services for boys ages 9 to 21 in a safe, therapeutic, and educational environment. Wediko clinicians work closely with students' families and referring professionals with the goal of returning the child to his home and community, or a less restrictive school, as soon as possible.

- **Wediko Summer Program:** is a 45-day therapeutic residential program in the woods of NH providing academic instruction, experiential education, and group and family therapy to 160 boys and girls ages 7-19.

- **Wediko School-Based Services:** offers clinical and program consultation to teachers and school administrators, direct clinical services to students and families, and trainings and workshops for parents and teachers. Services are provided to approximately 40 public schools in Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire.

- **Wediko Home-Based Solutions:** offers children and families a unique combination of customized wraparound supports to enhance children's academic confidence, social, and emotional well-being in the home, school, and community.

Taking care of yourself

- Puppies, kittens, babies?
- Special place or activity?
- Special people?

Objectives

- Gain an overview of teacher and school-based consultation

- Understand feedback from caregivers: what do they want from us?

- Understand impact of trauma on students, caregivers, and consultation process

- Develop ideas about how to support caregiver affect management

- Gain a framework for developing and supporting intervention in schools

Agenda

- Caregiver feedback

- Trauma's role

- Caregiver affect management

- Social-environmental interventions

- How do I bill for this and other logistics

Caregiver Feedback

- Make sure consultation is a two-way street
  - Teacher and staff highlight they are often providing information and updates to clinicians and not always receiving information back
  - Teachers are often looking for new tools/approaches
  - Connecting it to the classroom/home

- Mindful of time limits for school staff
  - Efficient communication is key

- Mutual Respect is important!

Trauma

Definition, impact on students and the adults around them

Why the focus on trauma? It's Prevalent.

Local: 2008 Boston Youth Survey (Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center)

- **<u>69% witnessed violence (beaten up, threatened with weapon, threatened w/ gun, shot at)</u>**

National: 2010 Adverse Childhood Experiences Study-ACES Study (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
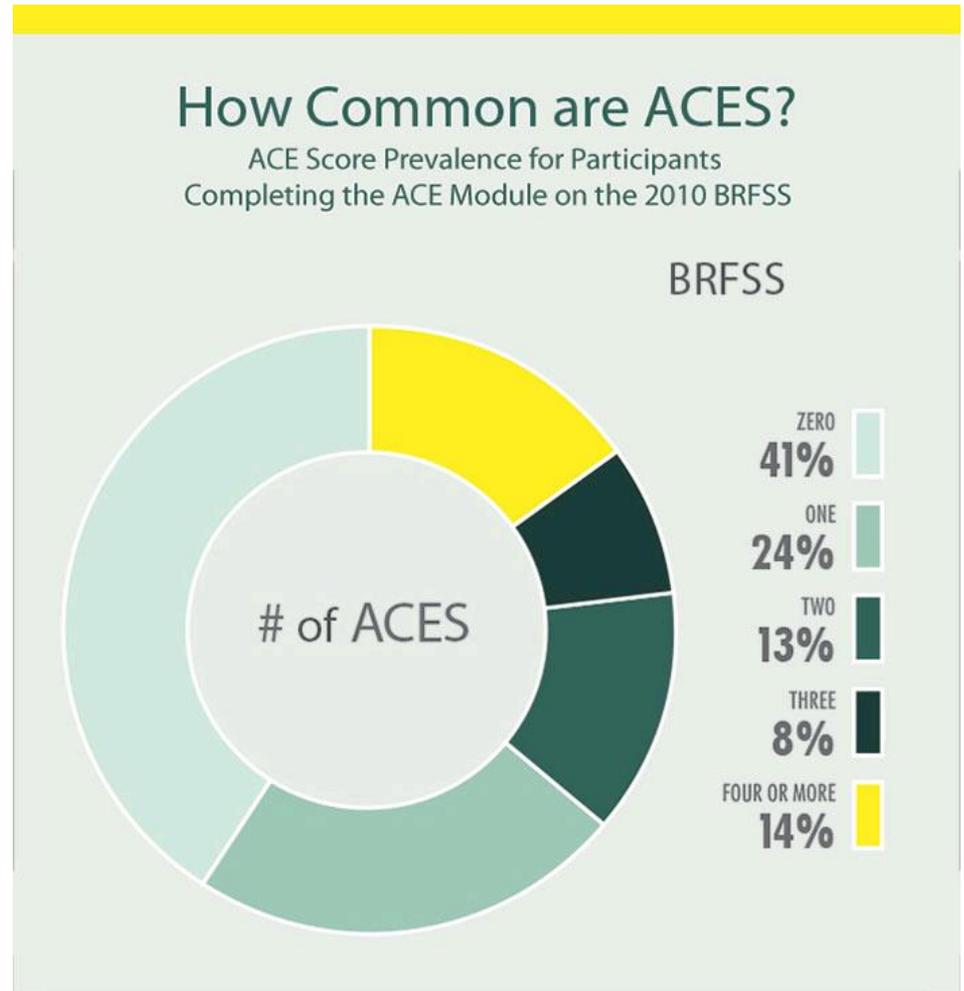
How Common are ACES?
ACE Score Prevalence for Participants Completing the ACE Module on the 2010 BRFSS

BRFSS

# of ACES

ZERO
41%

ONE
24%

TWO
13%

THREE
8%

FOUR OR MORE
14%

How Common are ACES?
ACE Score Prevalence for Participants Completing the ACE Module on the 2010 BRFSS
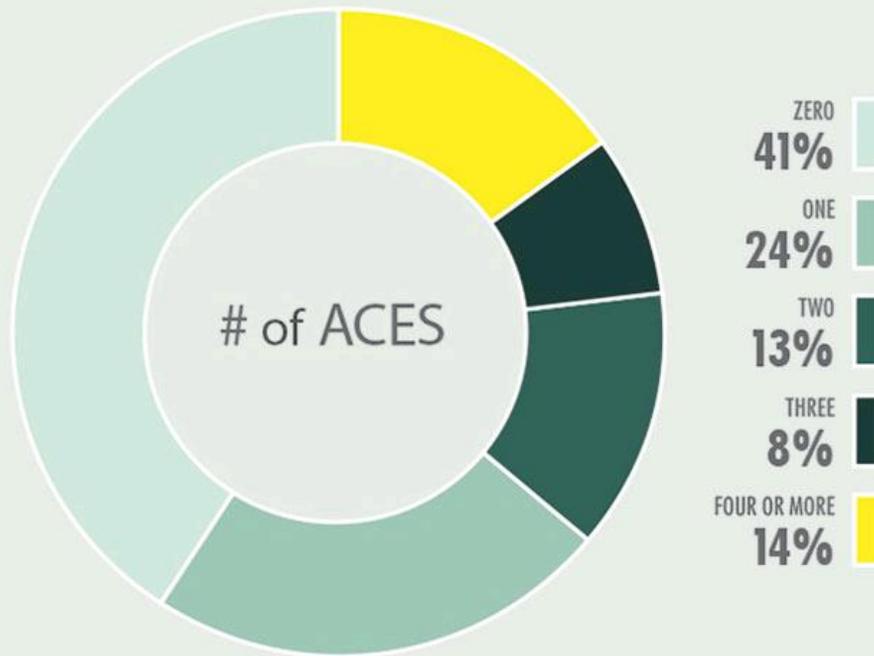
What is Trauma?

• Traumatic experiences are those that are

overwhelming, invoke intense negative affect, and involve some degree of loss of control and/or vulnerability. The experience of trauma is ***subjective*** and ***developmentally bound.***

Blaustein & Kinniburgh 2010;Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005

What helps people survive?

- Assumption of danger

- Rapid mobilization in the face of perceived threat

- Self-protective stance

- Development of alternative strategies to meet developmental needs

Blaustein & Kinniburgh 2010;Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005
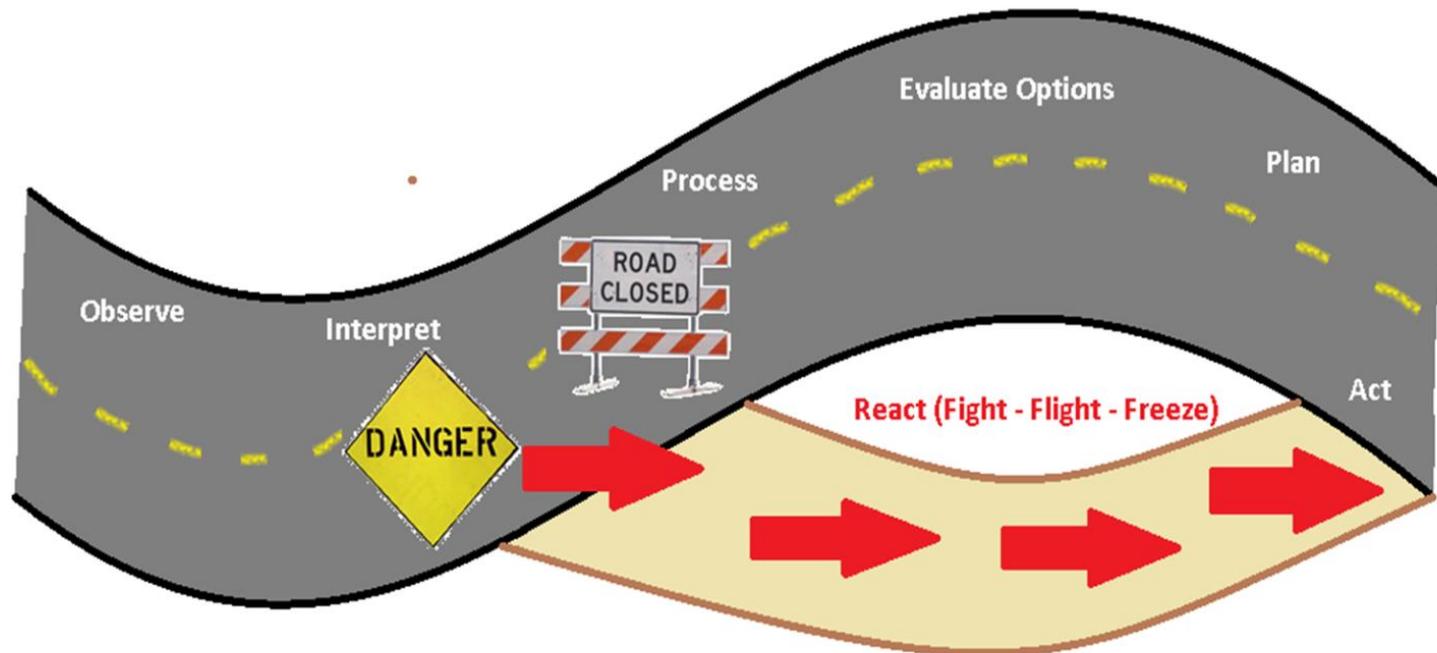
Impact on Development and Learning

➤ Regulation of Emotion

    ➤ Poor impulse control

    ➤ Aggression against self and others

    ➤ Trouble interpreting emotional signals

    ➤ Uncertainty about other people

    ➤ Defiance (active or passive)

Impact on Development and Learning

➢ Learning/retrieving new verbal information

➢ Ability to articulate needs

➢ Forming a coherent narrative

➢ Verbal problem solving

➢ Ability to extract key ideas

➢ Ability to organize information sequentially

    ➢ Impacts retrieval of information

    ➢ Impacts understanding cause and effect relationships

➢ Perspective taking

The Trauma Cycle

	Child	Parent	Staff
Cognitive	I am bad, unlovable, damaged. People are dangerous. I can't trust anyone	I am ineffective. This kid is causing trouble. He's making things chaotic for everyone	I am ineffective This family/this parent is so difficult. They need to just do what I ask them to do.
Emotional	Shame, Anger, Fear, Hopelessness	Frustration, Anxiety, Helplessness	Frustration, anger, burnout, loss of empathy
Behavioral	Avoidance, aggression, pre-emptive rejection and self-protection	Over-reacting, Controlling, Shutting down/Disconnecting emotionally	Reactivity, control, punitive responses
The Cycle	"I'm being controlled; I have to fight harder"	"He keeps fighting me; I better dig my heels in." "This staff doesn't get it-I'm not going to bother."	"I have to up the ante or this family will never do the right thing."

Challenges of working with Traumatized Children

➤ Emotional dysregulation can feel contagious

➤ Staff can unintentionally participate in recreating traumatic interaction in the role of rescuer, victim or abuser

➤ Situations often arise where the need for some kind of understanding and containment is at its greatest, and yet the situation is such that it is the least likely to occur

In summary…

- Traumatized children respond to their trauma history in the present. They are <u>not able</u> to discern that the context has changed
- Extreme behaviors within relationships can be seen as defensive or self-protective
- This behavior must be seen as an attempt to master extremely difficult environments. In this way, traumatized children are "*doing the best that they can*"

How has working with students with trauma affected you?

- Beliefs about the world

- Spiritual beliefs

- Sense of self, groundedness, emotional stability

- Sense of personal safety, family's safety

- Trust of yourself or others

- The way you judge people

- Sense of control

- Ability to be alone, to be with others

- Relationship to your body

Saakvitne, K.W., Gamble, S., Pearlman, L.A. & Lev, B.T. (2000) Risking Connection

Working with students/clients is an occupational hazard

➢We are likely exposed to horrible stories of things that happened to people we care about

➢When we do good work, we are empathetic-we open our hearts.

➢We feel responsible for our students' well-being

➢We may feel angry and helpless about what happened

➢The stories we hear might remind us of our own

Common Caregiver Responses to Children with Trauma

Common Caregiver Responses

- Feeling ineffective
- Guilt and shame
- Anger, blaming child
- Withdrawing from child
- Overreacting
- Becoming overly permissive
- Disrupting placement

Blaustein & Kinniburgh 2010;Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005

Impact of Invalidating Environments

➢ Communication is met with exaggerated response and/or punishment

➢ Painful Emotions are disregarded

➢ Person is told they are wrong about what is causing stress

➢ Experience is attributed to unacceptable personality traits

➢ Failure of individual to live up to expectations brings disapproval and attempts to change individuals attitude

How Do We Increase Our Ability to Regulate?
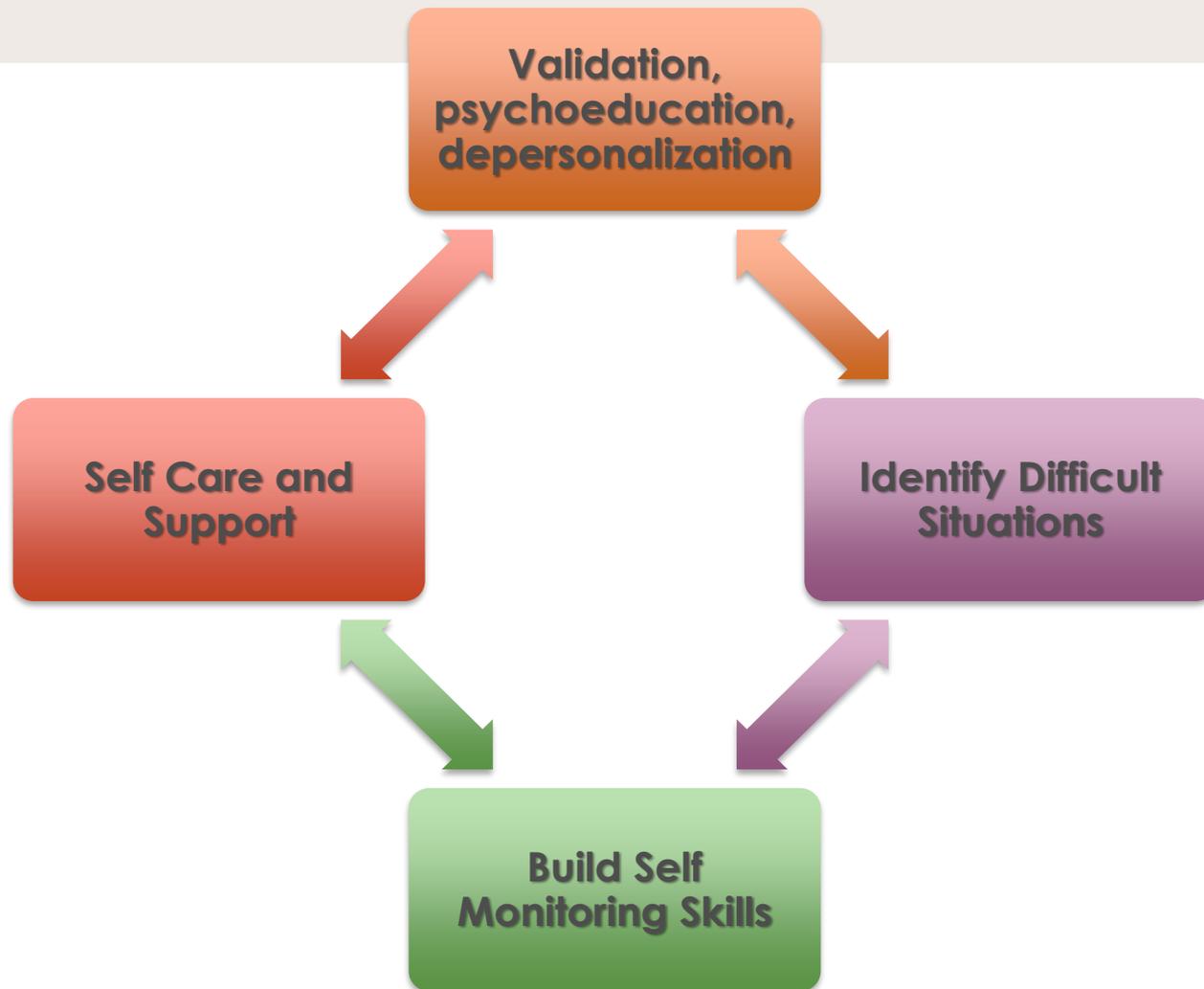
Validate, Normalize, and Depersonalize

➢ Normalize caregiver response to difficult behaviors

➢ Depersonalize youth trauma response

      ➢ QTIP- QUIT TAKING IT PERSONALLY

➢ Provide and seek psychoeducation

Blaustein & Kinniburgh 2010;Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005

Social Environmental Intervention

The course of development can be altered…by effective interventions that change the balance between risk and protection, thereby shifting the odds in favor of more adaptive outcomes.
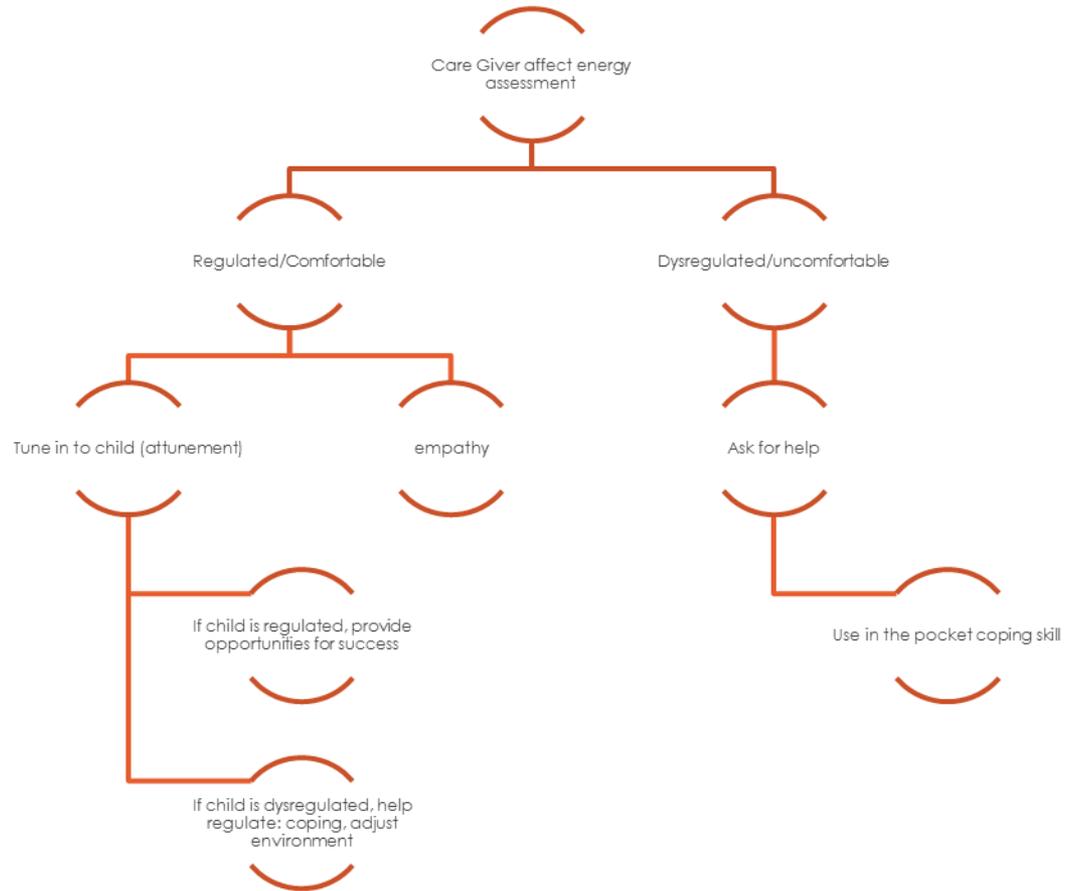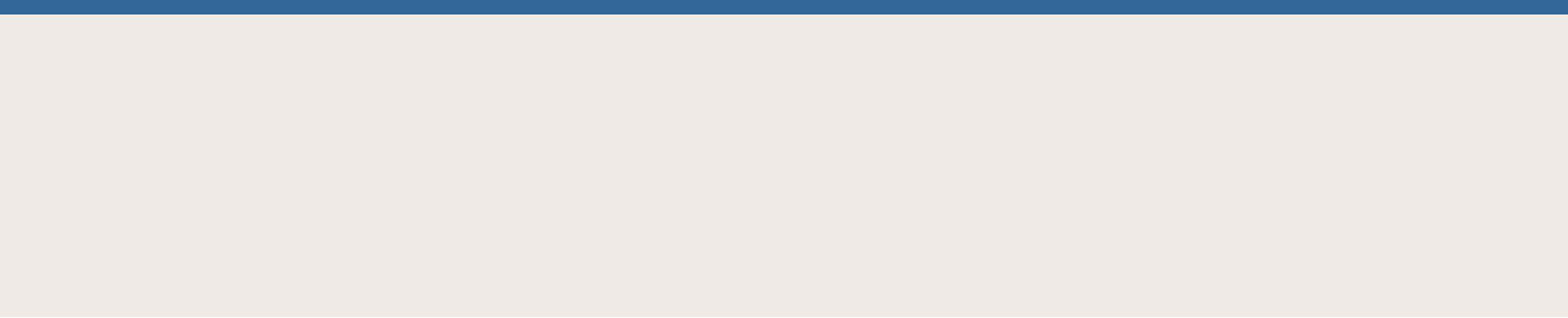
(Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)

Social Environmental Interventions

- Create calm, nurturing and healing environments (e.g., sensory, touch, color, yoga, art)

- Ongoing training & supervision to ensure 'caring, compassion, respectful' for children & families

- Pay attention to triggers, warning signs, strategies

- Reinforce caregivers for ways they are already adjusting the environment

- Continue to experiment with ways to adjust the environment..

Helpful Assumptions for Staff

- Behavior has function. Trauma related behavior is a person's best attempt to deal with intolerable circumstances

- Person wants to improve

- Students must learn new behaviors in relevant contexts

- We all need support

Care Giver affect energy assessment

Regulated/Comfortable

Dysregulated/uncomfortable

Tune in to child (attunement)

empathy

Ask for help

If child is regulated, provide opportunities for success

Use in the pocket coping skill

If child is dysregulated, help regulate: coping, adjust environment

A case example

- PS is a freshman, who appears impulsive and off balance. He lives with his mother and step dad. His history is significant for loss of his biological father, long history of school difficulty, neglect and multiple losses.

- Core beliefs- "I am annoying, defective" "I exhaust adults and adults can't help me" " I will be rejected"

- Piled up feelings- shame, deep sadness

Once Upon a time (two weeks before break)

- PS's guidance counselor before my meeting with him called me Into his office for the three of us to meet about the amount of time PS is out of class in the afternoon….

- What's are PS's sore spots/triggers?

- In session

- What do we know is regulating for PS?

- Next week

- Out of class intervention

- In class intervention

- To be continued this week…..

Common Attributes of Effective Environmental Intervention

- Linked to person's history of trauma

- Tied to specific environmental resources

- Encourage staff and youth creativity

- Incorporate sensory interventions

- Needs of individual supersede the rules of the institution

Getting to the Plan

- Validation

- Building curiosity about the behavior (i.e. what is the unmet need behind the behavior)

- Co-creating environmental intervention

Milieu Applications: Supporting Staff

- Pay attention to affect management/behavioral response at both the individual staff and systemic levels
    - Acknowledgement and reinforcement of what is currently successful

- Normalize staff response to difficult behaviors; remind yourself and others that feeling emotion in response to your clients is NORMAL and EXPECTED

- Consider the following:
    - Forums for routine communication among staff
    - Incorporation of trauma concepts into case discussion
    - Routine processing of difficult situations (from perspective of staff support, as well as child)
    - Building mastery through experiential skill-building

- Acknowledge vicarious trauma; build forums to address

- Team building

- Creativity and Experimentation

Blaustein & Kinniburgh
2010;Kinniburgh & Blaustein,

Teacher Consultation

- What are some examples of teacher/school staff consultation and collaboration that have been effective?

- What have been some challenges?

Tying this work in to treatment plans and reimbursement

– Developing Treatment plans that have skill building tied to classroom performance and success

  • Self regulation skills connected to classroom

– Review your service codes

  • Ex. MBHP

– IEP related services

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