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Preventing Challenging Behaviors,

in partnership with Region 9 Head Start Association

Julie Kurtz
Founder
Center for Optimal Brain Integration
www.juliekurtz.com

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the difference between sensory and emotional literacy.

2. Identify 1-2 strategies to help children identify whether their emotions are small, medium or large.

3. Identify 1-2 strategies to engage children in building self-regulation tools to manage their big emotions.

4. Name and identify 1-2 strategies to teach children emotional literacy.
A Child’s Brain is Like an Iceberg

Brain Architects

- Adults can directly influence the growth of children’s brains internally and externally
- Challenging behavior is communicating a story/need:
  - To gain someone or something
  - To avoid someone or something
  - To express a sensation/emotion
We Need to Teach!

“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we………

........punish? ........teach?

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

Tom Hemes, NASDE President (Counterpoint 1998, p.2)

The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice.

Peggy O’Mara
www.TheSilverPen.com
4 Steps to Teach ALL Children

1. Identify my sensations and emotions.
2. Identify how small (green), medium (orange) or large (red) sensations and emotions are in my body.
3. When my sensations or emotions are in the orange or red zone (medium/large) then I have to pick a self-regulation strategy to manage and calm my big emotions.
4. Think, think and think of a solution to my problem.

Step 1. Help Children Identify Their Sensations and Emotions

Sensory and Emotional Literacy:

- The ability to identify sensations and emotion words.
- The ability to identify sensations and emotions in myself.
- The ability to identify when sensations and emotions are small (green), medium (orange) or large (red) inside myself.
### Difference Between Sensations and Feelings

*The body has to release a charge of energy after a trigger event.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sensations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Feelings</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physiological happenings in the body</td>
<td>Words describe how you feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An energy charge in the body from a trigger</td>
<td>Small, medium or large feelings or scale of 1–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way your body “feels” (e.g. butterflies in stomach, head hurts, fire in throat, sweaty palms, pit in stomach)</td>
<td>Triggered by an experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body communicating intensity of experience</td>
<td>Mad, Sad, Angry, Frustrated, Scared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz: Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children

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Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz: Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children
### Sensory Language
*Experienced physiologically in the body*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Language</th>
<th>Feeling Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A volcano erupting</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterflies in my chest</td>
<td>Nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumble bees buzzing in my stomach</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hammer in my head</td>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumpy like a frog</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prickly</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweaty</td>
<td>Stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen iceberg</td>
<td>Numb, panicked, frightened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Encourage Sensory Recognition**

*Tune children in to their body sensations.*

“It looks like your body may be tired.”

“When that happened to you did you feel like a volcano was in your belly?”

Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz: *Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children*
Sensory Practice

- Pokey
- Fast
- Jumpy
- Bumpy
- Twisty
- Heavy
- Empty
- Tight
- Shaky

Teaching Children to Describe the Sensations in Their Bodies

- My heart feels Jumpy like a Frog
- My head feels Frozen and my body feels Cold
- My heart is beating Fast like a Race Car
- My tummy feels like a Roller Coaster
- My head feels like Buzzing Bees
- My insides are Twisty
- My legs feel like heavy Rocks
- My insides are Empty
- I feel Cold all over
- My heart is Heavy
- I feel like a Volcano ready to explode
- My brain feels like a Rocket Ship ready to take off
- My fists are Tight
- My face feels Hot and Sweaty
- My whole body feels Loose
- I have Scratchy skin
- My legs and arms are Shaky
- My body feels like an Iceberg
- My tummy is a T-rex Dinosaur
- My mouth is like a Cotton Ball
- My head feels like a Roller Coaster

Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz: Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children
Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check in Application

Created by Julie Kurtz for Android and IOS

Story Time

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY
Pay attention to:

- Your breath
- Your heartbeat
- The temperature of your skin
- Your muscles & belly
- Your energy

What sensations do you notice?

Listening to My Body

By Gabi Garcia
Illustrated by Ying Hui Tan
Emotional Literacy

- Teach emotions change throughout the day
- Learn others feel different about the same thing
- Check-in time for identifying emotions throughout the day
- Practice with books and guess what the characters feel
- Help children notice by saying, “You look proud”

Teaching of Emotions

Wonder with the child as they experience various affective states what they might be feeling:

- “I wonder if you feel sad right now”
- “It appears you might be frustrated.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELING (RED ZONE)</th>
<th>FEELING (GREEN ZONE)</th>
<th>FEELING (BLUE ZONE)</th>
<th>FEELING (YELLOW ZONE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mad</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrified</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelling</td>
<td>Easy Going/Flexible</td>
<td>Moving Slowly</td>
<td>Annoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troubled</td>
<td>Relieved</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awful</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Lost</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Joyful</td>
<td>Stuck</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2.
Identify whether sensations and emotions inside me are

small (green),
medium (orange)
large (red)
Feelings Thermometer

- Using a thermometer, teachers help children learn to point to the color that represents how “big” the emotions are inside of them.
- **Orange** means “emotions are beginning to rise up inside of me” or “my emotions are moving from intense toward the calmer zone.”
- **Red**, the highest zone of intensity, means “my emotions are heated up” and “my feelings are very big!”
- Laminate an arrow with Velcro to use with the thermometer. Children can move the arrow up and down the thermometer to represent the different levels of intensity of their emotions.

Identifying Feelings in Self

- Learning words for different feelings
- Learning how to recognize your own feelings
- Learning to recognize how SMALL, MEDIUM OR LARGE the feeling is
  - **Small, Medium or Large**
  - **0-10 Scale**
  - **Red, Orange or Green**
  - **Lion, Bear, Cat**
Step 3.
When my sensations or emotions are in the orange or red zone (medium/large) then I have to pick a self-regulation strategy to manage and calm my big emotions.

“When we inhale we stimulate the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) which makes the heart increase (accelerator). Exhaling stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which decreases how fast the heart beats (brakes).

In calm individuals, the inhale and exhale are steady and a good heart rate measures well-being.”

-Adapted from: The Body Keeps the Score, Page 269, Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.
Breathing is your body's remote control for self-regulation. Take a slow deep belly breath in through your nose and then slowly release the breath out of your mouth. Work from the belly, and move the breath all the way into your lungs and then back out.

We must help the children to learn to use their breath to calm their regulatory system – “breathe in, and breathe out.”

Just Breathe Video
(Elmo from Sesame Street)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mZbzDQpylA
Teaching to use the Breath

- **Feathers are a great visual for children**
  - Give each child a feather, and have them blow it down
  - They can try long exhales and short exhales
- **Stuffed animals or breathing buddy**
  - Have them lie down on their backs with an object such as a stuffed animal on their chest
  - Have them make it go up and down as they breathe
- **Pretend balloon breaths – “Breathe in, and breathe out”**
  - Start each session with 3 balloon breaths or belly breaths
  - Use a real balloon, and show them how balloons expand and contract
- **Smell the flower and blow out the candle**
  - Pantomime the actions for breathing in, then out

Infant Regulation

Walking (Holding)    Rocking (Holding)    Reading a Book    Humming / Singing

*Photo: Courtney Vickery*

*Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children* by Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz
Toddler and Preschool Regulation

Managing Big Emotions

Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children Nicholson, Perez, and Kurtz
Step 4. Think, think and think of a solution to my problem.

References

Books:

Websites:
- www.cainclusion.org
- www.challengingbehavior.org
- http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/

Phone and Tablet APPs:
- Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check-In (Julie Kurtz)
- Stop, Breath and Think
Thank You!

Julie Kurtz
www.juliekurtz.com
Co-Author of Trauma Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children