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Early Childhood Leaders Managing the Stress of Working in Response to COVID-19, in Partnership with Region 9 Head Start Association

Photo Credit: Alice Blecker

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how to tune in and notice their body’s individual reaction to stress.

2. Identify strategies for creating environments that support adults to buffer their stress response system and promote resilience.

3. Describe the stress-reducing, resilience-building tool called H.O.P.E.
Trainers

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Center for Optimal Brain Integration™

Zones of Self-Awareness

Cultivate your personal SELF-AWARENESS TOOLKIT. Tuning in and understanding what you individually look like in each zone can help you become more aware so that you can be your own FIRST RESPONDER in emotional emergencies and stress.
Your Emergency and First Responder Plan

- People that calm and ground you
- Places/Environments that are predictable, restorative and/or safe for you
- Objects/Things that are comforting
- Activities or strategies that calm your stress response system
- Words/Self-Talk/Mantras or a quote you can or do say to yourself to feel centered and grounded
- Routines or rituals you can do to bring you back to the ‘green zone’
Creating a Stress Reducing and Healing Environment

“When the crowded Vietnamese refugee boats met with storms or pirates, if everyone panicked all would be lost. But if one person on the boat remained calm and centered, it was enough. It showed the way for everyone to survive.”
— Thich Nhat Hanh

Uncertainty and Stress
Elephant in the Room

Mirror Neurons and Co-Regulation
Leading Staff through Stressful Times

- Know the critical importance of attuned, consistent responsive relationships.
- Provide grounding and reassurance. Model and encourage strategies to interrupt reactivity and calm stress response systems.
- Bear witness and listen non-judgmentally. Refrain from moving too quickly to offer advice, solutions or quick fixes.
- Help adults identify their strengths and the coping skills they have used in the past to manage adversity.
- Create opportunities for voice and choice and feelings of control to reduce the stress of uncertainty (e.g., support collaborative problem-solving).
- Be honest and do not dismiss fears or reality. Emphasize strengths, resilience and that you are all learning and going through this together.
- Model your own humanity: Your strengths and struggles. Normalize that this is not easy and the process of giving yourself grace.

“When we inhale we stimulate the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) which makes the heart increase (accelerator). Exhaling stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which decrease 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.
HOPE

H  Have present moment awareness.

O  Observe sources of strength and resilience.

P  Plan for social support.

E  Engage in restorative actions.

Have present moment awareness.

→ Pausing and noticing stress in the body.

→ Using strategies to de-escalate and interrupt reactivity.

One way I can practice present moment awareness is...

Observe sources of strength and resilience.

Think back to a difficult situation you have experienced in your life. What did you do that helped you to cope?
Plan for social support.

➔ Identify family, friends, colleagues or others in your life whom you care about.

➔ List groups or communities who provide support by making you feel a sense of connection and belonging.

Who are the people, animals or groups in your life that can help you to feel a sense of connection and belonging?

And how will you maintain connections with them during this time of social distancing?
Engage in restorative actions.

What is one action you can take to reduce your stress and help you feel grounded, safe, calm and/or energized?
Contact Us or Join the COBI™ Community

Website: www.optimalbrainintegration.com
Facebook: Center for Optimal Brain Integration
Instagram: COBI or Center4OptimalBrainIntegration
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References & Resources

Center for Optimal Brain Integration
https://www.optimalbrainintegration.com/
