Early Childhood Leaders Managing the Stress of Working in Response to COVID-19, in partnership with Region 9 Head Start Association
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Okay, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us for today’s webinar session. My name is Fernando and I come with the Region 9 Head Start Association and I will be your webinar host today. So feel free to contact me via the chat option of Zoom with any logistical questions you may have regarding audio, video, or any connection issues you experience. This webinar session will be recorded and made available for on-demand consumption within 24 to 48 hours up on our Region 9 Headstart Association’s YouTube channel, which can be found at our website wwwregion, the number nine, hsa.org. You should see that address right there on the screen. Please note that watching this session live, and/or on-demand via our YouTube channel, does not qualify for CEUs. To earn CEUs, viewers will have to access this course on-demand and complete the test at continued.com/ECE. To access the course, viewers will use promo code FREESUPPORT, the code, it’s on the screen and it’s all capitalized, for free access to the course, as well as the Emergency Response Strategy session, which will go live later today. The course should be available online at continued.com next week. PowerPoint slides and other materials used today are already available on our website, again, the address is on the screen. Now it is my pleasure to introduce our topic, Early Childhood Leaders Managing the Stress of Working in Response to COVID-19, and your presenters today will be Julie Nicholson, LaWanda Wesley, and Julie Kurtz, thank you.

Hello, everybody, this is Julie Kurtz and welcome to everyone who’s joining today. We are so grateful to Headstart Region 9 and Continued for creating this opportunity for us to come together in this critical time, to feel a sense of community and connection and to teach and learn from one another. My name is Julie Kurtz, I am the CEO and the founder for the Center for Optimal Brain Integration where we train on trauma informed practices for early childhood, K through five, middle school and high school. Today, we are going to have three learning outcomes, and after this course, participants will be able to, one, describe how to tune in and notice your own individual body’s reactions and responses, identify strategies for creating environments that support adults to buffer their stress response and promote resilience, and describe the stress-reducing, resilience-building tool that we call H.O.P.E. I’d like to introduce, have our other trainers introduce themselves, Dr. Julie Nicholson, Dr. LaWanda Wesley.

Hello, everybody, this is Julie Nicholson and I am a professor of practice at Mills College in Oakland, California.

Hi all, this is LaWanda Wesley and I’m with Oakland Unified School District and I am supporting today’s call.
- [Julie K.] Well, we’re gonna get right into it and the first thing we’re gonna talk about is a tool that we have on our website, www.optimalbrainintegration.com, and LaWanda will post that in the chat room. All of our handouts are located today, and at the three o’clock webinar, on our website. The first tool is called the zones of self-awareness, and this is a tool that cultivates your own personal self-awareness because tuning in and understanding what you individually look like, in each zone that we’re gonna talk about in a moment, can really help you become more aware so that you can be a first responder in your own life first for emotional emergencies and stress. If you take a look at this photo, well let’s go back one more slide just to take a look at that photo, and that photo, if you look at the woman standing there and when you’re on an airplane, you hear that you’re supposed to put the oxygen mask on yourself before a child, and we really thought that this photo was appropriate for many different reasons, what we’re facing today, we need to take care of ourselves, it’s so critical that we’re aware of our own body reactions so that we can manage our own stress so that we can better help the people that we serve.

Okay, let’s go to the next slide. On this tool that we offer you, you’ll see a very, a screenshot of it. There are actually three zones, we call them the green, the orange and red. The green zone is the place where you are in that optimal state of regulation, where you’re regulated, you’re calm, you feel grounded in the world. And then the orange zone is when you become slightly disregulated or moderately disregulated. And the red zone is when you move out of that disregulated state into something in the trauma world we call hyper or hypoarousal. Hyperarousal is when you’re in that fight or flight mode to protect yourself from perceived or real danger, and then hypoarousal is when you go into freeze mode, and many of us are in this red state right now where we are in fight, flight or freeze. So there are three zones and there are four clues under each one and we take people in our self-care training through these four clues. The first clue is the physical sensations in your body. For example, when you feel stress unique to you, you have a physical sensation. So when you’re calm in the green zone, it looks one way in your body. When you’re moderately disregulated, your physical sensations may look different and when you’re very disregulated into the red zone, your physical or body sensations, and some people describe sensations as a stomachache, a headache, their eyes twitching, they feel sweaty, their heart is racing, or they might feel like their sciatica in their back. We have these physical symptoms because the body is communicating the levels of stress or emotions that we’re experiencing in the moment and the next one, the next clue for which zone you’re in, and their four clues are the same for each zone, is the feelings that you have. So feelings are I’m angry, I’m mad, I’m happy, I’m irritated, I’m sad, I’m hopeful. This is the second clue. The third clue, as to which zone you’re in or the thoughts that you have, is
related to really your pre-frontal executive functioning and the thoughts are things like, oh, I’m so at peace with the world, or gosh, I just feel like I’m yelling at somebody.

There are different thoughts that we have when we’re in one of these zones, and the last one is behavior. Behavior is what do you look like behaviorally when you’re in one of these zones? So when we do this in our self-care training and when you walk away with this tool and you think about where am I right now, one of the things that’s really important to think about is it’s not always easy to do this right away. Sometimes it takes a long time to cultivate your awareness. Some people tell me green is more triggering, when things are calm, I get more triggered. Some people say, I can’t figure out what orange looks like for me. And then it’s very common for people to say, I only notice one or two things.

So for example, when I get in the red zone, I sometimes just notice my thoughts and my behaviors, I don’t notice what I’m feeling or body sensations. So it’s not like you have all four for every single zone, we’re just cultivating and beginning to cultivate this awareness. So I invite you to put in the chat box maybe which zone you think you’re in right now. Let’s take a few responses. If you were to think about, if you came onto this webinar, what zone are you in right now? Green or orange or red? People are saying green, orange, red, orange, orange. I can’t obviously read them all but a lot of oranges, red but back in orange now, I see. Wow. A lot of people are mostly in orange, dark orange somebody said, somebody shading their orange zone, very creative. Thank you so much for sharing all of this with us, the zones that you’re in, and I am noticing right now that most people are in orange, many people are in red, and many people are saying that they’re vacillating between different zones quickly throughout the day. So thank you for sharing what zone you’re in, and keep sharing, and we’re gonna move on to the next slide, which is the next part of this activity. When you look at the handout, there will be a backside. Everybody needs to be their own emergency and first responder, so we encourage you to think about the things that are grounders. I like to think of it this way, that if you’re like a tent flowing in the air and you need those grounders to keep you down when the wind is blowing, and one of the things that we need to pay attention to is what are the things that ground us? I had a phone conversation at five this morning over Facebook with somebody who was telling me that they were very disregulated and one of the things that she’s said is she’s lost all her grounders. Her routine has changed, she’s being asked to do new things, her relationships have to change and she doesn’t know how yet to address this new normal. So we need to think about what are the things that ground you individually? People. Places and environments. Objects or things that might be comforting to you, activities or strategies that calm your stress response system. Words or mantras, sometimes we have a quote or a mantra that we say to ourself over and over that
grounds us and keeps us centered, and for some people, routines and rituals bring us back to the green zone. And so I am wondering too if anybody wants to post, do you use any of these strategies to ground or calm yourself and what do you use? Some people are saying home, work, routines calm me, church calms me, walking. Someone has a mantra that they posted, everything happens for a reason, and then they added, and coffee. And so gardening, journaling, reading, tapping, pets, breathing, cooking, massage, yoga, meditation, all of these, serenity prayers, vary. This is incredible, I’d love to put this list together and post this later, so thank you for your responses. My husband, routine, my dog. All right, we’re gonna move on just so we can take a look at the next slide. Before we move on to LaWanda, I do wanna say there’s one more tool on our website. We’re not showing it to anyone, we’re not talking about it today, but it’s a tool that we created that, viral on Facebook. Maybe were 150,000 views and up to 2,000 shares, and the title of this is Coronavirus Anxiety Management, Be Your Own First Responder, and there are tips that are being shared widely, just simple tips for managing your own anxiety during this stressful time. And I really encourage you to look at these handouts, pass them out to your staff, look at them for yourself as you continue on the journey of redesigning your normal grounders during this time. So I’m gonna pass it on to, well, let me just, yeah, pass it on to LaWanda.

- [LaWanda] All right. Hi everyone, so good to be here in community with you and I’ve been on several calls with so many different folks about the current environment, but one of the things I realized, that is coming up for us, is that we are leading the charge in creating a stress-reducing and healing environment, and this is the full quote that we found, that was posted actually a couple days on social media, by Julie Kurtz, but I thought it was beautiful sentiment and it reads, 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. And the reason that quote resonated so much with me is because what we’re noticing all around us is that adults and children are awfully anxious and worried and they’re panicking and just having a hard time concentrating and nothing else. And we’re pretty much in a environment that is changing, it’s rapid, it’s uncertain, and maybe even perhaps some folks are feeling a certain sense of loss. But what we do know is how we come together individually and collectively can help us navigate through this. And as leaders, for sure, undoubtedly, you’re having some of your worry for managing your own personal life, I know I am, and for managing professional responsibilities that you have, and there is a balance because we were honoring the and and the both, but how we navigate through that is a constant day-to-day experience. So we do know that leaders create a stress-reducing environment, that the only way that we can do that is for us to first build that sense of calm and creating that
space and be our first responders on that. And I’m gonna pass the baton to Julie, who’s going to navigate us to the next part of this conversation.

- [Julie] Hi, everyone, it’s Julie Nicholson, we have two Julies on here. So what we’re gonna do next here is we are going to share some suggestions for how you, as leaders, administrators, can create the conditions to support others around you and to lead in a way that is human and humane, to be able to be authentic and honest. So you don’t have to pretend or hide the feelings and things that are going on because that would create a sense of self-doubt, guilt and shame. We wanna give you the tools to support yourself and also for you to feel like you have the tools to support those that you’re responsible for leading, to reduce stress, to build both individual and collective forms of coping and resilience, and we’re gonna suggest that this starts by having the courage to create spaces where you can both model and also guide people to honestly name what is going on. Not to pretend that we can just move right into business as usual but instead to take moments that we all need to attune to the conditions and the realities that are happening, to listen to one another, to hear the range of feelings and concerns that people have, to build empathy with one another and really lean and accompany, to be in community during this journey of uncertainty and a whole lot of disruption.

So I will take just a second to talk about uncertainty, and it seems that every email in text starts with these are uncertain and challenging times. And we know that uncertainty is hard in the best of times. Most of us really struggle with it but I wanna just start by saying, you know, it can create real feelings that are disabling, it can cause worry, difficulty concentrating, anxiety for some, frustration, and if it continues, there can be a sense of burnout. But what we wanna know in a time of uncertainty is that we’re not alone. It doesn’t matter if we’re introverts, extroverts, all humans require connection and especially in times of uncertainty. And here we are at this moment where we’re being talked to about the importance of social distancing, to prevent infection and community spread and so on. But we have so much stress and it’s going, this sense of social distancing is going counter to everything that evolution has hardwired us to wanna do, to seek out and support each other, we sort of yearn to huddle in together, to have that sense of holding hands, of hugging, of touching. There’s a lot about stress reduction, just to feel that human touch. These things soothe us and they’re pivotal for how we have evolved to respond to stress, and so what we know and what we’re talking about this here in this webinar and then the next one to come is that we have to find new ways to connect, to stay connected. We know that we, when we look across humanity and times of stress, we are really creative and we always adapt to survive and there’s no question that we’re gonna come up with and
we'll be sharing even today, with some of the ways that, we have new imaginative ways of connecting even if we are not in the same physical space. So I wanna just suggest that as leaders, you can guide, you know, you can be honest with others, we need to do that, to be honest with them, about the challenges we’re facing, but you also have this opportunity to guide people in conditions of uncertainty to engage in creative and collaborative learning and problem solving, and to recognize that out of uncertainty, we often have these moments of learning how to think out of the box, trying new ways of doing things, having new possibilities, new growth, and there can be lots of benefits to this. So LeWanda is gonna talk about the elephant in the room.

- [LaWanda] Yes, I am. Hi everyone, I'm back again. So one of the things I've been noticing, again, on many calls is that we as leaders have sort of getting straight to the business and one of the elephants in the room is realizing that we’re moving really quickly, maybe and sometimes we’re even reacting to quick strategies that we need to put in place, highlighting technical details about this, that, and the other, but the risk is us not taking into consideration the human aspect of it all, and including feelings and emotions and just holding a space where people can just be with each other and check in with each other and say how are you doing? And really leaning in and listening and attuning to one another and elevating each other's voice and doing that individually and doing that collectively with one another, allowing a sense of agency and control because what we do know is that when you’re in this, say for example, if you’re in your red zone, you may not be operating from your full thinking part of your brain so the elephant in the room is really starting to think about this issue of just moving so quickly to technical fixes or details and then trying to think about, well, how do we look at the situation? Are we naming what’s happening? Are we naming the nameless? And under the guides of directing towards both looking at what has to get done and what has to get accomplished. And there was this beautiful email that came across, from Barbara O’Neill, she’s the creator of Transform Challenging Behaviors. It’s a beautiful email that she titled How Are You Holding Up? And it reads like this, the big thing that's coming up for me and my conversations with people, both professionally and personally, is that people in positions of leadership are struggling to lead with humanity. Center directors and corporate CEOs alike are having meetings that are business as usual without acknowledging the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact it’s having, in some cases, and the fear or reality of people not getting paid during this forced time off. And she says, I'm not by any stretch of the imagination saying I know what to do right now, or even have the answers, but generally speaking, I have found that it’s good to meet people where they are at. It’s important not to have any white elephants in the room. In general, it’s helpful to acknowledge what’s going on and to validate emotions and circumstances, create space for people to be real to acknowledge the impact of
current events, company decisions and daily interactions, and some of the things that continue to pop up is, you know, if you’ve been out in these state calls or national calls is can we offer emergency childcare and let’s get to planning for that, ‘cause we wanna make sure our emergency responders and healthcare workers have access to childcare so they can work, or maybe some of us are working on developing distance learning mitigation plans, distant learning or mitigation plans. And then I’ve heard others talk about, hey, let’s just stabilize for this week. Let’s just get our bearings and let’s do really light connection and let’s find other ways to still be engaged with our families through phone calls or emails. And I heard one really beautiful story was someone said we’re holding 90-minute case studies for our children who have special needs and just focusing on one child at a time for 90 minutes a day, and just once a day. So there’s many different strategies of how you lean in and what can be done and we’re all innovating at the same time, but what I’d like to invite you to start, you know, if you could, in the chat boxes, think about, in your agency, have you noticed that leaders are naming the white elephant in the room? Are they allowing space to talk or process while balancing work tasks and technical details? And if you could share what is coming up in terms of that questions of, yeah, what you’re noticing from leaders. So yes. Some said, some maybe not as much as I’d like. Prayer helps. Some lack of communication, mm-hmm. Their directors are in constant contact with you through emails and texts. They’re supporting us, they’re helping us, yes. They check in all the time. Yeah, there’s a lot, there’s a lot, I’m trying to read it as it’s going, feeling very informed. Different responses maybe coming from professors. Our school systems. Services for children. Some are frustrated that childcare workers are being called to work, mm-hmm. A lot of different sentiments, so. My principal’s wonderful. Having team meetings by Zoom is helpful, yeah. Checking in with our daily manager. So you can see there’s a range of different ways of leaning in but the important part about this section of our presentation is how is it that we’re leaning in and making space and giving a sense of agency and voice at this time? And then I wanna invite Julie Kurtz to share the next slide on mirror neurons and co-regulation, but these are wonderful tips that you guys are sharing and we’ll save them, especially the ones that are allowing us to lean in and have space with one another.

- [Julie K.] Thank you, LaWanda, and I wanna just emphasize that the purpose of this is not to get you to push aside all your emotions and rush towards feeling calm and happy. Sometimes it just helps to sit with what you’re feeling and notice, and we all are first responders for ourselves first, but second, we’re called to task to help others as leaders and one of the things that we wanted to cast the spotlight on is mirror neurons and co-regulation. And stress is contagious. As human beings, we’re all relational and we absorb the emotions of those around us. Have you ever been around somebody
who’s anxious and then you become increasingly anxious, or someone that’s calm and you feel so calm around them? Our capacity to instinctively and immediately understand what another is feeling is due to mirror neurons. So mirror neurons are activated when you observe someone else taking action, like crying or smiling or walking towards you. When you observe someone experiencing emotion of fear, anger, or happiness, your emotional state can literally alter another person’s. An example of this is when we see someone crying and then we feel sad and we sense someone else’s stress and we feel our own internal distress, and this process of taking in another’s emotional state happens at a subconscious level which means sometimes it’s out of our control or awareness. And this is why this time is so difficult ‘cause many of you are helpers, that’s your superpower, and we feel deeply, we're very sensitive, and we’re absorbing the energy of everyone around us and it’s hard to stay grounded in that.

So co-regulation is a very powerful tool in your leadership toolbox that you can use to comfort and calm adults and children who are stressed and disregulated. To successfully co-regulate a distressed person you must actively work against the contagious nature of the disregulating stress impacting your own well-being and everything that’s swirling around you. You have to remain keenly aware of your own emotional state, that’s why we highlighted the green, orange, and red zones. What state are you in? When in the presence of distress, disregulated children or adult, we can follow them into disregulation or lead them back to regulation where they’re calm and they are more regulated. So this is a time, this is a critical time for you to be your own first responder. The number one goal is to really, really take care of yourself and to look at what state am I in and every choice I make, is it bringing myself or people to disregulation or regulation? We’re actually gonna go to the next slide and just take a little breath for this moment, in the halfway through our webinar. Just to give you a little education about the power of breath, ’cause sometimes we think, I don’t have control over anything right now, and we feel we’re spinning and there’s this wave of tornadoes emotionally happening around us. But actually, when you inhale, for example, you inhale through your nose, you stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, which increases your heart rate and it’s like the accelerator of your body. So every time you take a deep in breath, you’re stimulating the accelerator, which is the sympathetic nervous system. Every time you exhale, you’re stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system of your body and your sensory system, which decreases how fast the heart beats. It’s like the breaks of your body. So in calm individuals, the inhale and the exhale are like going 55, 70 miles an hour and you’re steady, you’re in the green zone. When you start to feel too much anxiety, unconsciously you take too many in breaths to match your stress state and you get more anxious. So one of the things that I wanna
talk about today is when you do a breath, you wanna do a belly breath. And the belly breath is where you take a deep breath in through your nostrils and it blows your belly up. You don't wanna do chest breaths 'cause that increases anxiety. So practice with me now, take a deep breath in through your nostrils and feel your belly blow up 'cause you sucked air in. So deep breath in, and your belly should be distended, and then when you do your deep breath out through your mouth, your belly sucks back in. So deep breath in through the nostrils, out through the mouth. The last thing that I wanna highlight about breathing is that if you are having a heightened level of stress or anxiety, or activation, your out breath should be longer than your in breath. Have you ever watched a professional, like the Olympics, for example, and on the Olympics you'll watch the athletes, before they do the 500 meter, and they're walking and they're shaking their arms and they're doing, out breaths? Because they're trying to slow the accelerator of their body down, so they don't burn all the energy off before the race. And so your out breaths can save your life during this time, so let's all take one, we're gonna take one deep breath in through the nose, hold it for three, and then we're gonna release for five to seven seconds before we move on to the next slide, just to pause. So take one deep breath in through your nostrils, one, two, three, Hold it, one, two, three, and out five to seven. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, we may not even have been able to go on that long, it's okay. But your out breath longer than your in breath. So breathing is the remote control for self-regulation. Now I'm gonna hand it over to Julie Nicholson.

- [Julie] Okay, great, and LaWanda and I are just gonna go back and forth sharing some strategies for you to lead staff and families through these stressful times. Many of these will be familiar to you but it's always good to just be reminded. And I will start with we know from every bit of literature and the research, clinical studies, and just our lived experience that the most important thing for reducing stress and preventing short and long-term negative incomes is the importance of this attuned consistent responsive relationship that you can offer to others.

- [LaWanda] Another one is providing grounding and reassurance, model and encouraging strategies to interrupt reactivity and calm stress, to calm the stress response system, and this could be something just by starting with the connector each day.

- [Julie] Bearing witness, you know, especially in these times when the problems are so complex, we don't know answers, there aren't simple quick fixes. Just a reminder that sometimes bearing witness, meaning you're just there, you are available to somebody, you're attuning to them, you're listening to them, and you're listening non-
judgmentally, letting them bring all of what they need to bring into that space emotionally, but you’re not there to, you’re helping them feel less lonely, less isolated, by having your presence with them. But you’re gonna refrain from jumping into and moving too quickly, or at all, into advice-giving solutions or quick fixes. Sometimes people just need us to sit with them and to bear witness to their pain or their presence and whatever’s coming up for them.

- [LaWanda] Exactly. Another one is helping adults identify their strengths and coping skills that they have used in the past to manage their adversity, and what we know by research and clinical evidence is that people who hear or create and tell stories of how they, as individuals and families and groups and communities, navigate through and overcome adversity can provide a deep reflection of how they could do it now. So for example, maybe teachers saying, you know, we had a plan for the day, or a leader had a plan for the day but I can readjust, I can rethink about what my day is going to look like and it’s okay to give yourself permission to do that.

- [Julie] And moving into the next one, when we look at how to heal from adverse experiences and trauma or to navigate through really stressful times, one of the things that defines trauma is a sense of powerlessness, a lack of control or feelings of perception, of having no sense of control, and so what we know as a foundation of stress buffering, stress reduction and trauma responsive practice is to give people a sense of agency, a sense of voice and choice, is what we often call it, but a sense of control. So for you as leaders to think about what are small ways that I could reduce stress and uncertainty by offering people chances to communicate their ideas. Maybe this is why it’s so important to have collaborative problem solving, opportunities, times for people to just share how they’re doing that day, to come up with ideas of how are we gonna run a circle time online and so on. But that, it’s not just helping them feel a sense of community, it’s giving them a sense of agency and that choice which is an absolute important factor for building resilience.

- [LaWanda] Another one is be honest and do not dismiss fears or reality. Emphasize strengths, resilience and that you’re all in a learning community together and that you’re going to get through this together. One of the things I’ve shared and we’ve shared is this too, shall pass, those kind of mantras, or just being able to lean in and say, you know what? Today I’m just really tired but I’m here, my body’s here and I’m trying to lean in. Or an idea that came up with our team, Oakland Unified School District, our EC leadership team is that we can have these daily check-ins where we’re just say, hey, what did you make for dinner last night? Or would you like to share a recipe? And these are the kinda things that will help folks decompress and be ready to
support their staff and move on with all the other given things that we have to get through for the day.

- [Julie] And a final idea, and of course, this is not all the ideas, you have many, many more, but one more in our slide here is just for you to model your own humanity. Remember we talked about the importance of leading with a sort of humane approach and a human approach. So to be comfortable and open, visible, in talking about or making your strengths visible but also your struggles. Normalizing the process for others that it’s not easy, we’re all learning together but there’s times when we feel strong and we feel in control, we have ideas, and times when it all feels really hard. And you’ll see, and many of you probably do this already, but to say that and to model that helps other people feel safe and doing the same. And it’s also a time, I think, for us to model that sense of self-compassion. I call it giving ourselves grace and saying, you know, I didn’t handle that meeting, it didn’t go as well as I thought it did, or I didn’t handle myself as well as I would want to in that moment and I’m gonna give myself grace. I’m working through a lot, you’re working through a lot, and just modeling that self-forgiveness, self-compassion is okay. Okay, we're gonna move on to, we're gonna now introduce you to a tool that we created, and we call this tool H.O.P.E. Why H.O.P.E.? When we, as individuals and as collectives, you know, programs, schools, communities, when we have feelings of hope, what that really means is that we’re emphasizing the control, the agency, that we do have in times of uncertainty. And what H.O.P.E. does is it reminds us that our relationships are strengths, again, individual and collective, our coping skill, our creative problem solving, our compassion, and our persistence have always, historically, and will continue to always help us manage adversity and to build resilience and strength along the way. Each one of these letter in our tool, H.O.P.E., represents and stands for a factor that is pulled from, again, different sources. It’s from the literature, the research literature, for sure. It’s also from clinical practice, and a third, and I would say perhaps, you know, the most important or very, very important, it’s from our narratives of lived experience. These things represent what we know are helpful to support coping, to support building resilience, and to support healing. So we’re gonna talk through each of these and give you some opportunities to share how you might, oh, and I will say, how you might use this tool. We’re gonna suggest that as leaders you use this tool both for yourself but also to think about how you might use this with your staff, with families, with communities, with others, in these times of stress to be supportive.

- [Julie K.] So a lot of you have been asking about where to find the tool, and thank you, Ed, for giving the link to the H.O.P.E. tool, it’s such a wonderful tool. Another thing we can think about is pausing and noticing where stress shows up in our body by
doing a body scan. Frequently in our trauma trainings, we take time, especially at the end of the training, before we leave, is to do a body scan. Sometimes you go to a store and you can take your product and scan it in one of those scanners, but we need to be able to do this for ourselves and in order to de-escalate. So we’re gonna actually think a little bit about a body scan and then we’re gonna think about the strategies that interrupt that reactivity that we have when we experience stress and notice it in our body. Sometimes when we go to that orange or red zone in fight, flight, or freeze, we really experience it in our body. So we hold our stress there but there are things that we can do to calm our central nervous system and one of them is the breathing we talked about, visualization or visualizing things that bring us joy and happiness. The brain does not know the difference between real and pretend, so when we bring to our imagination things that bring us joy, it can help us. Counting to 10 forward or backwards can give us a moment of pause before we react. For some of you, it’s listening to music, walking, knitting, gardening. Many people were posting in the chat room, they’re cleaning now to try and have a sense of control or to get their home in order since they’re there more now.

So disrupting our critical self-talk is the last one. That stuck point in our thinking where we begin to jump to black and white thinking, we jump to conclusions. We disqualify the positive in ourselves or others, we can’t see gratitude, we can’t see positive or joy. We have unrealistic expectations, we beat ourselves up. We have negative self-dialogue and this is a time to give yourself compassion, to give yourself kindness, to give yourself the grace you’re learning, we’re all learning, we all don’t know what to do, we’re all in this human journey together globally, how to manage this, and we wake up each day doing the best that we can. We’re gonna make mistakes, we’re going to give ourselves grace, and we’re gonna help others feel, and ourselves, as safe as we possibly can. So just take a moment to scan your own body and share with us, in the chat box, one way you practice present moment awareness, how do you check in, tune in, to where you’re at? Or just practicing that present moment awareness, I’d love to see what some people do. Let’s see. Cleaning helps focus. Walking in nature, heart breathing. Writing, walking. Focusing on something in the present, forest bathing. I know there’s a lot of research around the meditation, just stretching, running. Saying stop out loud, sorry for yelling but that’s the way they typed it. Journaling, five-minute meditation, maintain a routine, go outside. Look at my surroundings, just look at the leaves blowing on the trees, chatting with friends, praying, exercise or crying. There are so many that are coming in and I can barely even keep up with them but I wanna thank you for giving us so many ideas for present moment awareness. I’m gonna handed over to LaWanda to talk about observing source of strength and resilience.
- [LaWanda] Yeah, one of the ways, as leaders, well, we mean those leaders that we may not have a certain sense of agency over our current situation because it's so dynamic, it's so fluid. But in actuality, there are things that leaders can do to guide our individual teachers and groups to really start to think about their strengths and their individual and collective coping skills, and how they’ve used them before, and I kinda alluded to that earlier. What have your staff or educators or mental health consultants, your janitorial services, so many folks that we’re supporting, how do we start to think about them sharing their individual coping skills or what they’re doing with one another during this time. And there might stories out there that you know about, that you observed, already some sources of strength and resilience, and I want to invite you to think back to perhaps a difficult time that you had in your life experiencing this or what you did to help someone cope or get through a challenging time or period. And have you share that in the chat box, if you will. Yeah, because I feel like this is a way for us to all come together and share what’s working and we can borrow from one another. I’m seeing self-affirmations. Writing a lot is another way, exactly, journaling. Staying calm, walking, observing cooking, I’m hearing a lot about cooking. Making homemade Play-Doh, yes! Pray and walk and talk, journal, allow time to process. Stepping back from the train wreck, talking with other people. Exactly, taking in the sun are all good ways of looking at sources of strength. So that’s just one way of thinking about how you can support your team, observing for what is present, what’s good, what’s working, what’s positive. And I wanna transfer this over to Julie Nicholson.

- [Julie] And I’ll just build from that to say sometimes, when we were talking about that bearing witness and being with somebody and just creating that space, just asking that question, thinking back to a difficult situation you’ve been through, how did you cope? And giving them time and space in your attuned presence for them to remind themselves, that can be very powerful for somebody who might in the moment have forgotten that they have those tools, those strengths. So everything that LaWanda said and more. Let’s move on here to the P in H.O.P.E. This is the plan for social support. And again, this is something that we all know. We know from thinking about protective factors and from research on trauma and resilience, what is the most important thing, right, is attuned consistent supportive relationships. But maintaining those social supports, those social connections, this is gonna be a protective and a stress buffering factor. But in these times, again, of social distancing, one of the things, as leaders, that you can do is, and I’m sure you already have them, but to recognize that this might, the social distancing without intentionality, without planning for social connections, it could turn into social isolation and loneliness and we could lose the sense of the buffer and the resilience factor. So we want to just ask all of you to think about the family, the friends, the colleagues, the neighbors, indigenous elders, the knowledge keepers, the
groups and the community. In your own, let’s start with your life, if you think of those, whom you care about, and that help you feel a sense of connection and belonging. You can start by thinking who are those people for me and how in this time of social distancing, how am I making sure that every single day, we’re talking about the importance of maintaining schedule and routine, are we making sure to schedule in? That we have those social connections? And then I want you to think about how are you supporting your staff and the families and others that you’re working with, to remind them to do the same? How are you helping them to make the connections or reminding them about the importance of those connections? And we’re gonna, let’s see, we’re gonna click here and ask you to put in the chat what’s working for you, who are you connecting with? Who’s helping you feel a sense of belonging? And what strategies are you using to maintain connections during social distancing? 12-step, seeing my mom, FaceTime with my team to answer questions and check in. With phone. Calling friends and family, texting and check-ins. And I will share that all of those are wonderful ideas but to see a human face is very, very helpful. If we can’t be face to face and there’s any chance, and I know that we don’t all have access to the same technology, but just to know that seeing the human face can do wonders for us in these times needing connection. And then the second-best would be hearing the human voice. Okay, walking with family. Yes, seeing the human face, wonderful. Well let’s move on to E.

- [Julie K.] Engaging in restorative activities. This comes from our second book in the trauma series. That’s called “Culturally Responsive “Practices for Early Childhood Educators.” We’ll give you that resource at the end of the PowerPoint. When we wrote that book, all three of us were part of writing that book, that are on this call today, we asked people around the country and around the world, how do you engage in restorative actions? And we got several responses and these are what we often think of when we think of self-care, these are the things that we do to help us reduce our stress or feel grounded in our bodies or to recharge our energy, our emotional gas tank, and especially in times of uncertainty can be so draining, the emotional gas tank drains after five minutes sometimes. So we have to, even more than ever, commit to looking at our own individual and culturally meaningful and authentic, specifically to you, strategies that you would see as self-care. Some of them we talk about in our book, our tuning inward activities such as breathing or mindfulness, many of the activities that you shared in the chat box, even someone said wine, LOL, and those kinds of things were we turn inward, breathing, mindfulness, meditation, prayer, quiet time, journaling, writing. Many of you shared those tuning inward restorative activities or grounders. And then there are tuning outward activities. Many of you shared physical things such as running, walking, being in nature, forest bathing, calling a
friend, and Skyping with friends or going on Zoom, some of you said. All of these things are your own unique fingerprint to you and how you see self-care individually and culturally. And so we would love to hear from you, as you go down this journey of continuing to go inward and think back to the things that ground you and center you. They may be new things in these new uncertain times that you have to find a grasp for, but we’d like to see, if you can help us understand the chat room, how you help yourself feel grounded, calm, or re-energized and you fill that emotional gas tank. Going bungee jumping, painting, FaceTime, WhatsApp video, Wake Up Eddie. Listening to music without doing anything else, napping, yoga. For some reason, I’m feeling more in the green zone just reading these, it’s inspiring me. Mountain biking, listening to music. Many of these strategies, someone said, are from very privileged groups and we talk about that and address that in our book. We talk about the self-cares unique to you and so let’s move on, as we think about the next step. Thank you for sharing all of these strategies. Before we close, I wanna see if Julie or LaWanda wanna add anything else.

- [Julie] One thing that I saw in the chat, there’s a lot of things, I wish we had another two hours with everyone, but somebody had mentioned that the hardest thing for them was to ask for help, and they were learning to do so in this context. And I think that is such an important comment to make and I think of the leadership today, when I think of leaders and what it means to be a leader, it truly is to be in community, and when I think of, you know, leaders create spaces for themselves to learn and for other people to learn. To me that’s the essence of leadership. And if we’re creating those spaces, where we’re learning by listening, acknowledging other people’s strengths, one of the things we have to do, in those spaces, is to recognize our strengths and our gaps and our weaknesses, and in doing that, recognizing and shining a light on without any loss of ego, the collective brilliance and strengths and capacities and funds of knowledge and coping skills of those around us, and it is very much, I think of leadership activity, to say this is not something I know how to do or I’m not able to do right now and I do need ask for help. And I have lots of resources around me, we can think about this collectively, we can own this together, we can struggle and grapple with solutions in community.

- [LaWanda] And this LaWanda. One of the things I’m really appreciating is that as leaders, we have started to come together to share resources, to think about what’s possible, what can be done and how can we do it from an equity lens, how can we do it from a lens of healing and restoration and so forth. So this is feeling really good and starting to move into that space and do this work together. And just really quickly, I saw something on Facebook that really resonated with me about what can we do, and
just not to read the whole passage totally but someone said, outdoors is not canceled, music is not canceled, reading is not canceled, sharing time with friends via Zoom is not canceled, I could go on and on. So it just helps you to think as leaders, in that space, what is it that we can do, what’s still possible? And there’s so much that’s still possible. So just wanting to just leave that sentiment with you all.

- [Julie K.] Hoping that we can go to the last slide and close out our experience together. We wanna share with you a couple of things. We’ve got resources on our website but we also wanna share with you that we have two books that might be helpful to you. One of them is...

- Oh sorry, is it back?

- It's okay, Julie.

- [Julie] There you go .

- [Julie K.] It’s okay, one of ‘em is "Culturally Responsive Self-Care Practices "for Early Childhood Educators." This is a good time for this, right now we need it more than ever. Our second book was "Trauma-Informed Practices "for Early Childhood Educators: "Relationship-Based Approaches that Support "Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children." So if you have any questions, could we go back to the contact us?

- [Julie] Mm-hmm.

- [Julie K.] Please know that we are available in many, many different ways, and there’s another slide we can go back to and it’ll just show that before we close. We are very, very grateful for you being here today. Your time is valuable. We wish you well on the journey, we’re all in this together, we’re all connected in spirit and we look forward to also connecting with you in different ways through our social media. So thank you for being here today and we hope to hear and see many of you on the next webinar at three o’clock, which is a different one. Fernando, do you wanna say anything before we close out?

- [Fernando] Yes, thank you. I just wanna thank Julie Nicholson and LaWanda and Julie Kurtz for their time and a very, very wonderful, informative presentation they provided us today, and I just wanted to remind everybody that this session was recorded and will be made available for on-demand, within 24 to 48 hours, up on our Region 9
Headstart Association's YouTube channel, which you can find a link to by going to our website, www.region, the number nine, HSA.org. If you scroll down all the way to the bottom in the homepage, you will see a little link to our YouTube page and that will take you to where the recording will be once it gets uploaded. Also, just a quick reminder that watching this session, or going back to the YouTube channel, will not qualify for any CEUs. To earn CEUs, viewers will have to access this course on-demand and complete the test at continued.com/ECE. To access the course, viewers will use promo code FREESUPPORT, that's one word, all capitalized, for free access to the course, as well as the emergency response strategies session, which will go live at three o'clock, like Julie mentioned. And the course will hopefully be available online next week. I wanna thank everybody for tuning in, we had a really good crowd, and I hope everybody has a great rest of your day. We'll see some of you, hopefully, at our three o'clock session, but just let us know if you have any questions. Here are the association, we're happy to take any questions and redirect them to any of our presenters today. Once again, thanks everybody and I hope you--

- Fernando?

- Fernando, some people are asking about the link to the three o'clock webinar?

- [Fernando] Oh yes, thank you. So for anybody who’s interested, the registration form is still open, so all you have to do is go to our website, Region 9, it's right there on the screen, and navigate to our Events section, which is on the homepage. If you scroll down, you will see a calendar entry for the three o'clock session. If you click on that, that will provide you with the registration link. Just sign up and you will get all the information you need to attend the session. I'm also here in office, so if you wanna give me a call or send me an email, I'm happy to walk you through any questions you have. Just look for our events up on Region, number nine, HSA.org. Thank you.

- [Julie] And yes, three o'clock pacific standard time.

- Yes, thank you.

- Thank you, yes.

- [Julie] Thank you, everyone.