

# Addressing Worry through Trauma Invested Practices

## Participants Guide

### Objectives

This workshop will cover:

- Overview of **Trauma Invested Practices**
- Understanding **needs expressed through behaviors**
- Identifying signs and symptoms of **excessive worry**
- **Strategies** to help your child cope



### Defining Trauma

- Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope.
- Keep in mind the experience does not have to be life threatening to trigger a trauma response.



### Impact of Trauma

Early childhood trauma affects every aspect of children's stress regulation. Trauma can attribute to a child's inability to find and sustain a comfortable level of arousal.

- Low energy
- Lack of motivation
- Aggression
- Defiance

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### Trauma Invested Practices: The Foundation



### The Three Rs to Intervention

- **Relationship:** Just one safe, connected adult can help build resilience in a child
- **Responsibility:** Follow through on what you say or promise and express importance of following through even in difficult times
- **Regulation:** Emotional regulation strategies start in the body and move to the mind.



## Needs vs. Behaviors

- All behaviors are an expression of a need.
- Shift focus from how the child is asking to what the underlying need is that they are trying to have met.
- Children may have learned a certain way to ask or express themselves and they do not yet have other tools.
- Addressing behaviors is not always the answer. It is about helping understand the child's unmet need and teaching helpful ways to get that need met.

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### Common Needs Expressed through Behaviors



EMOTIONAL



CONNECTION



PHYSICAL



NEED FOR CONTROL

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## All Behavior Has a Function: To Obtain or To Avoid/Escape

- **To Obtain:** *I need or I want...*
  - Objects
  - Activities
  - Attention/Emotions
  - Sensory input
- **To Avoid/Escape:** *I need to escape...*
  - People
  - Objects
  - Activities
  - Attention/Emotions
  - Sensory input



## What is Worry?

- The Oxford English Dictionary defines worry as:
  - A troubled state of mind arising from the frets and cares of life; harassing anxiety or solicitude
  - An instance or care of this; a cause of, or matter for, anxiety; cares, solitudes
- Up to 70% of children as young as seven to eight years old report worrying at least from time to time
- In popular jargon, worry is synonymous with anxiety, nervousness, concern, fear, and uncertainty



## When Worry Becomes a Problem

- Worry may become problematic when it becomes excessive, intense, or uncontrollable
- Excessive and uncontrollable worry is part of the diagnostic criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), an anxiety disorder whose key feature is worry
- GAD prevalence in children ranges from .16% to 8.8% of community samples



## Strategies that DO NOT help

- Advice
- **Reassurance**
- Distraction
- Avoidance
- Participation in escape/avoidance behaviors
- Punishing anxiety behaviors



## Suggestions for Parents

- Believe your child can handle his anxiety and let him know that you believe in him
- Listen to your child and encourage him to talk about fears and worries
- Be understanding, use reflective listening, and don't use shame
- Do not reinforce the child's distress by rescuing him or her