

Supplemental Information

We hope this additional information from our presenters will be beneficial to early childhood educators.

Responding to Childhood Trauma: Building Resiliency in Our Children

How do we know if a child is experiencing trauma or has experienced trauma?

In most cases, we do not know what a child has experienced, so the best practice is to put systems in place that will benefit every child in the classroom. The practices that support healing from trauma also assist in managing behaviors in children. Every child can benefit from these strategies.

How does drinking water support calming?

Regulation in the body is supported as we swallow water due to the rhythmic pattern that takes place. This natural rhythm helps with calming and also breathing, which assists in naturally calming the body and the brain. The patterns and breathing that takes place as we drink water helps with calming down the release of the hyper-arousal and distress chemicals that come from the brain into the body. Children and adults react negatively when the body is dehydrated. This includes, becoming more easily irritated which can lead to meltdowns, aggressive behavior and fatigue.

Which is better- *Hyper-arousal* or *Hypo-arousal*?

The goal is to have an environment that supports the “*Optimal Arousal Zone*,” also known as a “*Window of Tolerance*.”

Signs of *Optimal Arousal Zone*:

- Ability to experience empathy
- Feelings are tolerable
- Ability to be open and curious rather than judgmental and defensive
- Feel safe
- Awareness of boundaries

What is *Hyper-arousal*?

There is too much arousal so the ***Fight*** or ***Flight*** response and behaviors remain present.

Signs of *Hyper-arousal*:

- Shaking
- Tension
- Reacting very emotionally
- Defensiveness
- Feeling unsafe
- Anger/rage
- Impulsivity
- Feeling overwhelmed

What is *Hypo-arousal*?

There is too little arousal present so the ***Freeze Response*** remains present.

Signs of *Hypo-arousal*:

- No energy
- Feeling ashamed
- Flat affect
- No feelings
- Disconnected
- Shut down
- Disabled cognitive processing- “can’t think”

How to support the child who is experiencing trauma created by families or parents?

The key to supporting a child who is experiencing trauma or any difficulty is to offer support with relationships, trust, and attachment. We can offer parents and families resources. But the most important thing we can do is to support rebuilding trust and attachments in our environments.

We can’t change the adverse experiences a child has faced or is facing. But we can impact the resiliency in that child.

How does trauma impact learning?

If a child is on guard, fearful, or detached- he/she is in a *survival mode*. Therefore, it impacts development, learning, and making connections with others. We need to re-build connections when the child is in the “*Optimal Arousal Zone*” so learning can take place.