



## Strengthening Families and Systems: Building Positive Relationships with Children who have Experienced Trauma Curriculum Overview

A workshop for birth, foster & adoptive parents, grandparents, relative caregivers, child-serving professionals and community members to share information about trauma and the effects on children to strengthen positive relationships between children and adults.

### **Chapter 1: Welcome and Workshop Overview**

Participants are welcomed to the workshop and learn what they will gain from the workshop. The concepts of psychological safety and self-care are foreshadowed. Participants will learn two emotional regulation tools and begin applying trauma concepts to an individual in their lives.

### **Chapter 2: Introduction to Trauma**

Participants are introduced to the definition of child trauma. They will learn the impact of trauma across development and the importance in helping children build resiliency in mitigating the effects of trauma.

### **Chapter 3: Understanding Trauma's Effects**

Participants are introduced to basic brain development and the body's stress center, as well as short and long-term consequences of early trauma. The concept of the "invisible suitcase" will be introduced. Participants will begin to see the larger picture of trauma and its impact on brain, body development, relationships, self-concept and future outlook. Participants will practice thinking about interactions in a trauma-informed way—especially when behaviors are challenging—and practice staying present, calm and self-aware.

### **Chapter 4: How a Child's Trauma Can Affect Us**

Participants will begin to understand the importance of self-care and normalize the need for self-care with emphasize on how self-care is a sign of strength (not weakness) which, contributes to resiliency. Participants are introduced to the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences). They will learn the signs of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress (STS) and vicarious trauma; identify specific self-care techniques that can help prevent compassion fatigue, STS & vicarious trauma; and explore at least three coping strategies to use when a child's trauma is a reminder of their own past trauma.

### **Chapter 5: Creating a Safe-Feeling Environment**

Participants will discuss the importance of creating an environment for children to feel safe and capable. Participants will learn the difference between physical and psychological safety and learn techniques for helping children who have experienced trauma feel safe. Participants will learn how to recognize and understand trauma reminders in children and learn strategies to help a child (and themselves) manage them.

### **Chapter 6: Understanding Feelings and Managing Behaviors**

Participants are introduced to the connection among thoughts, feelings and behaviors through the concept of the cognitive (or thinking) triangle. Participants will practice using the cognitive triangle by decoding behavior seen in a video about foster care from a child's perspective. Participants will also learn the concept of the "emotional coach," which includes step-by-step guidance to help a child understand and manage their emotions and learn new ways of thinking. Participants will continue to integrate previously learned tools, thermometer and square breathing, for emotional regulation.

**Chapter 7: Connections and Feelings**

Participants will discuss the critical role of relationships and connections with others to help children develop a strength-based understanding of their life story. The concept that children (and adults) develop, grow and heal in relationships will be emphasized. Participants will discuss ways to help children maintain relationships in their lives, and how to help children “make new meaning” of the way they view themselves. Participants will continue to integrate previously learned concepts, such as the invisible suitcase to consider how their experiences have impacted current relationships.

**Chapter 8: Becoming an Advocate**

Participants will learn about the importance of developing a trauma-informed team and discuss how teams can work effectively together. They will be asked to describe specific actions they can take as a member of a child’s team to advocate for trauma-responsive services and supports. Participants will also discuss how to recognize when a child needs professional help to heal from the effects of trauma.