



CORE
TEEN

Critical On-going Resource Family Education

Right Time Training: Parental Regulation

CORE TEEN CURRICULUM

In Acknowledgement

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CORE TEEN CURRICULUM: RIGHT TIME TRAINING

The CORE Teen Curriculum is comprised of three components: 1) Self-Assessment; 2) Classroom Training, and 3) Right Time Training. It was developed through a 3 year Foster/Adoptive Parent Preparation, Training and Development Initiative cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant #90CO1132. Project partners included Spaulding for Children; the ChildTrauma Academy; The Center for Adoption Support and Education; the North American Council on Adoptable Children; and the University of Washington.

The intent of the project was to develop a state-of-the-art training program to equip resource parents to meet the needs of older youth who have moderate to serious emotional and behavior health challenges who require intensive and coordinated services and may be at risk for more restrictive congregative care.



PARENTAL REGULATION OVERVIEW

“

You have the response-ability; the ability to choose our response to any situation.

~Stephen Covey

”

The purpose of this learning opportunity is to enhance your understanding of parental regulation. Parental Regulation is the set of skills and abilities that help us manage our feelings and behaviors so that we can then use the right skills, interventions and supports at the right time. The learning objectives are to:

- ▶ Learn the important components to parental regulation.
- ▶ Understand how to regulate yourself through a variety of techniques.
- ▶ Understand the importance of self-regulation and modeling those behaviors for the youth.

Every parent experiences times when they feel a sense of frustration, anger, hurt, and sadness. The challenges and stresses that parents face every day test their ability to stay calm and regulated. As a resource parent, you will more frequently find yourself in situations that tax your reserves. Just like the youth you care for, stressful situations can trigger your “fight or flight” response, prompting you to act first and think later.

When you practice self-regulation, you will have greater capacity to tolerate feelings of distress and be better able to adapt your parenting strategies to both model self-regulation and achieve better outcomes to the situations that you will face with your youth. Parental regulation starts with self-awareness. When you tune in to your own emotions and behaviors, you can avoid acting too quickly or over-reacting to upsetting situations. Parental regulation is an essential component when trying to resolve issues while establishing a trusting and safe environment for the youth.

“

Naming an emotion begins with the process of regulating it and reflecting on it.

”

~Unknown

PRE-VIDEO DISCUSSION

Parental regulation begins with a caregiver’s awareness of the things that can cause a sudden outburst of emotion in them. These things are often referred to as “triggers”. Some parents cannot tolerate swearing, disrespectful attitudes or lack of communication from their youth.

- ▶ What kind of behaviors result in immediate and strong reactions from you?
- ▶ What kinds of things violate your moral and ethical code?

After you have identified your triggers, you should examine how you typically respond in these moments. Knowing your own physical, biological and emotional responses to stress will help you to predict

and prepare for those “trigger” reactions. Some signs of stress may include changes in your breathing – possibly breathing quicker or holding your breath. You may also find that certain muscles in your body tighten, or you feel pressure in your gut or heart.

- ▶ How can you tell when you are feeling triggered?
- ▶ What are your strengths and limitations when it comes to managing your emotional responses during these times?

After becoming aware of your physical, biological and emotional responses, you will then need to manage your responses to ensure a positive outcome. This will require you to be open to change; maintaining a positive attitude as you work to adapt your parenting and communication strategies.

- ▶ How easy (or hard) is it for you to keep your emotions in check?
- ▶ What are you currently doing to control your impulses to act first and think later?
- ▶ Think about the ways that you have traditionally responded to parenting situations. What has been helpful or effective in the past? How will you stop yourself from using the responses that are not helpful?

Monitoring and managing our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning, takes support, tools and practice. If caregivers are able to regulate and model this behavior, youth will be able to learn these positive regulation skills.

- ▶ What are some of the ways you have helped another person calm down when they have been overwhelmed or “triggered”?

Think of other questions you may have and write them on a piece of paper. Reflect on them while reviewing the video.



VIEW the Parental Regulation Right Time Episode

POST VIDEO DISCUSSION

Talk with your viewing partner or support system about your reactions to the video. Was there anything that you heard that surprised you? What questions remain for you?

In this video segment, you heard experts and parents talk about the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation and co-regulation. One parent's reminder was that unless you are self-aware, emotional pain from experiences in your past can surface.

- ▶ In terms of self-awareness, do you know what situations you find most challenging?
- ▶ Who will help you when you experience these types of triggers?
- ▶ How easy (or hard) is it for you to ask others for help?

In the video segment, you heard the term “co-regulation”—the process of resource parents using their own regulation to help a youth become more regulated. Experts and parents emphasized the notion that “someone who is dysregulated cannot regulate another person”.

- ▶ What are your thoughts about the idea of co-regulation?
- ▶ What does it mean to “under-react” to an “over-reaction” in your youth?

One expert said, “this is not a behavioral journey, this is a healing journey”.

- ▶ What does this mean?
- ▶ How can stopping unhelpful thoughts about the youth (what's wrong with him) allow you to tolerate the behaviors that trigger you?

You heard parents talk about the importance of self-care and focusing on activities that sustain them and relationships that are supportive. Having supportive voices surrounding you builds confidence, sustains hope and reminds you that you are not in this alone.

- ▶ What kinds of activities do you find help you feel relaxed and calm?
- ▶ Who are the people you have in your life that are the most supportive of you in times of need?

Please discuss with your viewing partner (parenting partner, family member, caseworker, etc.) what information was presented to you that was new, or that resonated with you regarding the impacts of relational trauma on children, noting any realizations you may have had while viewing the information.

“

This is not a behavioral journey.
This is a healing journey.

”

~Heather Forbes

PARENTAL REGULATION COMPONENTS

Several components were introduced within this video segment related to parental regulation. Discuss what you recall about each of these with your viewing partner. Make note of any that you do not recall or do not feel as though you understand fully. Use some of the resources provided to learn more.

- ▶ **Self-Awareness** – Understanding what your body is feeling and the effects emotions are having on you is the first step in self-awareness. Tuning into these physical and biological symptoms will help you to stay regulated and strategic in determining how best to respond. When you are highly stressed, as we learned in the classroom content, your brain can shift into a “fight or flight” mode, and you move from using the top part of your brain, which is more thoughtful and planful, to the part of your brain that is more primitive and reactive. Practice keeping your cool by removing yourself from stressful situations for a short time, whether mentally or physically, and using relaxation techniques like deep breathing. Expect relapses and setbacks. Instead of giving up after a setback, vow to start fresh next time and learn from your mistakes.

“
Wherever you are, be all there.
”
-Jim Elliot

- ▶ **Self-Regulation** – Remember to stay calm under pressure. When you slow down and manage your reactions to situations, (take a step back from negative thoughts and feelings, analyze them, and come up with positive alternative thoughts), you gain perspective on the root cause and motivation of the youth’s behaviors and have more time to respond intentionally. Don’t be in a rush to solve problems, but do take initiative and stay persistent in working toward your goals, even when it’s the last thing you feel like doing.
- ▶ **Co-Regulation** – This is a process of using your regulation to help a youth become more regulated (regulation is contagious!). You as the caregiver will be in charge of putting forth the initial effort to soothe the youth’s emotional distress. As you continue to be sensitive, consistent and calming in your responses, youth become relaxed and regulated (when the youth escalates and you don’t, that is co-regulating!). Over time the youth will develop more emotion regulation strategies of their own.

Once you have reviewed the components, which ones do you believe require the biggest stretch from your natural parenting style?

Because these components will be a stretch from your natural style, they will certainly create feelings of discomfort. Being able to tolerate discomfort and learn to master a new skill will be crucial to your success in learning to adapt as a parent. Please take a moment with your viewing partner to discuss how you anticipate feeling when you try to use this new skill.

SELF-SOOTHING STRATEGIES FOR THE SENSES

Developing sustaining and self-soothing strategies does not have to be complicated or extensive and you can choose methods that use different senses. Here are some suggestions to help you identify elements of your own self-soothing strategy:

- ▶ **Sight:** Go outside and find something pretty to look at (flowers, the sky, or other elements of nature that appeal to you). Look through photos that make you happy. Color or draw in a coloring book.
- ▶ **Sound:** Listen to music that you find relaxing. Most songs are 2-4 minutes long, so having a few identified and ready to go when the need arises is a good idea! Play a recording of the ocean or other nature sounds, sing, whistle or hum.
- ▶ **Smell:** Light a scented candle or make something savory to eat, the smells will help you relax.
- ▶ **Touch:** Curl up with a soft blanket. Take a warm bath or shower. Get into more comfortable clothes.
- ▶ **Taste:** Sip tea or hot cocoa. Suck on a candy or mint. Have a piece of chocolate.
- ▶ **Kinesthetic:** Rock in a rocking chair. Rhythmically tap your feet or hands. Go for a walk. Play catch or bounce a ball. Stretch.



QUESTIONS PARENTS CAN ASK THEMSELVES

Read these commonly asked questions and consider how they can fit into your Action Plan for Parental Regulation.

Question: What can I do if I notice my youth starting to get “revved up”?

Answer: Using calm, neutral language will help you attune to the youth and make them feel supported. Ask them what you can do to help them. You can also use a gentle redirect away from whatever is distressing them.



Question: What is mindfulness and how can it help regulation?

Answer: Mindfulness is allowing an emotion to be present then allowing it to pass. Being mindful means that we recognize that emotions are temporary, even though they may be very distressing. Remind youth that they have not always felt this way and encourage them to talk about what they are feeling in the moment.

Question: Do past traumas affect regulation?

Answer: Yes. Oftentimes youth are reminded of past experiences and experience emotional reactions as a result. Pay attention to the youth’s re-experiencing and become attuned with them. Be able to anticipate the emotional change. During this time remind the youth that these experiences are in the past. Ask them to identify what is different about this situation to the prior ones.

Reflect on something that is currently a challenge between you and your youth where your parenting responses thus far have produced results you are not satisfied with. Use the space below to describe the behavior, your parenting efforts thus far, and how your youth responded.

Write down the behavior that is currently causing you a challenge, your parenting response, and your youth’s response.

USE S.T.A.R. TO PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

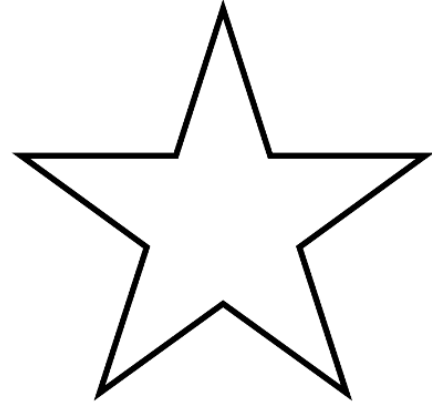
Consider ways that you can practice having to regulate yourself so that you become more comfortable managing your emotions. Regular practice can change your brain in ways that will make you feel more confident, resilient, and in control. Use the S.T.A.R. steps:

S—Stop
T—Take a deep breath
A—And
R—Relax

Try to practice the S.T.A.R. steps during lower stress level times and around less critical events, such as:

- Waiting in line at the bank or store
- Dealing with the cable/phone/electric company on a problem
- Completing household jobs that you don't like
- Sitting in heavy traffic
- Solving a quick problem before a meal when you are hungry
- Finishing one small task at the end of the day when you are tired

STAR



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RESOURCES

These resources can provide some additional information that may help you explore Parental Regulation further.

▶ **Yelling At Kids**

An excellent video resource demonstrating why yelling is counterproductive.

<https://www.facebook.com/ParentingTodaybyattn/videos/163000857849180/UzpfSTMxMjMzMDY4NTc4MTc2MDo2MTUyNzEyMDU0ODc3MDU/?q=nacac%20parent%20leadership%20network>

▶ **Trauma-Informed School Practices: Self-Regulation**

This video was made for the classroom, but includes many great strategies that can be used at home as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwMrDDHdZIA>

▶ **State -Dependent Functioning (Seven Slide Series)**

This brief video highlights the importance of understanding how stress and distress influence the way we think, feel and act.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uCn7VX6BPQ>

▶ **Mindfulness Apps**

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/10/16/557633144/mindfulness-apps-aim-to-help-people-disconnect-from-stress>

▶ **Yoga for Beginners**

This is a video for beginners, to give you an idea of what the physical practice of yoga is all about.

<http://yogawithadriene.com/yoga-complete-beginners/>

▶ **Mindfulness Course**

Free, online Mindfulness course to take at your own pace.

<https://palousemindfulness.com>

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

Now, it is time to develop a plan to address those areas you would like to change. Consider the points / questions below, as well as your self-assessment and classroom material, when identifying a plan to improve your skills related to parental regulation.

- ❖ Identify / define the specific issue or concern you have related to parental regulation.
 - ▶ If you completed the CORE Teen Self-Assessments, consider your results related to the characteristics that are essential to support parental regulation (compassion, commitment, acceptance, attunement, self-awareness, self-regulation, sense of humor and adaptability/flexibility).
 - ▶ Review the material that was presented in classroom Session 4: Parenting Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma.

- ❖ Identify your “triggers”. Some of the most common emotional triggers for Resource Parents include:
 - ▶ The youth is not being respectful
 - ▶ Your extra efforts are not appreciated
 - ▶ You feel they don’t like you
 - ▶ You don’t feel understood
 - ▶ Your efforts are not valued
 - ▶ You are not being treated fairly
 - ▶ You are not getting the attention you need
 - ▶ You do not have the amount of freedom you want
 - ▶ You don’t have time to relax and a peaceful place to do so
 - ▶ You don’t feel safe
 - ▶ You don’t feel included
 - ▶ You don’t have enough opportunities to have fun
 - ▶ There are too many new challenges

- ❖ Consider your thoughts about the challenging behaviors that trigger you.
 - ▶ What are the underlying reasons for these behaviors?
 - ▶ What replacement thoughts (thoughts that are calming and help you accurately interpret the need) can you use in these difficult moments?

- ❖ Reflect on your thoughts about using parental regulation strategies, focusing on the feelings you have during difficult moments.
 - ▶ What are the strategies that you will use to help you get (and stay) regulated?
 - ▶ Who can you talk openly with about the need for self-care?

What are my triggers and what do I plan to do to improve my regulation as a parent?

Things or situations that trigger me	Effects on my body	How It makes me feel about the youth	How it makes me feel about me	Positive alternative thoughts about the situation	Ways I can use this situation as an opportunity to enhance my relationship with the youth
1.					
2.					
3.					