**Trauma Informed Skill Building Suggestions**

**Safety and Stabilization**

Externalizing Children and Adults … travel up and down “Vulnerability Mountain” very quickly and need skills at all places on the mountain

**Remember – Top opportunities for growth for children (and adults) with complex trauma are**

- Self-Regulation Skills

- Positive Self-Identity

- Co-Regulation Skills (being in a trusting healthy relationship with others)

**Children with externalizing behaviors who have experienced trauma struggle with these basic skills**

(Blaustein &Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 114)

1. Acknowledging and coping with vulnerable emotions
2. Modulating intense emotions, particularly in the face of key triggers such as injustice, shame, etc.
3. Accepting responsibility for actions in social conflict
4. Engaging empathy and perspective-taking in difficult relationships

**All Interactions Need to Embrace the Trauma Informed Core Values from Fallot (2011)**

1. Safety (all forms!!)
2. Trustworthiness
3. Choice (which includes Voice)
4. Collaboration
5. Empowerment

**OTHER TIPS –**

Don’t force a child to acknowledge a difficult emotion before they are ready

Do normalize their denied emotions (acknowledge, validate, understand)

Respond to the NEED, don’t react to the BEHAVIOR

Understand that externalizing behaviors protect a child from deep shame and overwhelming feelings

**Build Motivation and Resilience**

In Motivational Interviewing … remember to bring your OARS

- ask **O**pen questions, **A**ffirm consumer statements, **R**eflect consumer statements, **S**ummarize consumer statements

**Step One:** Work with Ambivalence (dialectic) … always 2 sides and maybe 3

**Step Two:** Resist the “Righting” Reflex

**Step Three:** Demonstrate Empathy

**Step Four:** Engage consumers in Change Talk

**Every Day (Self Care and Protective Factors)**

**Self-Regulation and Mindfulness (“sunscreen”)**

* Relaxation and Grounding Exercises
* Bilateral Movement
* Attunement Exercises
* Mindfulness Exercise – EX: breathing, “one thing”
* Self-Care Plan (daily practice)

**Self-Awareness (“knowing your skin” and “checking the weather”)**

* Educate children about their triggers and trauma responses
  + Wise old owl (Hawn Foundation)
  + Guard Dog (Hawn Foundation)
  + Smoke Detector (Van der kolk)
  + Alarm System ( ARC book pp.316-318)
  + Light Switch (“Please Explain Anxiety to Me”)
* Teach and practice with them identification of feelings and needs
* Engage them in “Behavioral Experiments” where the try something different
* Teach about Thought Distortions (“thought distortion box”) so they can begin to recognize thoughts they tell themselves that take them down to “Distress Valley”
* Supporting beliefs that child or adult deserves “good” things
* Recognizing “bumps in the road” don’t mean “a crash”

**Relationship Skills or Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills (“bringing a friend to the beach”)**

* Empathic Communication Skills (mirroring)
* Change/Acceptance choices (handout)
* Practicing how to identify a feeling, state a need, and make a request

**In the Distress Valley - Distress Tolerance Skills**

**Emotional Distress (“aloe on sunburn”)**

* ACCEPTS (**A**ctivities; **C**ontributions; **C**omparisons; **E**motional Opposite; **P**ushing away; **T**houghts; **S**ensations)
* Galvanic Skin Response (hand-warming)
* Distraction (mandala)
* Vacation “meditation”
* “Just Worrying” Skill

**Build Resilience – Resilience can be taught** (Daniel & Wassell, 2002; Werner, 1993)

Support Systems (people and relationships)

Ability to Trust

Assertiveness

Setting Realistic Goals

Positive Self-Identify

Self-Regulation/Emotional Regulation

Problem Solving Skills

Communication Skills

Empathy

Reflective Behavior