Window of Tolerance

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What is your stress level?

How will understanding Stress responses and the Window of Tolerance help participants... and us?

- All behavior is communication
- Normal reactions
- Not an excuse for bad behavior
- Can block goals and dreams
Disclaimer:

This is NOT a presentation that will help you pass your next exam. It's about looking at concepts differently in order to make them more approachable and applicable.

A quick search to define “Trauma Informed”

“Recognizing that many people have trauma.”

“Excellently... but what do we do with that? How do we recognize and respond?”

Explaining trauma informed care/education/ community engagement to self and others.

How Trauma Informed Services can help at our centers...

- Staff
  - Recognize signs of stress in staff
  - Implement programs that can decrease stress
- Participants
  - Learning environment
- Caregivers
  - Client centered care sets a culture
- Horses
  - Slow down, be present

Window of Tolerance

- A concept created by Dr. Dan Siegel (1999) to describe the ‘optimal arousal zone’ of human beings
- The capacity to manage emotions when under stress, at any given moment.
• “Humans are designed for connection. After trauma, the brain and body can prioritize protection over connection.”
  - Bessel van der Kolk
  - *(The Body Keeps the Score, 2015)*

• Now add a pandemic that further breaks connection…
What we may see in our staff/participants/ourselves:

- Fatigue, difficulty sleeping
- Being startled easily
- Difficulty concentrating
- Racing heartbeat - anxiety
- Edginess and agitation
- Aches and pains
- Muscle tension
- Feeling numb, sad, or emotionally reactive
- Sensory overload

Trauma & Brain Development

Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Ed
"Don’t tell me to go meditate/take a bath/go jogging!"  
Treating the problem or the symptom?
• **Staying grounded.** To feel in the present and more grounded, sit in your chair. Feel your feet on the ground and your back against the chair. Look around you and pick six objects that have red or blue in them. Notice how your breathing gets deeper and calmer.

“If you can’t measure it, does it exist?”
Brene’ Brown

- Subjective Units of Distress
- 0-10
- 0=no distress, 10=the worst distress

**Window of Tolerance**

Bandwidth can be very narrow – our goal is to expand it, but that we have to be in it.
Protocol for trauma recovery

- Stabilize
- Stabilize
- Stabilize
- Skill building/resource development for self-regulation
- Cognitive restructuring for self-regulation
  - Change the automatic negative thoughts
- Understand your behaviors as they relate to past experiences
  - Perspective taking
- Recognizing blocking
  - Intellectualizing, anger, etc. (Defenses)
- Reprocessing
- Reintegration

Coping skills and self-care

1. Where are you in your window of tolerance?
3. Butterfly Hugs
4. Tapping
1. Breathing.
   1. Square breathing
   2. Deep breathing from your belly can help ground you and bring you back to yourself if you feel you’re being triggered.
2. Physical activity. Get moving…
3. Soothe your senses.

How Trauma Informed Services can help at our centers…

- Staff
  - Check in with staff
  - Recognize signs of stress in staff
  - Implement programs that can decrease stress
- Participants
  - Incorporate coping skills into lessons
- Caregivers
  - Handouts of what you are teaching
  - Client centered care sets a culture
- Horses
  - Breathing, feeling the horse move in warm up and cool down
  - Slow down, be present

What is your stress level?

- Where are you in your Window of Tolerance?