

**Family Therapy Component of the Integrative
Attachment Trauma Child Protocol
Module 2**

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**Teach Foundational Skills and
Adaptive Information**

Developmental Trauma Creates Deficits

- Don't assume the child has skills or knowledge typical for his age group.
- The child may have fallen off the typical emotional, social, academic trajectories. Watch for gaps in information and skills.
- Teach, demonstrate, and role-play with child and parents.

Brain Work

Brain Work



- Helps the child develop metacognition
- Helps the child develop healthy self-talk
- Helps the child access adaptive information

Brain Work in Action

Say...

- “We’re going to work together to help you learn to think about your thinking and to think about your feelings.
- “Let’s work together to help understand and calm your brain!”



Teach "Feeling Brain/Thinking Brain/
Survival Brain"

Demonstrate :

- "This front left side of your brain is your thinking brain. This is where you have your helpful thoughts."
- "The right side is your feelings brain. This is where your big feelings come from."
- "Towards the back of your brain is your survival brain. This part of your brain causes you to react without thinking."

Teach "Feeling Brain/Thinking Brain/
Survival Brain"

Ask...

"Was that (thought/feeling/behavior) coming from your thinking brain, your feelings brain, or your survival brain?"



"Talk to Your Brain" (Self-Talk)



Examples:

Say...

- "Talk to your brain. Tell your brain your mom loves you, she's just trying to help you."
- "Talk to your brain. Tell your brain everything is okay. Tell your brain it's O.K. to relax."

Skills, Skills, and More Skills



Teach the Jobs of Moms and Dads



- Many traumatized children do not understand the true intentions behind parents' behaviors.
- Together with the child and parent, list and discuss the jobs of moms and dads.



Teach the Jobs of Moms and Dads



For example...

- They keep me safe.
- They keep me healthy.
- They help me learn how to take care of my body.
- They guide me in making good decisions.
- They help me learn how to get along with others.
- They make sure I get a good education so I am prepared to be a grown-up.

More Skills:
Through Teaching and Practice

- The morning routine
- The nighttime routine
- Household rules
- Social skills
- Bathroom skills
- Boundaries

More Skills:
Through Teaching and Practice

- How to take turns
- How to sit at a restaurant
- How to make a friend
- How to make small talk
- How to ask for help
- How to give a hug/ask for a hug
- How to act around strangers



More Skills:
Through Teaching and Practice

- Practice accepting help, comfort, and praise.
- Practice transitioning, tolerating no and accepting redirection.



Practice the Communication Game



Explain to the parent and child...

- “We are going to work on skills for expressing feelings and skills for listening.”
- “Each of you will get a minute or so to talk about a feeling related to anything you choose to talk about.”
- “After one of you speaks, the other will say, “This is what I heard you say...’ and give a summary.”
- “Then if you were the speaker you will say, ‘You got it completely,’ or ‘You got some of it, but here is what you left out....’.”

Big Deal? Or No Big Deal?



- Children stuck in fight-flight often react to small annoyances and big annoyances with the same level of intensity.
- Work with the child on understanding the definition of a big deal vs. a little deal.
- Encourage the child to practice asking himself, “Big deal? Or no big deal?”

Low Alert/Medium Alert/High Alert



Ask the parent and child to describe...

- Observations about the child in high alert and low alert.
- Observations about the parent in high alert and low alert.

Make a list of observations on the white board.



Low Alert/Medium Alert/High Alert

- With the child, list the skills that help him get back to low alert.
- With the parent, list skills that help the parent get to low alert.



Bring Skills to the EMDR Therapist to be Reinforced in a Future Template

- An important component of EMDR is the future template.
- After a new skills is learned and worked out in family therapy, the EMDR therapist can reinforce a role-play or “mental movie” with bilateral stimulation!



Strengthen the Most Grown-up Self

Identify the "Most Grown-up Self"

Ask...

- "What are (11-year-old) skills?"
- "What are 11-year-old behaviors?"
- "What new things does an 11-year-old learn in school?"
- "How does an 11-year-old manage stress?"
- "How does an 11-year-old make friends?"
- "Wat does an 11-year-old sound like?"

Make a list on the white board.

Teach the Child to Notice His "Most Grown-up Self"

Say...

- "Think of a time when you were in your most grown-up self."
- "How did you feel?"
- "How did you sound?"
- "How did you look?"
- "Notice how you feel right now."

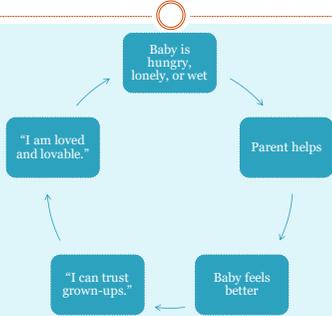
(Draw a picture and take it to the EMDR therapist.)



Teaching What Babies Need

HURT CHILDREN NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE ROOT OF THEIR BEHAVIORS

The Cycle of Trust



The Cycle of Mistrust



A Doll Can Help Demonstrate

Talk about what babies need...

- “What are all the ways we take care of babies?”
- “Do you think you learned you could relax and rely on grown-ups to take care your needs?”



Educate Children About Earlier Neglect/Abuse Without Demonizing Parents

Provide developmentally appropriate adaptive information regarding:

- Drug/Alcohol Addiction (“Once your parent started using drugs/alcohol, he couldn’t stop, and it made his brain foggy.”)
- Mental Illness (“Your parent had trouble with his feelings brain.”)
- Generational issues (“Your parent didn’t know how to care for you because he did not have the right kind of care growing up.”)

Directly Addressing Traumatic Events

Provide Safety for Addressing Traumatic Material

- Don’t encourage the child to “try to remember.” Trust that the child will remember what he needs to remember to heal. It is not necessary for the child to access all memories.
- Parent work is key to providing a safe, secure holding environment for trauma work.



Provide Safety for Addressing Traumatic Material

Create a container

- Encourage feelings and pictures to stay in the container between therapy sessions.
- Make a container from a box or jar.
- Or draw a picture of a container.



Talk About Talking About It

- Ask, "If you have a splinter in your finger, do you leave it, or do you pull it out?"
- Remember, "Feelings come and go. The feelings won't hurt you. The memories can't hurt you."
- "Our job is to help you make the upset memories and feelings become smaller, and help you make your good feelings get bigger. The EMDR will help with this."

Talking About It

★ Talk about it

- My feelings disappear
- I feel the pain.
- I have better days
- You can get through it and become less nervous.
- The feelings will come but then the feelings will go.

Don't talk about it

- I'll be fine for everybody.
- It's like the volcano: one day it's fine.

Detective Work Related to Traumatic Events

Say...

“It makes sense that the littler one on the inside has some stuck feelings because of what you have gone through.”

“What feelings do you think might be stuck in your brain because of what you went through?”



Piecework...Use of Drawings or Sandtray

Say...

- “Upsetting pictures sometimes get stuck in the brain. I wonder if you have an upsetting picture that is stuck about what happened. We want to get it outside of your brain.”
- “Can you draw just a little bit of it?”
- “Can you make a piece of the upsetting picture in the sand tray?”

(The drawing/sand tray can then be provided to the EMDR therapist.)

Detective Work: Identify the Thoughts, Feelings, Triggers, and Memories Connected to the Behavior



Teach About Triggers

- Give examples of positive and negative triggers (situations, smells, faces, sounds, voice tones, pictures)
- Metaphors can be helpful (mousetrap/jack-in-the-box)



Look for the Trigger

Say...

- “Let’s work together to figure out the trigger. What exactly happened to trigger those sudden big feelings?”



“Detective Work”

Use a nonjudgmental, matter-of-fact attitude with the child and parents while looking for trauma triggers, thoughts, and feelings driving the child’s behaviors.



Detective Work Related to Traumatic Events

Say...

- “Upset thoughts are get stuck in the brain, too. Let’s see if we can figure out the upsetting mad/sad/scared thoughts.”
- “What thoughts would be more helpful?”

Look for the Emotion

- Say...
- “What was the feeling when that happened?”
- (You may need to use a feelings chart or give suggestions, such as, “Other children sometimes feel....”)



Connect Current Triggers/Thoughts/Emotions to Traumatic Events

- ◻ **The floatback:**
- ◻ Say...
- ◻ “I just want you let your brain remember back to when you were much smaller and think about when you first had those upset feelings?”
- ◻ Or you can say...
- ◻ “Think back to when you were smaller. When was the first time you had that upset thought?”

Look for the Negative Cognition (NC) Related to Triggering Situations or Past Traumas

Say...

- "I wonder what upset thought your brain was thinking just then."
- "What was your mad/scared/sad thought?"
- "What is the thought from the hurt little one on the inside?"
- "If it were me...."
- "Mom if it were you...."



Look for the Preferred Positive Cognitions (PCs) Related to Current or Past Traumas

Say...

- "What would be a more helpful thought?"
- "What could you tell your brain instead?"
- "What is the truth?"
- "What are the facts today?"

(The child may need suggestions.)



Provide Needed Helpful Information

- For example...
- "I'll bet you didn't know that children are never responsible for the behavior of adults."
- "This was not your fault."
- "Your forever mom and dad are doing everything they can to make sure you stay safe."
- "Your birth parents loved you, they just didn't know the right way to care for kids."

Bring the Information to the EMDR Therapist

Information about triggering events, past traumas, and associated thoughts and feelings will assist the EMDR therapist with reprocessing.



Settle Down the Smaller Part of Self

Awareness of the Smaller Self

Say...

- “A lot of kids have a hard time staying in their most grown-up self because of the feelings and thoughts stuck in the brain from the past.”
- “The feelings and thoughts of the smaller hurt self are easily triggered.”
- “I wonder if you can think of a time when those feelings were triggered.”

Encourage Reassuring Dialogue



- “Is this feeling/thought coming from your bigger self or your littler hurt self? What can your most grown-up self say to the littler you?”
- “John, can you talk to the littler John on the inside and remind him that you are safe and the past is over?”

Encourage Dialogue From the Parent



- “Mom/Dad, what do you want the little one on the inside to know?”
- “Mom, can you talk through John’s eyes to the littler John inside and remind him he is safe?”
- The therapist can model dialoguing with the little one on the inside.

Making Sense of the Behaviors



Say...

- “When your smaller self is triggered, your actions don’t match your 11-year-old self.”
- “The little you on the inside is not bad.”
- “Young children in hard situations don’t know what to do.”

Expressing Appreciation and Reassurance to the Younger Part of Self

Say...

- “Let’s think of reasons the littler you inside learned to feel this way/think this way/act this way?”
- “The little you did what you needed to do to take care of yourself. Let’s say thank you to that younger part of you for _____.”
- “Let’s remind the little one on the inside that the past is over, you are safe and loved, and you have what you need.”

Work with Baby Dolls and Nesting Dolls

- Use dolls to help the child and parents connect the child’s behaviors and underlying feelings and thoughts to “the little one on the inside.”
- Dialogue using dolls to change core beliefs.
- Use dolls to help the child and parents develop compassion for “the little one on the inside” and for what the child has gone through.
- Use dolls to assist in dialoguing with “the little one on the inside.”

Detective Work is Ongoing

The Detective Work is Ongoing

- The landscape is always changing. The parents, child, and therapist work together to identify new triggers, new identified NCs, and additional touchstone events.



If You are Working as a Collaborative Team...

- The family therapist provides identified triggers, memories, NCs, PCs, and emotions to the EMDR therapist.
- The EMDR therapist is able to implement EMDR efficiently and consistently.

If You Are Working Solo...

- Follow family therapy work with EMDR to process triggers and memories.
- Family therapy sessions can be alternated with EMDR sessions.

The EMDR Therapy...



- Integrates the traumatic material with new helpful information.
- Brings the adaptive information down to a feeling level.
- Reduces intense negative affect and increases positive affect.
