

School-Age Care Approach to Big Kids Big EMOTIONS

Presented by The Pennsylvania Key

Introductions

Blended Age Mental Health Consultants



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Objectives

- Teachers will be able to support themselves and youth in recognizing their own emotions.
- Teachers will be able to apply techniques for responding to big feelings.

“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we ... teach?
punish?”

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as
automatically as we do the others?”
- *Herner, 1998*

Hot Button Reflective Practice

Hot Button Behaviors:

- Throwing objects
- Whining/Crying
- Laughing at the teacher
- Swearing
- Hitting/Kicking
- Spitting

Hot Button Reflective Practice

Think through these questions:

1. What emotion word describes how this behavior makes you feel?
2. How do you respond to your emotions?
3. How do you react to the behaviors?
4. How do these feelings impact your relationship with the child?
5. How do these feelings impact the relationship with the family?



Behavior Has Meaning



1. **Pause-** Before reacting, think about the meaning behind the behavior. Has this behavior occurred before?
2. **Ask-** Ask yourself, what is the youth trying to communicate through the behavior? What do I know about this child that may help me find the reason behind the behavior?
3. **Respond-** Label the child's feelings and validate the wants or needs the child is expressing.

Form and Function Activity

The **form** is the behavior the child is using to communicate.

The **function** is the meaning behind the behavior.

Form and Function

Age	Behavior (form)	Possible function (meaning behind behavior)
6 years old	Hits a friend who is playing near them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I am tired- I do not want to share my toy- I need space- It is too hot in the classroom
9 years old	Refusing to do homework during homework time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I have no control over my day- I don't understand the homework- I am hungry- It is too loud in the classroom
12 years old	Rolls eyes whenever teacher gives direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hormonal changes affecting mood- Bored with materials in classroom- Feels "too old" to be at SAC- In a fight with best friend at school

SAC Brain

What can affect our brain's ability to control our big feelings?

- Age
- Trauma
- Temperament
- Health Issues
 - Nutrition
 - Chemical Imbalance
 - Sleep
 - Stress
- Technology
- Culture
- Family
- Many other factors and variables



SAC Brain



- Adults need to understand how the brain works during big feelings to help students regulate their big feelings.
- Does anyone know when the prefrontal cortex (the thinking part of our brains) is fully developed?

Brain Development at Different Ages

Ages 6-7	Ages 8-10	Ages 11-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning to express thoughts and feelings in detail Using language to socialize Learn to question things Gradual increase in attention span Learning takes place through concrete play experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All previous skills from 6-7 and..... Begin to use complex thinking to solve problems Develop a sense of right and wrong Develop competitiveness Change emotions quickly Begin to compromise and solve problems with peers May be sensitive or overdramatic Developing long lasting friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All previous skills from 6-10 and... Use active listening in both formal and informal settings. Use nonverbal communication techniques to enhance meaning. Show constructive ways to express needs, wants and feelings Demonstrate respect for individual and cultural differences that help develop healthy relationships. Use imagination to form and to express thought, feeling and character. Growing desire to be independent Form close one to one friendships

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

An Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) is any traumatic event that occurred during childhood. ACEs affect children's mental, physical, and emotional health.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES INCLUDE:

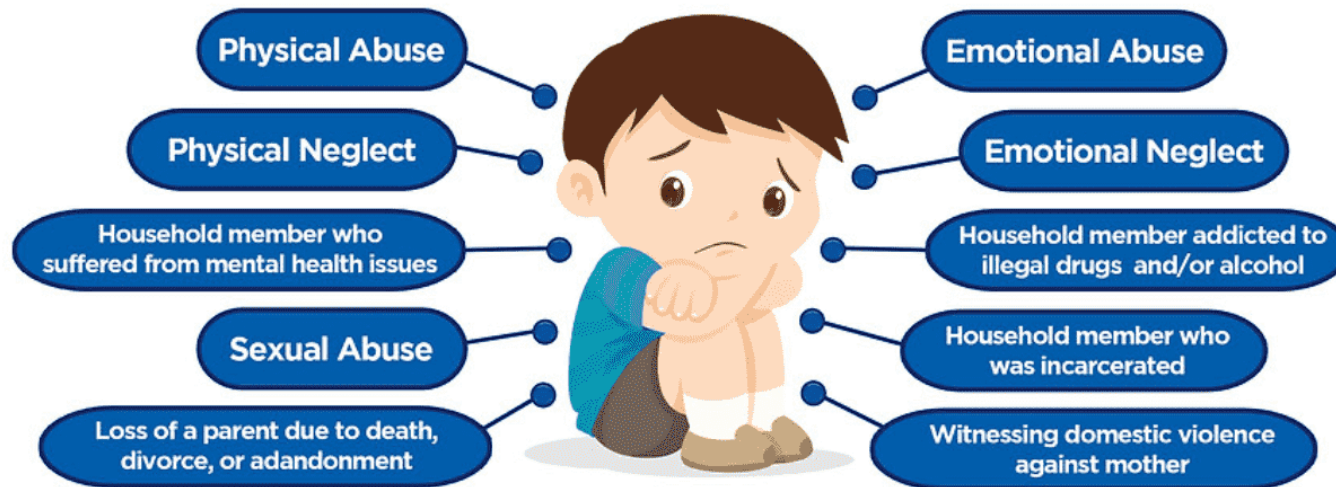


Image from
PCA Illinois | THEISSUES | Childhood
Trauma (preventchildabuseillinois.org)

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN LINKED TO:



How does trauma affect the brain?

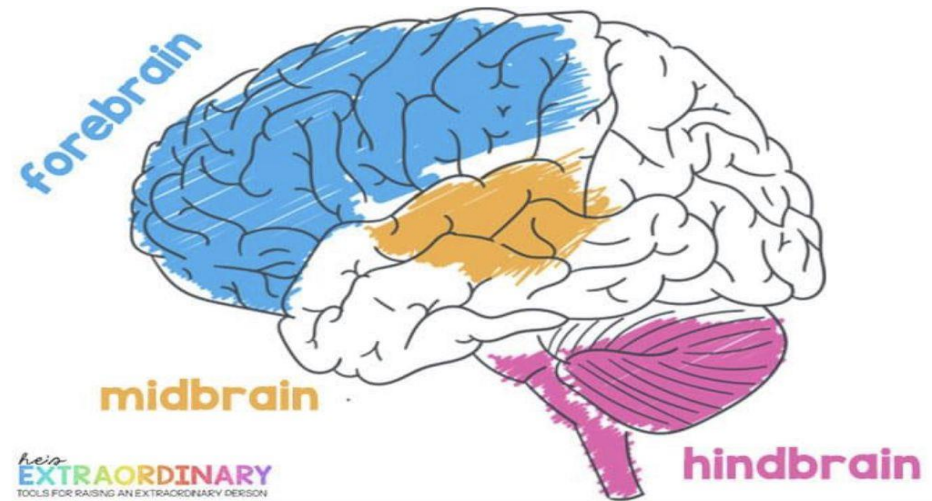
According to the Child Mind Institute, trauma is a result of any frightening or upsetting event.

Experiencing trauma can cause:

- poor self-regulation: often in fight or flight mode
- negative thinking: belief they are bad, fear of making mistakes
- executive function challenges: chronic trauma affects memory and ability to make decisions
- trouble developing relationships with teachers: students have a wall up and struggle to trust adults in their lives

EMOTIONAL REGULATION & THE BRAIN

Let's look at the parts of the brain!



forebrain

THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX – The thinking part of the brain. Controls executive functions, reasoning, problem solving, etc. When regulated your child's forebrain is engaged and ready to learn.

midbrain

THE LIMBIC SYSTEM – The feeling part of the brain where emotions are experienced. When engaged there is less connection with the forebrain. Your child will seem emotional, needy, demanding, uncooperative, nervous, etc. Help them regulate their emotions.

hindbrain

BRAIN STEM & AMYGDALA – The survival part of the brain. Controls fight or flight instinct. When engaged there is no connection to the forebrain. Your child may hit, bite, scream, spit, run away, shut down. They need to feel safe. You cannot teach or discipline right now.

Image shared from hes-extraordinary.com

Let's look at the brain during a big feeling

CONNECTING BRAIN TO BRAIN



BRAIN STATE & BEHAVIOR

RESPOND (NOT REACT)

GO

GREEN LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will appear calm, open, receptive, engaged. Thinking, playing, reasoning, loving.

(PREFRONTAL CORTEX)
LEARNING

PAUSE

YELLOW LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will appear emotional, needy, clingy, cuddly, demanding, distracted, hyper, uncooperative, nervous laughter, crying.

(MIDBRAIN)
FEELING

STOP

RED LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will present in one of three states:
Fight: hitting, biting, screaming, spitting.
Flight: run away, look away, push away.
Freeze: shut down.

(BRAIN STEM)
FEARING

TEACH

Your child's brain is receptive, and his/her brain is ready to learn and grow! Talk, play, model, explain, guide, and appreciate.

REGULATE

Help your child learn to regulate their body using your words and actions. Meet emotion with emotion. Set and hold to limits calmly. Pause. Breathe. Model the skills you are teaching. Affirm that emotions are safe, allowed and helpful. Use mindfulness, compassion, ritual, and play.

COMFORT AND CALM

Meet unmet needs (sleep, hunger, order, routine). Look to your body language. Soothe your child. Get low. Make eye contact. Offer gentle touch/hug. Less talking, more being. You might say: "You're safe."



Calm in the Storm Visual

STOP

RED LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will present in one of three states:

Fight: hitting, biting, screaming, spitting.

Flight: run away, look away, push away.

Freeze: shut down.

(BRAIN STEM)

FEARING



Co-Regulation Example



Regulation Strategies for Youth

Calm Down Area

- A calm-down area can be used for children who need space to help regulate their bodies. The calm-down area can include soft furniture, sensory toys, feelings chat, books, etc.
- An adult should be nearby when a child is in a calm-down area to be there for emotional support. The calm-down area should be a safe place and not be used as a punishment or “time out.”

Calm Down Bags

- A calm-down bag is a bag that children create for themselves. They can **choose** the materials in the bag and use the bag when they are experiencing big feelings and need support to calm down.
- Just like the calm down area, an adult should always be providing support while the child uses the calm down bag.
- A calm-down bag could include coloring books, sensory toys, books, small toys, snacks, drinks, a picture of their families, etc.

Regulation Cards

Regulation cards or calm-down cards can be used as another option for children who have big feelings. Given a few choices, youth can choose which option would help them regulate their body with support from a calm adult.

PAUSE

YELLOW LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will appear emotional, needy, clingy, cuddly, demanding, distracted, hyper, uncooperative, nervous laughter, crying.

(MIDBRAIN)

FEELING

Debriefing Form

GO

GREEN LIGHT BRAIN:

Child will appear calm, open,
receptive, engaged. Thinking,
playing, reasoning, loving.

**(PREFRONTAL CORTEX)
LEARNING**

Sample Debriefing Form—Student

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. What happened?

2. Why did it happen?

3. How did it work out?



4. How did you feel after that?



5. What can you try next time that might work better?

Note: Adapted from Colvin, G. and Scott, T. M., 2015, Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom (2nd ed.), pp. 225-226.

What can you do to stay calm?

Help Us Stay Calm

Strategies that help you and your child during challenging behavior

Stay Calm | Reflect | Re-Connect

When your child is engaged in challenging behavior or experiencing anger, stress, sadness or frustration, it is important to stay calm. If you express your anger and frustration, it might result in more challenging behavior from your child. Remaining calm will provide the safety and support your child needs as they learn how to calm themselves.

Step 1: Calm Yourself

- Count until calm (1,2,3,4,...)
- Connect with a friend
- Think something positive or fun about your child
- Drink some water; Have a snack
- Take deep breaths
- Ask for help

Step 2: Reflect

- What feelings and thoughts came up?
- How do you think your child is feeling?
- What might your child need to prevent the behavior from occurring again?
- Are you calm enough to re-connect with your child?

Step 3: Re-Connect

When you re-connect, you can help your child learn new skills. Once you feel calm, and your child appears calm, here are a few tips.

- Make sure your child is calm
- Acknowledge feelings
- Offer choice
- Redirect to a new activity
- Talk and play with your child

More family resources at ChallengingBehavior.org/Implementation/Family.html

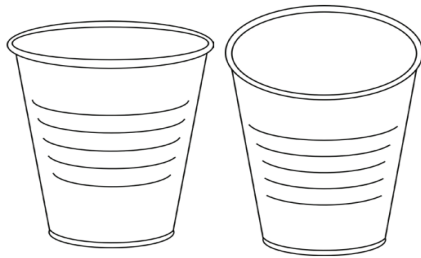
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Pub. 01/13/20

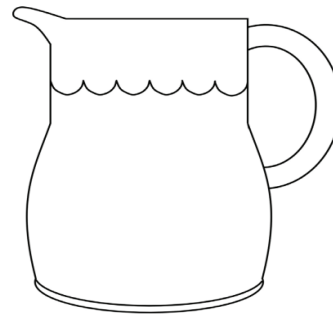
You can't pour from an empty cup...

The Path of Resilience



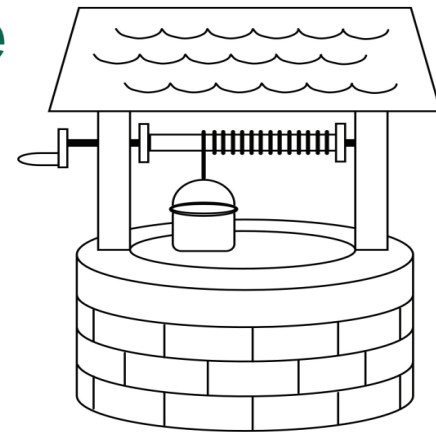
The “Cups”

Children need support from all of the adults in their lives in order to build resilience and to develop, both socially and emotionally. Children are the “cups” waiting to be filled each day, in order for them to become resilient adults.



The “Pitcher”

Resilient children need resilient adults. Adults working with and caring for young children can think of themselves as “pitchers.” Every day, adults pour and pour into the “cups” – the children. But as the famous saying goes, “you cannot give what you do not have.” So, it’s important for adults to focus on their own resilience and social-emotional health, in order to keep those pitchers full.



The “Well”

Adults working with and caring for young children need support and guidance, too. Those in positions of leadership in the early care and education field who provide that support can think of themselves as the “well.” With the “pitchers” pouring and emptying out on a daily basis, there must be some way for them to be refilled. Serving as the “well” means that you focus on not only your own resilience, but that of your fellow caregivers.

Show Up

- The Emotional Alphabet
- Leave your backpack at the door
- 104 Self-Care Strategies for Afterschool Professionals
- [Self-Care for Teachers \(challengingbehavior.org\)](https://challengingbehavior.org)

Knowing Yourself....

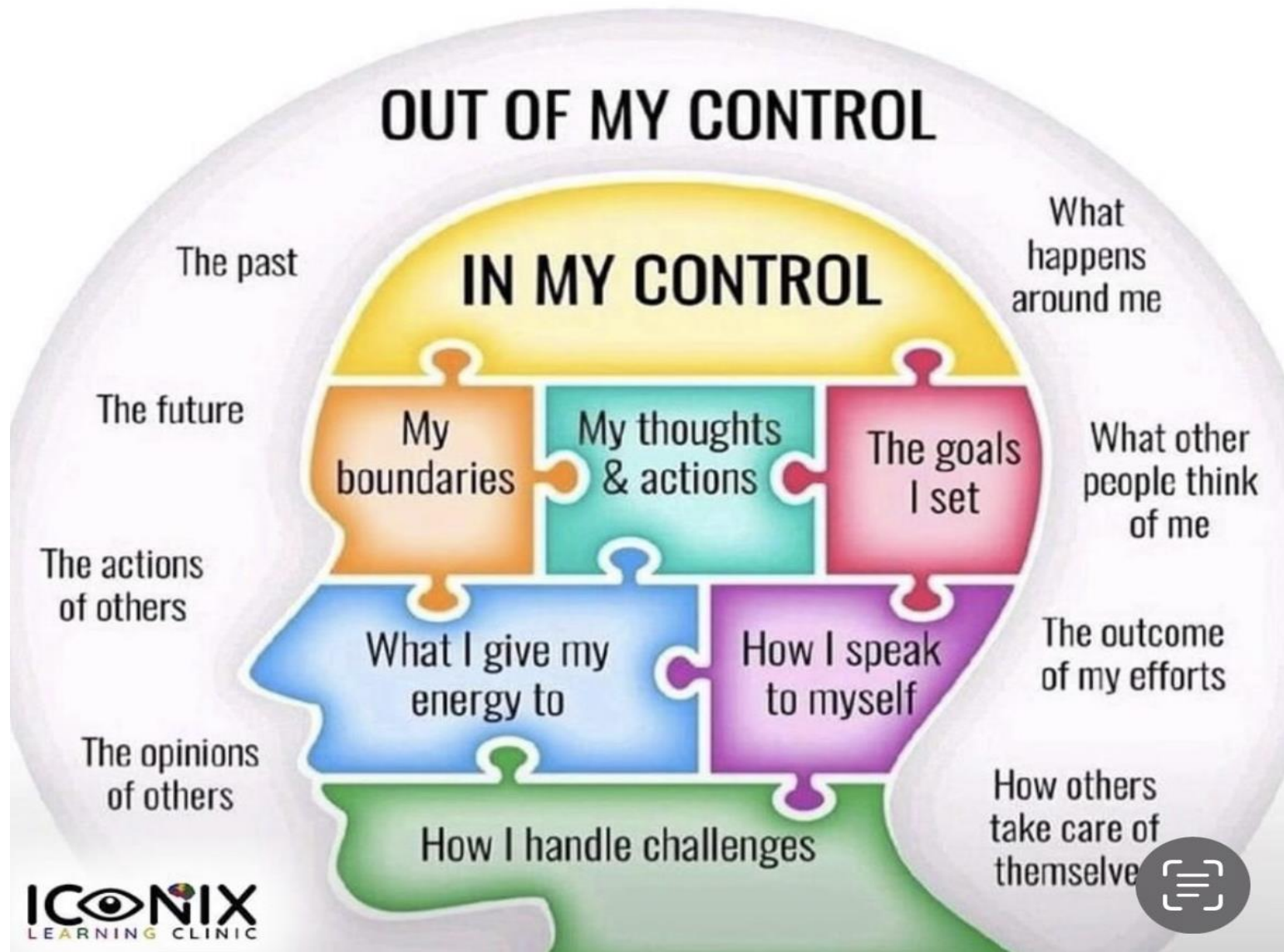
Knowing Yourself- Devereux

Knowing Your Temperament

Knowing Your Hot Spots



What I can control and what I can't



Ponder this...

“Where did we ever get the crazy idea that in order to make children feel better, first we have to make them feel worse? Think of the last time you felt humiliated or treated unfairly. Did you feel like cooperating or doing better?”

--Jane Nelson



Caught Being Good

“A child seldom needs a
good talking to as a good
listening to.”

–Robert Brault



For every **one** negative comment,
a child needs to hear **five to nine**
positive comments.

I see you.
I hear you.
I support you.

Role Model



The Real Menace about dealing with a five-year-old is that in no time at all you begin to sound like a five-year-old.

-Jean Kerr

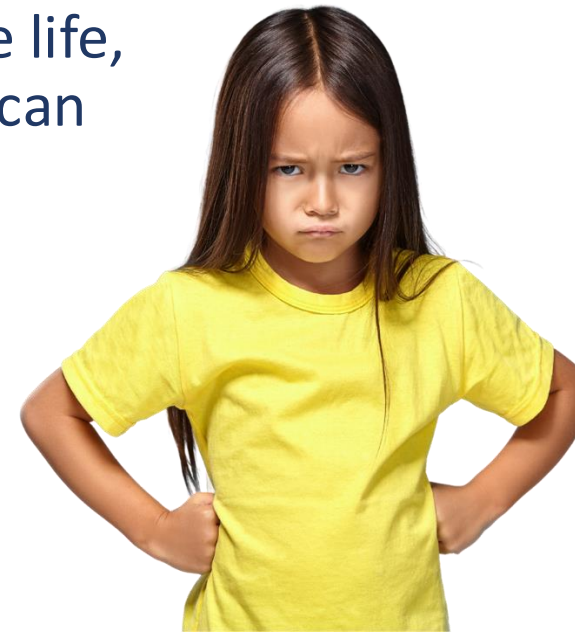
Walk the walk and Talk the Talk.

Identify your big feelings and show how you are managing them.

Environment & Relationships

The **environment** plays a large part in what children feel, how they handle those feelings, and whether they can deal with those feelings.

We also know **building positive relationships** with youth, families (understanding culture, home life, and communication strategies), and schools can support their social-emotional well-being.



YOUTH BEHAVIOR REFLECTION SUPPORT TOOL



OCTOBER 2022

Youth Behavior Reflection Support Tool

Questions and Answers



For Additional School-Age Childcare Support

- Peers in the program
- Program director
- School personnel
- DHS Certification
- STARS Quality Coach
- Program Quality Assessor
- SAC Specialist
- Regional School Age Mental Health Consultant

School-Age Mental Health Consultation

Sign up for School Age Childcare Mental Health Consultation.

You will meet virtually with one of the Pennsylvania Keys' School-Age Mental Health Consultants.

The flyer with the QR code is in your packet.



Remembering Our Role

Today, we learned a variety of variables that can affect brain development and youth's ability to cope while having big feelings.

We want to remind everyone that while this information is helpful in understanding the youth we teach; it cannot be used to diagnose or label a youth in your care.

Please seek outside support if you feel a child needs more support than can be given in the SAC program.



Ponder this...

“One of the most important things we can do is to send a child home in the afternoon liking himself just a little better than when he came in the morning.”

Eda Leshan

