

# Trauma Responsive Caregiving Strategies

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# AGENDA

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Trauma Informed vs Trauma Responsive

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Relationships are KEY

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Trauma Responsive Environments

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Trauma Responsive Strategies

# About the Presenter



- ◆ Native New Mexican- born and raised in Las Cruces
- ◆ Moved to ABQ for college
- ◆ University of New Mexico Graduate
  - ◆ Bachelor of Science in Family Studies
  - ◆ Master of Art in Counseling.
- ◆ Mother of a 4-year-old
- ◆ Early childhood educator
- ◆ Trained experiential play therapist
- ◆ Clinical supervisor for a behavioral management program.
- ◆ Infant Mental Health Endorsed
- ◆ Certified in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC).
- ◆ 2023-2024 Early Childhood Policy Fellow at Bank Street College of Education.
- ◆ Private Practice
  - ◆ Brave Healing Mental Health Services, LLC



**Trauma Informed Care  
VS.  
Responsive Care**

# What Is Trauma-Informed Care?

“Trauma-informed care (TIC) encompasses a variety of approaches to working with children exposed to traumatic events or conditions.”

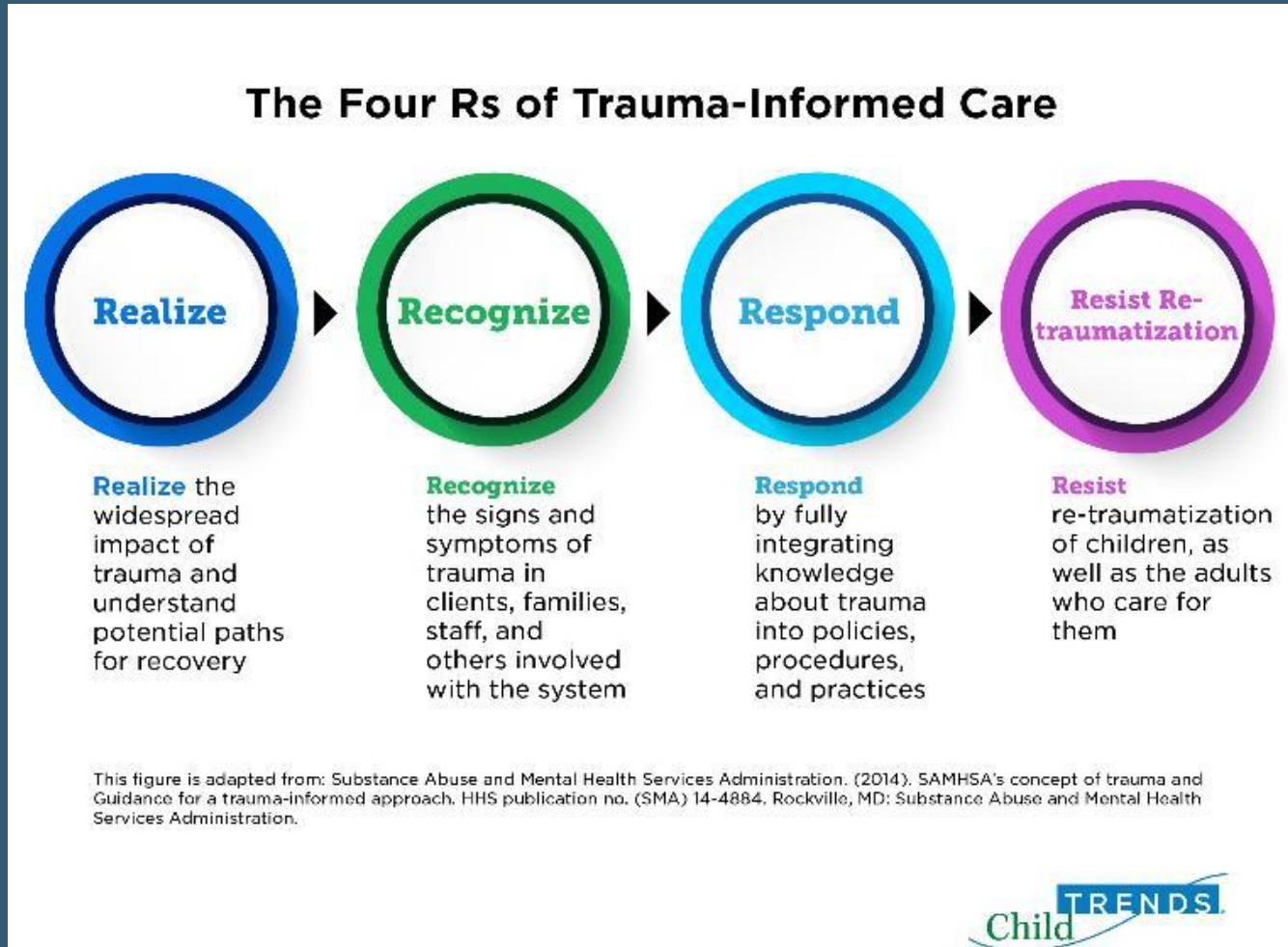
“TIC helps service providers, parents, and systems recognize and respond to the needs of children who experience trauma.”

“TIC enhances the effectiveness of child-serving systems by promoting a common language.”

“Everyone in a child’s life has a role to play in TIC.”

“TIC supports the capacity of adults to cope with their own responses to trauma.”

# Realize, Recognize, Respond, and Resist Re-Traumatization



Source used with permission: Bartlett, J. D., & Steber, K. (2019, May 19). *How to implement trauma-informed care to build resilience to childhood trauma*. Child Trends.

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/how-to-implement-trauma-informed-care-to-build-resilience-to-childhood-trauma>

# What Is Trauma-Responsive Care?

Providing trauma-responsive care means moving beyond just being informed and offering the most effective and compassionate care to those affected by trauma.

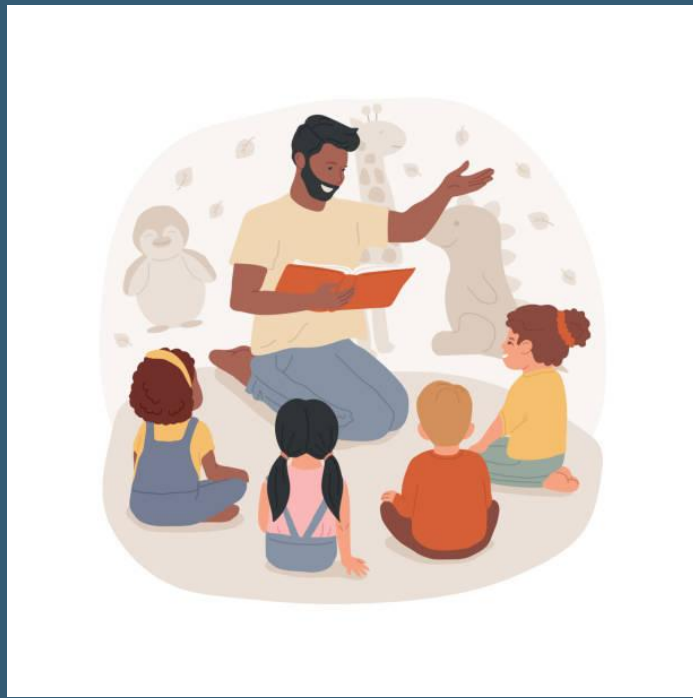
Looking at every aspect of a baby or toddler's experience in our care and thinking about how to ...

- Build safe, secure, nurturing relationships
- Proactively look for signs or symptoms indicating a traumatic experience
- Respond to their needs in a manner that is sensitive to their possible trauma experiences
- Being sensitive to triggers that might activate an alarm response
- Create emotionally safe and healing environments
- Intentionally resist traumatization

# Trauma-Responsive Strategies



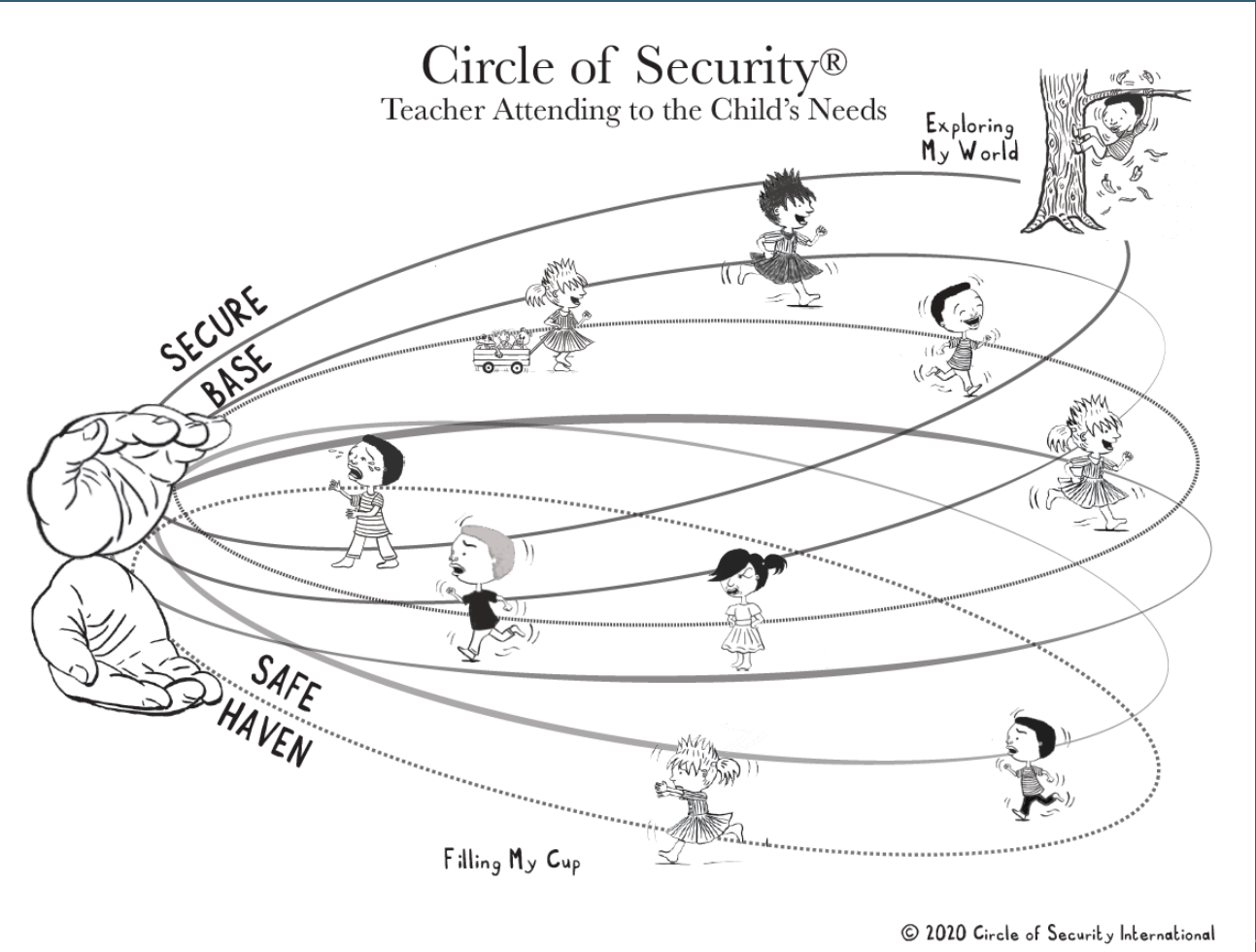
Relationship  
is KEY



# Building Secure Attachment, Trust, and Creating Healthy Relationships



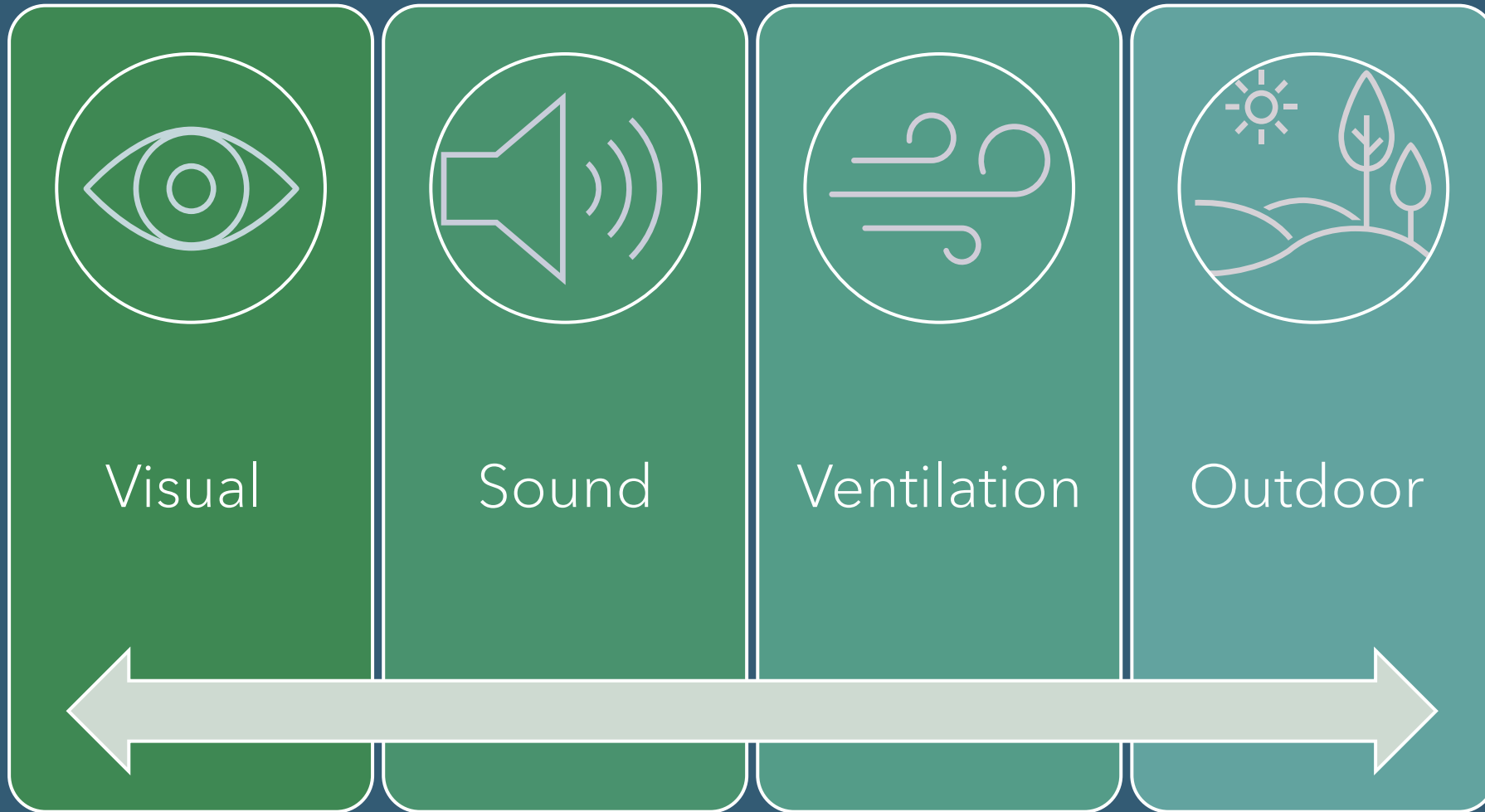
# Caregiver-Child relationship



# Trauma-Responsive Environments



# Trauma-Responsive Environments



# Environments

How can environments promote emotional safety for young children?

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Small groups

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Private places

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Individual place

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Familiar photos, preferred toys

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Predictable placement of materials

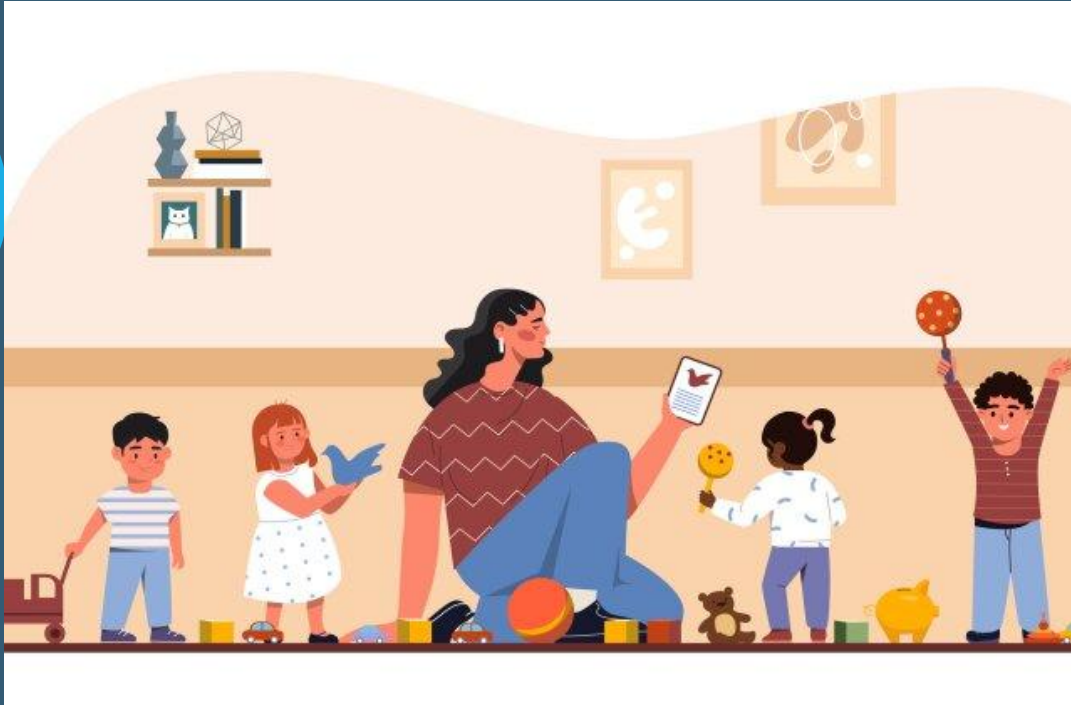
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Calm surroundings

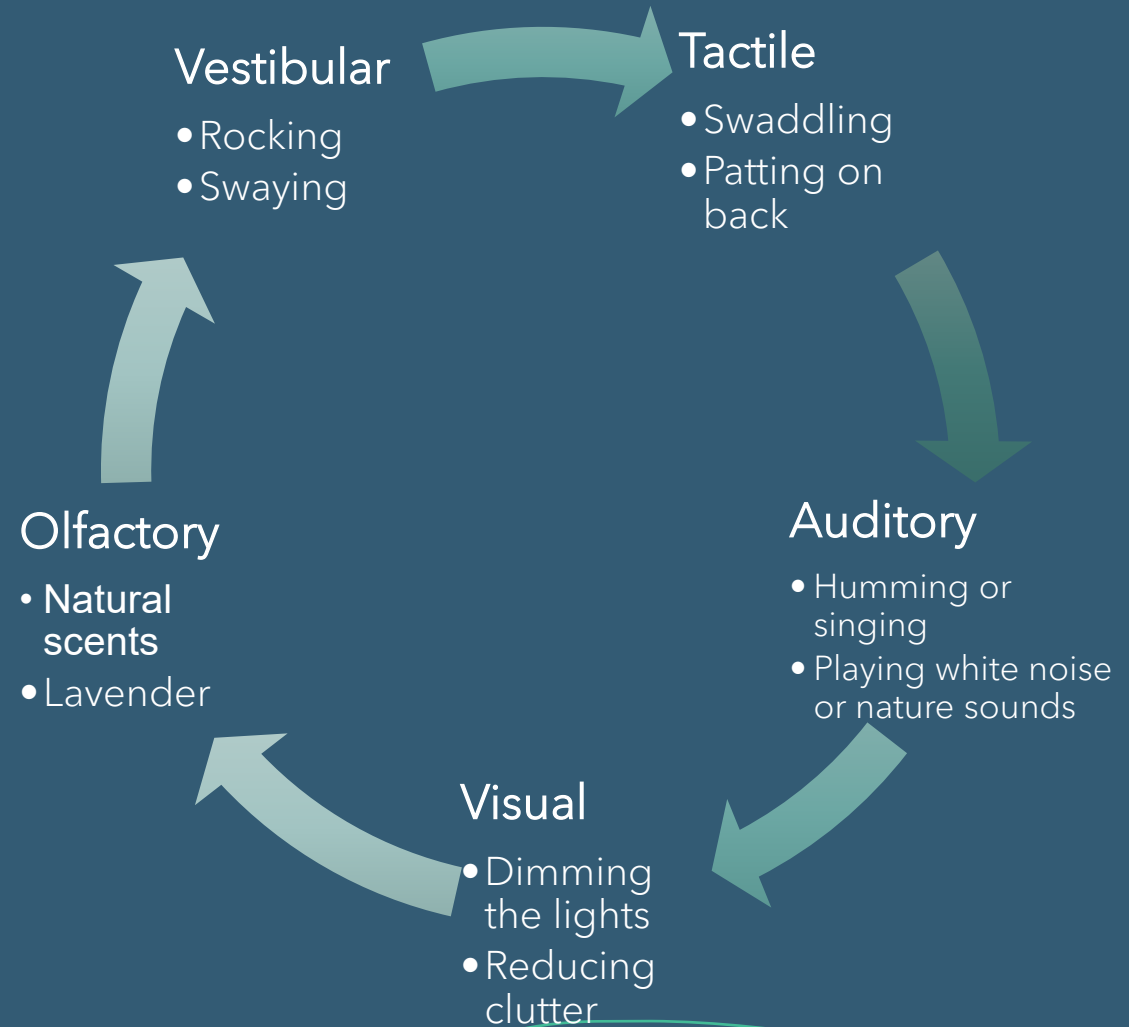
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Natural spaces (indoor and outdoor)

# Caregiving and Teaching Practices

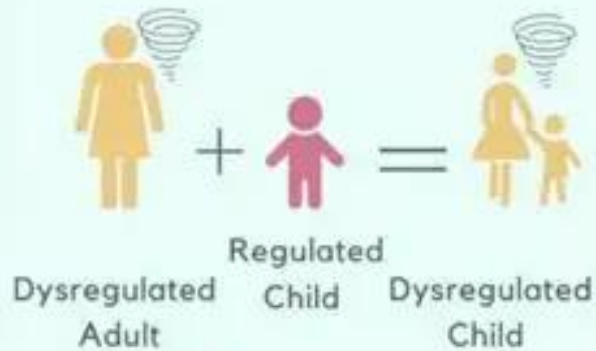
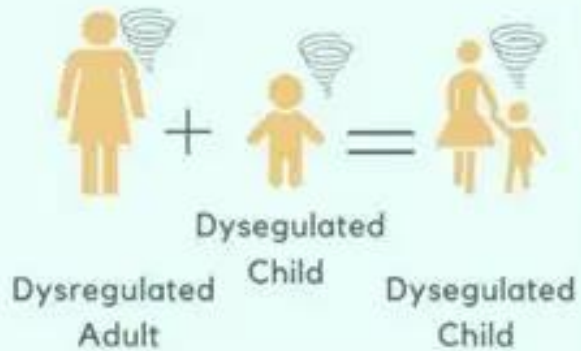
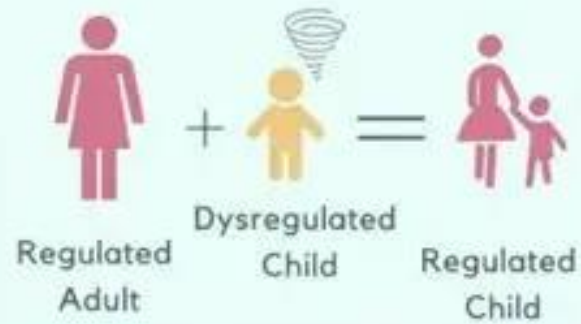
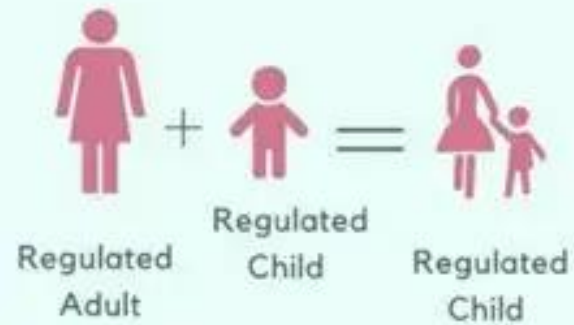


# Helping Co-Regulate and Self-Soothe



# CO-REGULATION

for the visual learner



# Co-Regulation

# Emotional Self-Regulation



Young infants rely on adults for comfort.

Self-regulation grows with the developing brain.

Children develop the ability to manage and regulate emotional responses.

Caregivers contribute to children's self-control and regulation strategies.

Sources: California Department of Education. (2009). *California infant/toddler learning & development foundations*.  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/itfoundations2009.pdf>

Tarullo, A. R., Obradovic, J., & Gunnar, M. R. (2009). Self-control and the developing brain. *Zero to Three*, 29(3), 31–37. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303230063\\_Self-control\\_and\\_the\\_developing\\_brain](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303230063_Self-control_and_the_developing_brain)

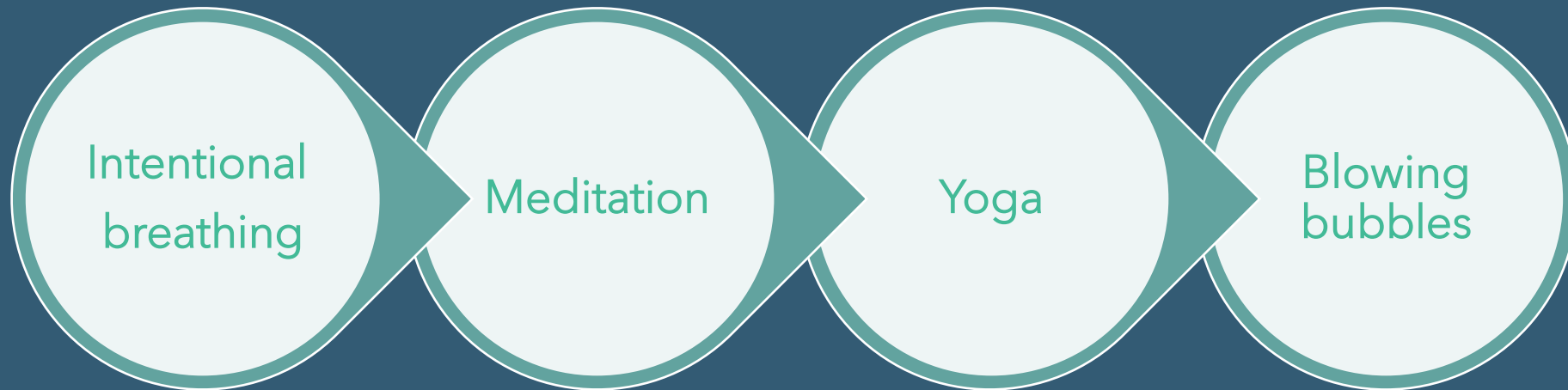
# Self-Regulation



# Practices That Support Self-Regulation

- ◆ Respond with sensitivity and support.
- ◆ Give advanced notice of changes in activities.
- ◆ Offer many prompts and reminders.
- ◆ Reinforce self-regulated behavior.
- ◆ Encourage sustained attention.
- ◆ Support language development.
- ◆ Increase the number and complexity of rules gradually.

# Additional Strategies to Support Self-Regulation



# Understanding Behavior: It All Has Meaning!

"The challenging behaviors of traumatized children are driven by fear –not rebellion and defiance. Scared children do scary things because they are afraid and not because they are trying to get on the last nerve of the people who care for and teach them."

# Behavioral Responses

Fight	Fight—responds by fighting back and sometimes using misdirected aggressive behaviors
Flight	Flight –responds by trying to escape, run, or hide
Freeze	Freeze –responds by shutting down, being non-responsive or withdrawn
Fawn	Fawn –responds by trying to appease others

# Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Seek out the cause.

Be present.

Be responsive.

Use positive redirection and guidance.

Remember a child's behavior is not personal.

Listen.

Practice ways to self-regulate.

Use routines.

Respect the child's needs and feelings.

Offer choices.

Encourage self-esteem.

# Strategies to Develop Emotional Literacy in Young Children

Use the adult-child relationship to expand children's awareness of emotions or feelings:

- ◆ Verbally acknowledge and label emotions expressed by toddlers.
- ◆ Assist infants and toddlers with regulating or co-regulating their emotions.
- ◆ Talk about how feelings can change.
- ◆ Use questions about feelings to see if and how a toddler responds.

# Strategies to Develop Emotional Literacy in Young Children

Find opportunities in the group setting to talk about feelings:

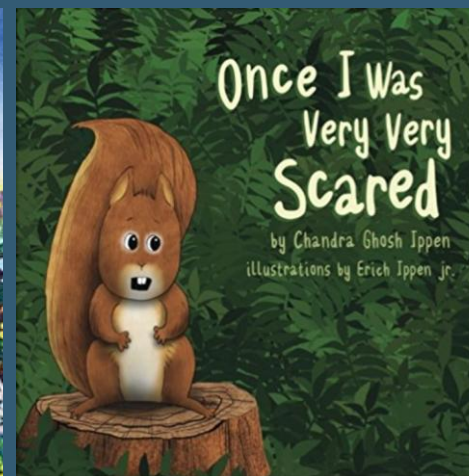
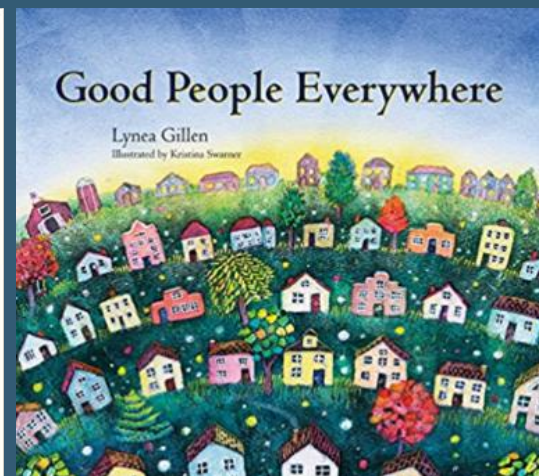
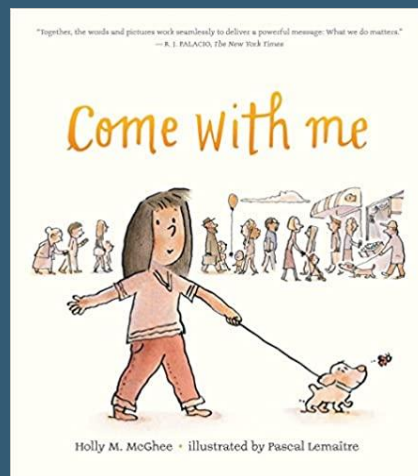
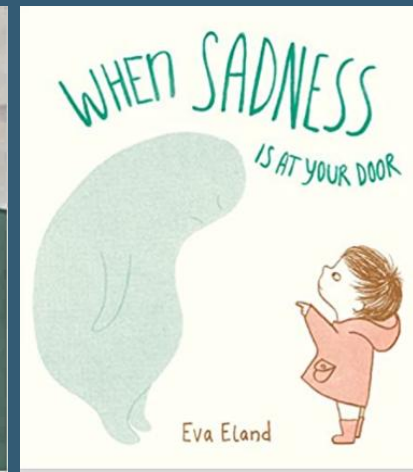
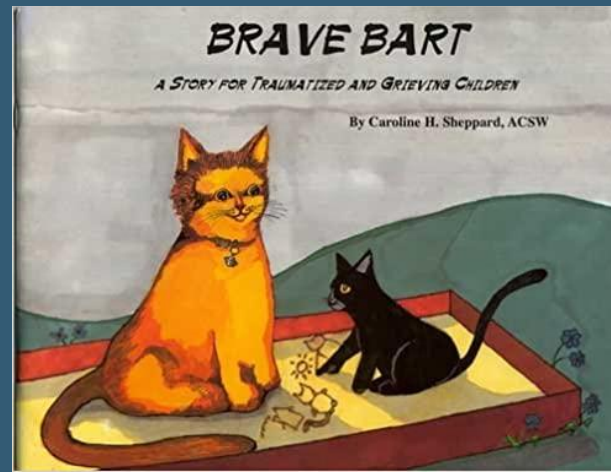
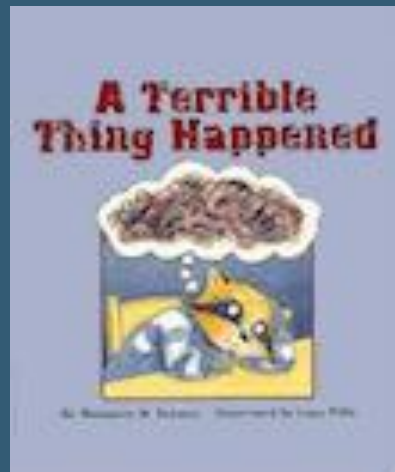
- ◆ Stay close and support children when they experience difficulties with peers and need adult support to resolve them
- ◆ Show positive feelings for both children in conflict
- ◆ Let children know through your calm approach that conflict is normal and can be resolved with help

# Strategies to Develop Emotional Literacy in Young Children

## Use enriching language tools:

- ◆ Choose books, music, finger plays, and songs with a rich vocabulary of feeling words.
- ◆ Use puppetry or felt board stories that retell common social experiences and emphasize feeling vocabulary and conflict resolution.
- ◆ Read stories about characters children can identify with who express a variety of feelings.

# Books to Help Toddlers with Trauma



# Caregiving Schedules and Routines



ROUTINES

SCHEDULES

TRANSITIONS

# Schedules and Routines

How schedules and routines support social and emotional development:

“They are an important part of each day.”

“They meet children’s basic needs.”

“They provide opportunities for learning and development.”

“They help develop a sense of security and control.”

“They provide predictability.”

“They support competence and confidence.”

# Strategies to Support Routines for Young Children

Use first and next or first and then words

Display an item, such as a new toy, photo, or plant, that children and families can explore together during arrival

Sing or play lullabies

Involve children in routines – for example, invite toddlers to help pass items to the next person during mealtimes

# The Importance of Play



# Play!

Minimizes fear

Gives control

Practices life skills

Promotes social emotional competence

Provides an avenue for self-expression



# Trauma- Responsive Play Strategies

Music

Movement

Dramatic  
Play

# Using Rhythm and Music with Babies and Toddlers

Singing

Simulating mother's  
heartbeat

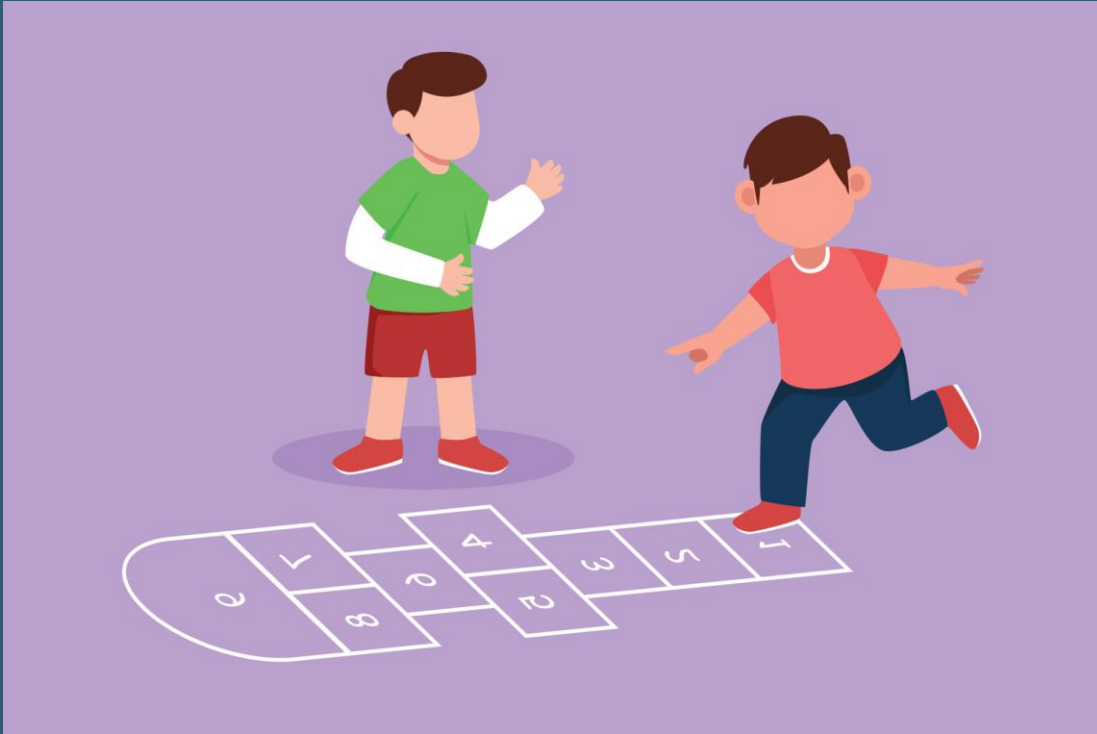
Rhythm-based instruments

Movement to music

Dancing



# Physical Activity



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Indoor space for active play

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At least 20 minutes every 2 hours

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Rough and tumble play area

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Abundant access to outdoor areas with natural spaces

# Bilateral Play

Butterfly hugs or karate chops

Clapping games and songs (for example, "Patty Cake," "If You're Happy and You Know It")

Puppets

Cross-body hopping, jumping and tossing games

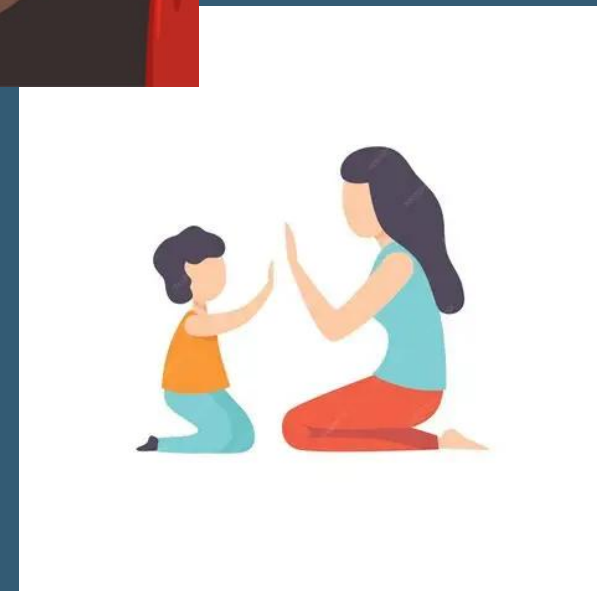
Tearing or crumpling tissue paper (create a craft)

Connecting or separating construction toys, magnetic blocks, Mega blocks, pop-beads, Legos

Playing with toy instruments; banging drums, triangle, symbols

Pinching, pulling, and squeezing Playdoh (finding hidden objects), as well as using the Playdoh "tools"

Art that involves using both hands



Sources: Artigas, L., & Jarero, I. (2014). The butterfly hug. In *Implementing EMDR early mental health interventions for man-made and natural disasters*, 127-130.

Talwar, S. (2007). Accessing traumatic memory through art making: An art therapy trauma protocol (ATTP). *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 34(1), 22-35.

Tripp, T. (2007). A short term therapy approach to processing trauma: Art therapy and bilateral stimulation. *Art Therapy*, 24(4), 176-183.

# Dramatic Play



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Opportunities to act out thoughts

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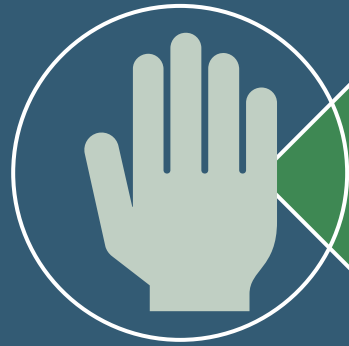
Gives power and control



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Caregivers can listen and learn

# Mindfulness and Breathing with Young Children



Five  
Senses  
Exercise



Starfish  
Breathing

Questions?



# Thank You

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