

Strategies to Improve Emotion Regulation of Educators and Students

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NCTSN

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Continuing Medical Education Commercial Disclosure

I, Julian D. Ford, am co-owner of
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Treatment/Training Model

What is “Affect?”

- Specific Emotions + Diffuse Feelings
- Guides Attention (Orienting/Alerting)
- Origin of Motivation (Wanting/Liking)
- Guides Behavior (Reacting/Seeking)
- Imprints Memories—(Un)forgettable
- Creates the Self (I feel, therefore I am)

- Foundation of all Relationships

What is “Affect?”

“Ibn Arabi says, If it were not for this love, the world would never appear in its concrete existence.”

Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*

What is “Dysregulation?” –

States of Body/Mind that are:

- Too much/little (outside a tolerable “window” of arousal/intensity)
- Confusion (sound & fury /utter silence)
- Unknowable/Inexpressible
- Unpredictable/Uncontrollable
- Can't be recovered from/re-set

Relevance of Trauma to Affect Dysregulation

Traumatic Stress = Dysregulation

Adaptation to Events and Internal
Reactions that are Unpredictable/
Uncontrollable and that are Outside
of a Tolerable Window of
Arousal/Intensity

Relevance of Complex Trauma to Affect Dysregulation

Complex Trauma Involves
Disorganization of the Primary
Attachment Relationships in which
Affect Regulation is Learned

Survival Trumps Co-Regulation

Vignette 1: 15 yr old obese inattentive girl

- CSA, CPA, parental DV, emotional abuse
- >20 out-of-home placements since age 8
- PTSD, RAD, DissociativeDNOS, Bipolar Dx
- Described as: vengeful, impulsive, reckless, mood swings, explosive temper, self-harm
- Describes self: “garbage, worthless, reject”
- In school: always late, daydreams, requests hall passes often, leaves class like a rocket
- Strengths: determined, studious, articulate

Vignette 2: 13 yr old adopted Russian orphan girl

- Abandoned by substance using Bio Mother
- CSA, CPA by babysitters/foster parents
- 13 crisis hospitalizations suicidal/self-harm
- Diagnoses: IED, RAD, Bulimia, SUD, BPD
- Described as: isolate, controlling, explosive, sexualized, intrusive, vindictive, narcissistic
- Describes self: “disgusting, wish I were dead”
- In school: attends irregularly, defiant, irritable
- Strengths: engaging when in good mood, self-reliant, enjoys reading and drawing

Vignette 3: 14 yr old boy living with bio father

- Likely CSA by substance using bio mother's boyfriend age 4-7, molested 9 yo sister x1 yr
- Diagnoses: ADHD, GAD, MDD, Mj SUD
- Described as: avoidant, worrier, ”
- Describes self: “confused, stupid, slow, easily bored, I sleep to escape, I need mj to relax”
- In school: “forgets” homework, gives up when taking tests, extremely self-critical on all work
- Strengths: intelligent, friendly, sense of humor

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Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy

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FREEDOM steps

FOCUS

Slow down, Orient, Self-Check

RECOGNIZE

Stress Triggers

EMOTION

One MAIN Emotion

EVALUATE

One MAIN Thought

DEFINE

One MAIN Personal Goal

OPTIONS

Build On Your Positive Choices

MAKE a contribution

Make the World a Better Place



A Practical Template for Affect Regulation:

“SOS”

- **Step I: Slow Down**
 - Sweep your mind clear of all thoughts
- **Step II: Orient Yourself**
 - Choose one thing you want to think about; what ever is most important to you at this moment
 - Focus on What Is, *not* What Isn't/Should Be
- **Step III: Self Check (Scale = 1 to 10)**
 - How much Stress? How much Control?
 - How much Anger? How strong an Urge?
 - How connected in your relationships?

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Affect Regulation is Most Crucial in Transitions

- *Beginnings & Endings (of the year, semester, day, class, topic, activity, each interaction)*
- *Late Arrivals or Early Departures (note how these may parallel students' life experiences)*
- *Important Relationships (make sure students have something tangible to remind them that you continue to believe in and think of them)*

As educators, you make a contribution to every student every time you provide a living role model of how to recognize stressors and stress reactions while also focusing on what is truly important and choosing your options accordingly