

WORKING WITH TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

The Feelings Playhouse Tool



BODY OUTLINE

- "U" Turn at Elbows and Knees



BRAIN, HEART, HOUSE

- Emphasize Brain's role as boss
- Spend some time listening to with what the child fills her "playhouse."
- What has she experienced as "fun."



LIES VERSUS TRUTHS OF FEELINGS

- 1. Feelings come from the outside.
- 2. Feelings are "Bigger, Stronger and Smarter than me."
- 3. Feelings are to be avoided, repressed, or numbed.
- 1. Feelings are made inside of us.
- 2. Feelings are by definition, smaller, weaker and dumber.
- 3. Feelings need to deliver their "message", felt, and "let go."



FEELINGS AS "MINIONS"

- Although by definition, Feelings are not smarter-they are cunning and creative.
- Like "Minions," Feelings are most helpful to us when managed well:
 - Allow them to do their job.
 - Let them know when they've done their job, then send them back to the "Playhouse/Workshop."
 - **NEVER LET THEM OUT OF THE PLAYHOUSE UNSUPERVISED**



THE BASIC 5 FEELINGS

- 1. Love
- 2. Fear
- 3. Hurt
- 4. Sad
- 5. Mad



A WORD ABOUT ANGER

- Anger/Mad appears to be an evolutionary development designed to tap into the power of sad, hurt and scared in order to keep us alive. (true story, brah)
- (Remember the "Lions, Tigers and Bears...")
- Unfortunately, many persons with trauma histories identify anger as their only emotion, the only one they trust and/or the only one they expect from themselves and others.
- When confronted with an ANGRY outburst, remember the Wizard.



FEELING MESSAGES

- 1. Love- "I am, safe, wanted, worthy, understood, cared for and/or feel these things toward an other."
- 2. Fear- "I am getting hurt/dead-Will get hurt/dead."
- 3. Hurt- "The thing that was said or done feels ugh." Or physical hurt.
- 4. Sad- "Something or someone I care about has/is going away."
- 5. Mad- "Protect by Defend/Attack!"



BRAIN'S JOB

Listen to feelings as they provide information regarding "How I am in the World."
 Accurately read, interpret and respond to Feelings' Messages.
 (This accuracy includes the ability to discern "That's on you, This is on me" behaviors and to adjust choices accordingly.)

Listen, Plan, Evaluate, Repeat

One of the "wounds" of trauma is the delayed development of this critical social interaction skill.



FEELINGS' JOB

- Deliver the message to Brain, aaaaaannnnndddd-return to the Playhouse!!!
- DO NOT LET THE FEELINGS READ, INTERPRET OR UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES RESPOND! (without direct supervision)
- It's not in their contracts and it isn't pretty when they do.



SUGGESTED SCRIPT

- Fear -"WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE!! TRUCK! TRUCK! TRUCK! SQUISHED LIKE BUG!!!!
- BRAIN-"THANK YOU FEAR, I GOT THIS. You did your job. FEET MOVE! OK Fear, go back to the Playhouse and come again when I need you."



"HOW DO YOU GET TO CARNEGIE HALL?"

- Children with trauma histories typically spent the first few years focusing brain development resources on survival rather than laying the foundations of the sophisticated social interactions skills necessary in later life settings.
- The "Playhouse" is a tool designed to provide a framework for understanding what feelings are, the need to manage them and basic "how to" of management.
- This tool is most effective if used before a conflict, tantrum, behavioral outburst.
- This tool is most effective after a conflict, tantrum, behavioral outburst.
- Only with time, practice, practice, practice and coaching will the traumatized brain be able to engage the tool on it's own to lessen or divert conflict, tantrum or behavioral outbursts.
- Remember: Under IDEAL conditions, it takes a "Trust Bonded" brain 5-10 YEARS to demonstrate minimal skill competence.


