Mastering Stressful Moments
Developed and Presented by: Raelene Ostberg, M.Ed.

Objectives:
- List a technique to override natural instinctual stress responses
- Identify helpful options for mastering stressful moments
- Label a method to improve a stressful time of day

Main Points:
- Our stress level affects how we feel, how we think, and how we behave
- Our stress is catchy so affects how others feel, think, and behave
- You can master stressful moments
  - Be in tune with what is going on with your body and mind
  - Recognize and label feelings
  - Take regular intervals to soothe and calm
  - Make a plan of action to respond to stressors
- **Children learn how to manage stressful moments over time, through your example and ongoing support and teaching.**

“Stress is when the demands on your body or your expectations of those demands exceed your ability to handle them.”

Megan Gunner, University of Minnesota

Stress and the brain
1. Reactive (Reptilian)
2. Emotional part (Limbic)
3. Higher level thinking part (Neo-Cortex)

*When faced with a highly stressful event, the message gets to the emotional reactive center of our brain. We, at this point, can be known to “Flip our Lid”. Dan Siegel (No Drama Discipline).

*Stress is catchy! When our level of stress hormone increase, so does the level of stress hormone in others.

Stress Hormone in the Body

Adapted from: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html

Master Stressful Moments - Reduce and Avoid Stress
*Manage your stress *Set up the environment *Incorporate calming brain and body breaks **Lower stress during transitions

1) Manage your stress

- Be attuned to what is going on with our body and mind
  - What does your body do when stressed?
  - How do you behave? What do you do?

Raelene Ostberg, M.Ed., Master Trainer, Achieve - Founder Thriving Together, LLC - Parent Educator, PAIIR Program  (507) 581-9346  raeleneostberg@gmail.com  www.thriving-together.com
What helps you override your natural-instinctual response?

**Trick to mastering stressful moments:** Increase the time between when the event occurs and when you react. In the “pause”, do what helps you (breathe, walk away, do a gesture, focus brain on mantra, stretch, drink water, shake hands, smile…)

Have a plan, what will you do?

2) **Set up the environment**
Create “de-stress” locations
- Quiet space, “peace corner”
- Jumping, throwing, dancing space
*Use those spaces

3) **Incorporate calming brain and body breaks**
*Recognize the Rise  *Catch early  *Soothe and calm

YOU?
- What do you need to calm? How do you calm yourself?

- Have a plan, what will you do?

THE CHILD? *Watch for little signs of stress and incorporate something soothing and calming. But what?! What does a child in your care do when stressed?

What do they need to calm?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Striking Out / Fight</th>
<th>Shutting Down / Flight</th>
<th>“Gathering In” / Tend to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood goes to the muscles</td>
<td>Can’t do things by self</td>
<td>Whine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit/bite/push</td>
<td>Want to be held and then let go of</td>
<td>Cling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw</td>
<td>Can’t stand stimuli</td>
<td>Request your help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lash out</td>
<td>Walk away</td>
<td>Complain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Child striking out needs**
- Outlet for physical exercise
- Running
- Exercise
- Throw Repetitive motion

**Child shutting down needs**
- To be near, but without more stimuli
- Stop talking
- Space
- Dim lights
- Pause

**Child “Gathering in” needs**
- Attention and snuggling in
- Massage or touch
- Hugging
- Holding
- To be close

*Resource: Mary Sheedy Kurcinka “Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles.”

**Brain Break**
- Any questions or comments?
- What is your takeaway from this section?

**4) Lower stress during transitions**

- *Build in rewarding routines around transitions*
- *Prep for the transition*
- *Sing a song*
- *Get visual*

**Group Brainstorm**
- What time of day is a particularly high stress time?
- What can you do to help yourself master this stressful moment?
- What do you currently do to help the child through this stressful time of day?
### Master Stressful Moments - During the Moment:
- Have a plan, what will you do?
- Recognize the rise

1) Calmly Connect  
2) Show empathy, label and assist  
3) Help child calm  
4) For 3+, revisit, problem-solve later and teach

### *Show empathy, label feelings, and assist*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Validate, label feelings, “hear” the child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Child clinging to mother" /> Child clings to mother and says, “Don’t leave me Mommy!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Child grabbing toy" /> It is cleanup and child grabs toy and states, “Mine!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Child whining" /> It is time to go outside for play time, and she whines, “I’m tired…..”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Child showing upset" /> Mommy shows up for pickup instead of Daddy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IN THE MOMENT: Helping children learn to calm: Increasing responsibility over time:

**Infants:** Observe and give sensitive and responsive care, show empathy nonverbally, calmly label and validation  
**Toddlers:** Label using toddlerese and assist to help the child get what they need  
**3-5 years:** Help, acknowledge, encourage, prompt, label, and teach  
**5-8 Years:** Empathize and brainstorm solutions, have child come up with a "coping plan", problem-solve consequences and rules, share your stories

**Teaching Tools:**  
- *Relaxation Thermometer*  
- *Volcano*  
- *Stop/Go signs*  
- *Hand Model for Kids*
## Managing Intensity – During Very Strong Emotions

- Wait, watch, listen, feel, calmly verbalize a “way out”
- Remain calm and available
- Keep child safe
- Continue to show empathy
- Repeat limit with understanding
- Positive self-talk
- In the big picture…
- This is normal behavior… all kids do this at some point…
- It will soon pass…
- The child is just learning to deal with disappointment…

### Objective Review:
- List a technique to override natural instinctual stress responses
- Identify helpful options for mastering stressful moments
- Label a method to improve a stressful time of day

### Personal Reflection:
During stressful moments, I can help myself by
- When a child is showing stress-behaviors, I can
  
### Tips to calm:
Move/clean/exercise
Visualize
Breathe
Call a friend
Take a break
Feel or squeeze something
Reframe
Write about it
Walk away
Others?

*Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.*

*Mother Teresa*