
Trauma and Regression of Self-Care Skills

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the US News article, “Trauma and Childhood Regression: What to Do When Your Child Goes Backward.” The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the connection between trauma and the regression of self-care skills.
- ◆ Identify the children in your learning environment that may be displaying regression of skills following a traumatic event and determine appropriate supports.
- ◆ Develop an action plan to provide a safe environment for children to heal and express their feelings related to trauma to support their self-care skills.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children’s development of self-care skills.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support self-care skills.

“When something truly traumatic happens in a child’s life... rather than talking about how they feel, they may simply revert back to a behavior that was long gone.”

Dr. Gail Saltz

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ If children experience a traumatic event, they may present their feelings differently than adults. Rather than communicating and expressing their emotions, they may show a regression (i.e., loss of previously mastered skills) of self-care skills.
 - Reflect upon the ways that your emotions and feelings impact your behaviors. Consider how a child's behaviors may be impacted by a negative experience or traumatic event.
 - The article provides examples of some types of self-care skill regression, including wetting the bed or clinging to a preferred adult. What other types of self-care skill regression might you notice?

- ◆ Observe the children in your care and reflect upon the progression of their self-care skills. Identify those who may be demonstrating a regression of previously mastered self-care skills, such as toileting, dressing, feeding, etc.

- ◆ While this article is intended for families, it provides practical suggestions for supporting children who have experienced trauma that can be applied in your learning environment, as well.
 - The article urges caregivers to resist punishing or shaming children if they demonstrate regression of previously mastered skills. Reflect on your current practices. How do you respond to children who show regression of self-care skills? How do you provide support for children to develop their self-care skills?
 - Consider the suggestions provided by the article. Which of these strategies are you already implementing? How can you modify the suggestions to meet the individual needs of the children in your care? What other strategies may be effective in promoting children's self-care skills?

- ◆ Develop an action plan to provide support for children who demonstrate a regression of self-care skills following trauma or negative experiences.
 - Brainstorm ways to provide opportunities for children to express their feelings.
 - Implement the strategies provided by the article, as well as other effective strategies in your learning environment.
 - Carefully monitor children's progress and modify your supports as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about self-care skills:

- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/trauma-sensitive-classrooms>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article provides suggestions for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom to support the children in your care. Suggestions include providing support during self-help tasks.
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- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Supporting Young Children After Crisis Events
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/jul2020/supporting-young-children-after-crisis-events>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article provides information on the different ways children can be impacted by traumatic events and crises, as well as different ways educators can provide support.