
Supporting Reasoning Skills to Prevent Self-Blame

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the “6 Ways Childhood Abuse or Neglect Lead to Self-Blame in Adulthood,” from PsychCentral. 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

- ◆ Reflect upon a time or event that you experienced difficulties/errors in reasoning leading to self-blame.
- ◆ Understand why children who have experienced trauma may display errors in their reasoning that lead to self-blame.
- ◆ Create an action plan to identify the signs of self-blame related to trauma and refer to professionals to support children’s reasoning skills.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your discussion and action plan.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support reasoning skills.

... a child wants to understand what happened and why.

Sandra Lee Dennis

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ The article discusses how “...human beings want to understand, and here, too, a child wants to understand what happened and why.” Reflect upon an experience or event that left you wondering “why?” or “what happened?” Perhaps you wrongly experienced self-blame, as well.
 - How did you use your reasoning skills to answer your questions? What factors influenced your reasoning?
 - Did you experience self-blame while trying to answer these questions? What errors in reasoning led you to this belief?
 - How might a preschooler who has experienced trauma experience similar errors in reasoning and understanding?
- ◆ During the early childhood years, children are egocentric in their thinking. They tend to think that everyone around them sees the world the same way as them. Therefore, children are often unable to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of others.
 - How might egocentrism influence a child’s reasoning skills?
 - How might egocentrism impact a child’s reasoning and rationalization when they reflect upon their trauma (e.g., “why did this happen?”)?
 - What cognitive distortions (i.e., irrational or inaccurate thought pattern) might a child develop as a result?
 - What behaviors might you notice?
 - How can you support children’s reasoning skills, while considering where they are in their development?
- ◆ Develop an action plan to identify and provide support for children who have experienced trauma and display self-blame behaviors as a result of errors in their reasoning.
 - Observe the behaviors of the children in your educational environment. Do children display signs of:
 - Toxic self-criticism
 - Black and white thinking
 - Chronic self-doubt
 - Poor self-care and/or self-harm
 - Unsatisfying relationships with caregivers and/or peers
 - Chronic shame, guilt, and/or anxiety
 - Identify the resources available to you in your setting (e.g., counselors, leadership, community resources) to provide support for the child. Make a referral to a mental health provider when necessary.
 - Support the child’s development of reasoning skills in your learning environment by:
 - Narrating Reasoning
 - Asking Open-Ended Questions
 - Prompting Children’s Explanations
 - Monitor children’s progress and modify your plan as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about preschoolers' reasoning skills:

- ◆ **Source:** Education Gateshead
 - ◆ **PDF:** Children and Egocentrism
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://educationgateshead.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/3535b-JH-Children-And-Egocentrism.pdf>
 - ◆ **Description:** This PDF discusses children's development and the impacts of egocentrism on their learning, thinking, and reasoning in the early years. The resource provides insight into children's development as well as suggestions for ways to support children's empathy and reasoning skills.
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- ◆ **Source:** Science Daily
 - ◆ **Article:** Children Develop PTSD When They Ruminates Over Their Trauma
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190326081345.htm>
 - ◆ **Description:** This research article summary discusses evidence that children who ruminate, or repeatedly try to reason why a traumatic event occurred, were more likely to develop PTSD. The resource can promote ongoing discussions about children's reasoning skills related to trauma.