

# Group Discussion Activity

## Family Trauma Scenarios

### Introduction

The purpose of this activity is for educators and administrators to discuss how to increase the supports and interventions for students in a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented way.

### Prerequisite Activities

Complete the following prerequisite activities with the individuals who will participate in the discussion of the scenarios. The principles of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools should serve as the basis for the discussion.

- Review the Principles of Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools.
- Discuss the resource Principles of Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Guiding Questions: Parents and Families for the purpose of understanding the variety of components of the school that can be addressed to ensure a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approach to students' challenges.

### Materials Needed

- Principles of Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools
- Reference Sheet: Adjusting Educator Mindsets toward Parents and Families

### Discussion Activity

1. Break into small groups.
2. Hand out scenarios with directions and questions (see below).
3. Choose one scenario for your group to discuss.
4. Read through the scenario individually.
5. Discuss the scenario using the questions listed under the scenario.
6. Choose a reporter for your group who will share when you return to the larger group.
7. Reconvene all groups to share their discussions.

### Follow-Up

In future meetings, create scenarios that directly reflect your school population for further discussion. When possible and with respect to confidentiality, in small teams, discuss specific cases and examples happening in the school.

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# Family Scenario

## Pre-School Special Education Student

### Directions

- Choose the scenario your group will discuss.
- After all participants have completed their reading of the scenario, discuss the questions following the scenario.
- Reflect on the principles of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools during your discussion.
- Prepare to share key points of your discussion with the larger group.

### Scenario

Allison is a three-year-old identified with a speech and language deficit. She receives services to address her speech and language deficit in the family home two times a week from a speech therapist and 3 times a week from an early childhood special education teacher. Allison has difficulty making sounds correctly and thus she is difficult to understand. Her mother is very frustrated about her speech and often loses her temper when she cannot determine what Allison is saying. She also had a slight stutter considered normal for her developmental age; however, the incidents of Allison stuttering have begun to make her speech even more difficult to understand.

Using a strengths-based approach, the therapists note that Allison is putting a lot of effort into learning her sounds. Her mother wants to understand and help Allison when she needs it. Interfering with her mother's understanding seems to be the demands of two other smaller children (6 months and 18 months), her own mother's illness and presence in the home, and no one to take care of her three children so she can work.

The speech therapist and special education teacher are noting that Allison is less comfortable working with her mother in the room. They have begun to wonder if "something more" is happening between Allison and her mother. The therapist and teacher are wondering what they can or should do.

### During Your Discussion, Keep in Mind:

- Parents do care about their children.
- Apply the Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Principles to Parents and Families.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the speech therapist and special education teacher assist Allison's mother to manage her frustrations when she cannot understand her daughter?
2. What other supports might the school provide to assist this situation?
3. How can the therapist and special education teacher assist Allison to manage her anxiety in response to her mother?
4. How does your chosen response help meet the following goals?
  - Maintain high expectations.
  - Reduce the challenging behavior.
  - Solve chronic problems durably.
  - Build skills and confidence.
  - Create (or restore) a helping relationship.

# Family Scenario

## Elementary Student

### Directions

- Choose the scenario your group will discuss.
- After all participants have completed their reading of the scenario, discuss the questions following the scenario.
- Reflect on the principles of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools during your discussion.
- Prepare to share key points of your discussion with the larger group.

### Scenario

Joshua is a nine-year-old third-grader who was adopted at age four by Sue and James. They are unsure of what he experienced prior to his adoption except that he spent one year in a foster home after being removed from his birth mother's custody. He does not have a current mental health diagnosis even though Sue and James make sure that Joshua sees a counselor on a regular basis. Before his mother was furloughed from her job, Joshua was able to participate in hippotherapy (horseback riding) and took swimming lessons at the YMCA.

He experiences many challenges moving through a regular day at home and school, including sleep disruptions, selective eating that does not include the rest of the family's favorite foods, and difficulty remaining focused through meals, TV shows, games, and other activities that require him to be stationary. His parents describe him as "constantly moving."

Joshua is placed in a general education classroom and does not receive services for special education; however, there is a Title I educational assistant who provides support during literacy and math. When school is virtual, Joshua does not voluntarily link to the classroom. His mother, who is currently furloughed from her job, needs to sit with Joshua to support his engagement in the classroom. He has two younger siblings who also need his mom's support, so this leaves her weary at the end of the day. Frequently, she is unable to be with Joshua while working with the other two children and then he is not in class.

The teachers are frustrated with Joshua's absenteeism from class. He has many missing assignments and poor grades on unit tests. Joshua's dad is working extra hours to make up for his wife's leave from work. As a result, she is unable to be on any virtual meetings with the school or come to school for any conferences. Parents are resistant to considering Joshua for a special education evaluation and feel the classroom teacher is currently the best option for him.

# Family Scenario

## Elementary Student

### During Your Discussion, Keep in Mind:

- Parents do care about their children.
- Apply the Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Principles to Parents and Families.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the classroom teacher, school counselor, and administrator assist Joshua's mother to support his learning in the current situation?
2. What other supports might the school provide to the family to assist this situation?
3. How can the classroom teacher and counselor assist Joshua to manage his anxiety in response to school and home?
4. How does your chosen response help meet the following goals?
  - Maintain high expectations.
  - Reduce the challenging behavior.
  - Solve chronic problems durably.
  - Build skills and confidence.
  - Create (or restore) a helping relationship.

# Family Scenario

## Middle School Student

### Directions

- Choose the scenario your group will discuss.
- After all participants have completed their reading of the scenario, discuss the questions following the scenario.
- Reflect on the principles of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools during your discussion.
- Prepare to share key points of your discussion with the larger group.

### Scenario

Margarita is a seventh-grade student who with her family are considered legal immigrants from Mexico. They entered the United States to live with her uncle and aunt in Dayton, Ohio. Despite their legal status, Margarita's parents are fearful that they will be sent back to Mexico at any time. Her father does part-time work cleaning homes with his brother and sister for cash.

Margarita had little English instruction in Mexico. At school she qualified as an English Language Learner, but the teacher and counselor have not been able to connect with her mother or father to receive permission to place her in a program. They have a cell phone that is paid for monthly. Neither of her parents will answer the phone for fear of who may be calling or what they may be telling the government authorities. They will not come to school to any meetings.

Staff are frustrated on how to provide Margarita with more help without reaching her parents. The multi-disciplinary team considering Margarita's situation is in agreement that she requires more support and that part of that support needs to be engaging her parents with the school team.

### During Your Discussion, Keep in Mind:

- Parents do care about their children.
- Apply the Principles of Trauma-informed, Resilience-oriented Schools to parents and families.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the school team engage with Margarita's parents to collaborate on increased support for her in the school setting?
2. Are there any other supports the school can provide the family? If so, what would they look like and how would they be implemented?
3. How can the school team assist Margarita while they are working to engage her family?
4. How does your chosen response help meet the following goals?
  - Maintain high expectations.
  - Reduce the challenging behavior.
  - Solve chronic problems durably.
  - Build skills and confidence.
  - Create (or restore) a helping relationship.

# Family Scenario

## High School Student

### Directions

- Choose the scenario your group will discuss.
- After all participants have completed their reading of the scenario, discuss the questions following the scenario.
- Reflect on the principles of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools during your discussion.
- Prepare to share key points of your discussion with the larger group.

### Scenario

By credits, Anthony is a second semester freshman in high school, but by age, he should be a first semester junior. Anthony does not attend school daily. When he is in school, he does not bring materials to class and frequently falls asleep. A multi-disciplinary student support team has been put together to consider how to support Anthony in his current situation.

Contact has been made with Anthony's mother. She was very willing to provide information and would accept support. The team now knows that Anthony's father is in jail on a misdemeanor drug charge. Mom has been diagnosed with breast cancer in the last several weeks. She does not know how she will be able to get treatment for her cancer since she is the only parent working and she has four children. Anthony is the oldest child and frequently has to stay home to care for his youngest siblings (who are two and three) while Mom sleeps after her night shift at the local 24-hour gas station.

Anthony's mother shared that she cares deeply about him finishing school but does not know what to do to help him. Mom is tired, frustrated, and worried about her children should she not be able to access treatment for her cancer.

### During Your Discussion, Keep in Mind:

- Parents do care about their children.
- Apply the Principles of Trauma-informed, Resilience-oriented Schools to parents and families.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the high school team support Anthony, his mother, and his family in their current situation?
2. Are there any supports the school can provide the family? If so, what would they look like and how would they be implemented?
3. How can the classroom teacher and counselor assist Anthony to manage his anxiety in response to school and home?
4. How does your chosen response help meet the following goals?
  - Maintain high expectations.
  - Reduce the challenging behavior.
  - Solve chronic problems durably.
  - Build skills and confidence.
  - Create (or restore) a helping relationship.