

## **OVERVIEW OF SESSION II CARING FOR CHILDREN WHEN CHILDREN EXPERIENCE ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

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### **Session II**

**Objective:** To orient participants to Session II of the module.

**Materials:**

Handouts

- Handout #15 Agenda for Session II

Overheads

- Overhead #8 Agenda for Session II

**Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can describe potential impacts of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and neglect on the development and behavior of children and youth.

**Materials:**

Handouts

- Handout #16 A Child's Picture
  - Handout #17 A Child's Energy
  - Handout #18 Behaviors That May Result From Abuse/Neglect
  - Handout #19 Exercise: Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on Children and Youth
  - Handout #20 Possible Effects of Abuse/Neglect on Children and Youth
  - Handout #21 Degree of Impact of Abuse/Neglect on a Child or Youth
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### Overheads

- Overhead #9 A Child's Picture
- Overhead #10 A Child's Energy
- Overhead #11 Instructions for Exercise: Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on Children or Youth

### **Instructions:**

The topics to be discussed:

- A way to understand the impact of abuse and neglect on the development of children and youth.
- Possible effects of abuse and neglect on children and youth
- Factors that may influence the degree of impact of abuse and neglect on children or youth.

Using Handout #16, "A Child's Picture," and Overhead #9, "A Child's Picture," highlight the fact that abuse and neglect can interfere with children's beliefs about themselves, other people, relationships, and the world.

Experiencing abuse and neglect may result in a child seeing himself as bad, worthless, "damaged goods," or powerless; seeing other people as bad, untrustworthy, all-powerful; relationships as manipulative, hurtful; and the world as a dangerous place. It is important for caregivers to understand that if young people perceive the world in this way, they may develop defensive and self-protective behaviors that challenge caregivers.

Refer to Handout #17, "A Child's Energy," and Overhead #10, "A Child's Energy." When normative development occurs in an environment in which a child's needs are being met, we can expect that a child's energy will go towards achieving development in each of the domains: physical, emotional, mental, and social. However, if abuse and neglect occur, then a child's energy may be diverted into trying to survive what is happening to her.

The child's picture of self, other people, and the world combined with the impact of abuse or

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neglect directly influence a child's behavior. Abuse and neglect can interfere with a person's ability to "...experience life in a positive, creative, and fulfilling way" (Kempe, p. 7).

Understanding this can help caregivers recognize the importance of guiding and supporting children to find appropriate ways to meet their needs.

**Exercise 1:**

Think about the children with whom you have the most frequent contact and think of all the ways a child from this age range might show you, through behavior, that they are being abused or neglected.

For example, if you care mostly for toddlers, elementary school age children or adolescents, how would that child let us know, through his behavior that he is experiencing fear, anxiety, or sadness? For example some toddlers may become clingy, elementary school age children might bed-wet, adolescents might abuse substances. Children may have difficulties with academic work at school or with concentrating and following directions at home.

Refer to Handout #18, "Behaviors That May Result From Abuse/Neglect," and take a few minutes to read the material.

**Exercise 2:**

An exercise that explores some of the impacts of abuse/neglect on children. Pick one of the following areas:

- 1: child neglect
- 2: physical abuse/neglect
- 3: emotional abuse/neglect
- 4: sexual abuse

TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

Refer to Handout #19, "Exercise: Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on Children and Youth."

Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on Children and Youth".

In Column One, jot down one or two abusive or neglectful actions or situations that a child might experience in the abuse category you have picked.

For Column Two, ask yourself, "If a child or youth experienced this action or situation, what beliefs about self, other people, and the world might she develop?" Write down your ideas.

In Column Three, answer the question, "If a child holds this belief about herself or other people, or the world, what might the psychological or emotional effects on the child be? Focus on the emotional and psychological effects, not on the behavioral or physical indicators of abuse or neglect.

In Column Four, list any behaviors identified in the last exercise that may fit. The sections on positive messages and positive actions or interventions will be used in another exercise later in the module.

**Summary Remarks:**

Refer to Handout #21, "Degree of Impact of Abuse/Neglect on a Child or Youth," The degree of impact of the abuse or neglect on the child depends on a number of factors.

- How old was the child when he was first abused? Can the child recall a time when he was not being abused? Is being abused a recent frightening experience?
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- How many times was the child abused? Was he abused once or many times over a number of years?
- How much violence or threat of violence was used on the child? Is her mother a victim of domestic violence?
- How closely related was the perpetrator to the child? Was there a violation of the child's trust in the parent, relative, or caregiver?
- Was there any adult close to the child who tried to protect him from the abuse? Was the child supported or rejected by adults close to her? Are there any adults whom the child felt close to and loved by?
- Were there any areas in the child's life where he experienced success and reward?
- How secret was the abuse and how much force or threat of force was used to keep the secret?

- Was the child believed if and when she attempted to tell?

The major effects seem to fall into one of four categories and influence the behaviors of children as they try to make sense of what happened and why. Effects of abuse and neglect include:

- A sense of betrayal—someone who was supposed to take care of, protect, and, in the instance of abuse or neglect by a family member, love the child, hurt him instead.
- A sense of powerlessness—the child did not have a choice in what happened, nor did she seem able to stop it.
- A sense of stigmatization—the child somehow felt different and that something was wrong with him to have this happening.
- Traumatic sexualization—in the case of sexual abuse, the child was introduced to sexual activity in inappropriate ways and may view herself as “...being valued for her sexuality.” (James, 1989, p. 32), or may view sex and sexuality as something to be avoided.

A child's cultural background, whether or not he experiences any developmental disability, and whether the child is male or female might influence the effects.

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Children and youth may demonstrate resilience. They have the ability to “bounce back” when faced with situations that overwhelm their normal capacity to cope. These young people are able to make sense of what happened and to move forward with their lives. However, it is important to remember that even the most resilient child will face huge difficulties when impacted too greatly by abuse and neglect. Being able to connect with one person who believes in her and truly cares about her well-being and worth as a person is crucial to a child's healing.

While abuse and neglect does impact a child development, each child is unique and caregivers cannot assume that everyone will be impacted by abuse or neglect in the same way.

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### 3. CARING FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE AND NEGLECT

#### **Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can identify, describe, and demonstrate supportive responses while caring for the needs of children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect.

- Handout #19 Exercise: Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on

Children and Youth

- Handout #22 Abuse-Related Accommodation
- Handout #23 Healing Process
- Handout #24 The Role of the Caregiver
- Handout #25 Case Studies: Caring for Children and Youth Who Have Experienced Abuse/Neglect
- Handout #26 Skill Practice Directions

**Instructions:**

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Many of the behaviors that have been identified in earlier sections of the module may have been useful to children as they attempted to make sense of the abuse that happened to them. For those who are caring for these children or youth, responding to the behaviors in supportive ways can be very difficult.

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The section will look at:

- How children and youth might try to make sense of the abuse.
- The healing process.
- Responses caregivers might give in order to be supportive.

Children or youth who experience abuse or neglect are “survival beings.” When we think back to the effects of abuse and neglect on children and youth, we can see that many of the behaviors that children and youth develop as a result of abuse and neglect are ways to survive.

Review Handout #22, “Abuse-Related Accommodation,” to introduce Briere’s (1992) concept of abuse-related accommodation. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the child’s drive to survive. Many of the behaviors seen may make sense if we think of them as survival mechanisms or strategies that the child uses to cope with the abuse or neglect they have experienced.

Refer to Handout #23, “Healing Process.” The process must proceed according to the child’s timeframe rather than according to someone else’s timeframe. The process is based on the child’s needs. The cyclical nature of the process and when events trigger a child, he may cycle back to an earlier stage in order to resolve some issues. When that happens it is important for caregivers to validate the child’s experience and to be patient with the process.

## TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

We acknowledge that this can be a difficult time for caregivers as they may experience the child's pain and feel as though they don't know what to do. This is a time to be particularly aware of the need for self-care as was discussed in the Effects of Caring module.

Review Handout #24, "The Role of the Caregiver." The caregiver is crucial to the healing process and the role falls into three categories (Croll, p. 221):

- Building relationships.
- Creating routines that support healing.
- Guiding behaviors in ways that teach. This will be built upon in the module "Guiding Behavior of Children and Youth."

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### Exercise 1:

Recall effective communication and listening skills from the "Communication Skills and Self Awareness" module that are crucial when establishing relationships. Highlights from that module include:

- attending skills
- listening with empathy
- using open questions
- summarizing.

Recognizing that behaviors serve a purpose for the child can help caregivers to guide and support the child to find ways to get her needs met in appropriate ways.

In order to support a child's healing and to guide him to develop appropriate behaviors, it is very important for us, as caregivers, to draw on our communication skills and the integrity of the relationship we have with the young person.

Refer back to Handout #19, "Exercise: Impacts of Abuse/Neglect on Children and Youth." Refer your attention to the section "Positive Messages" and "Positive Actions or Interventions."

The following exercise will provide you with an opportunity to consider positive messages and positive interventions that caregivers might use in supporting a child and in guiding his behavior.

A reminder that many of the behaviors we see come from the despair and hurt that children feel when they are abused or

neglected by people from whom they expected love and caring.

- child neglect
- physical abuse/neglect
- sexual abuse.

- Brainstorm what messages a caregiver might give to a child demonstrating some of the behaviors.
- Brainstorm what actions or interventions a caregiver might do in guiding the child to behave in appropriate ways.

For example: If a 4-year-old child experienced emotional abuse and now isolates herself by sitting in a corner of the couch with her eyes down, then a caregiver might say, "I like it when we spend time together," and invite the child to sit next to her while she reads a story.

Review the following points:

<b>Type of Abuse and Behaviours</b>	<b>Positive Messages</b>	<b>Positive Actions or Interventions</b>
Emotional abuse - isolates self.	"I like it when you sit with me."	Read a story to the child.
Physical Abuse - acts aggressively towards another child.	"I can see that you are angry but you are not to hit Johnny."	Separate the children.
Sexual abuse - child covers up body with layers of clothing and tells you she feel "dirtied" by what happened.	"I'm sorry that happened to you, it wasn't your fault," or "I can understand why you feel that way. It wasn't your fault."	Allow the child space and demonstrate willingness to talk when she wants to.
Neglect - child hoards	"You can have a snack when you want one."	Show the child where the snack food is.

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ords and actions must occur with empathy, caring, and an appreciation for the fact that the behaviors helped the child survive the abuse or neglect. It will take time for the child to give up the behaviors.

**Exercise 2:**

Pick a case study from Handout #25, “Case Studies: Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Abuse and Neglect.”

Review and make notes of how you as the caregiver may respond to the situation by referring to Handout #26, “Skill Practice Directions.”

**Summary Remarks:**

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It is important to move to supportively challenging self-perceptions and guiding the behaviors of children and youth in a teaching/coaching manner. This is the focus of the module “Guiding Behavior of Children and Youth.”

A trusting relationship is essential to the healing of a child or youth who has experienced abuse/neglect. Such a relationship is built through safe and secure daily interactions and strategies used to guide behavior in ways that teach.

**4. WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

**Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can identify, describe, and demonstrate how to support a child who is disclosing an abusive and/or neglectful experience.

**Materials:**

Handouts

- Handout #27 How Children Tell Us
- Handout #28 Steps to Take When a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect
- Handout #29 Case Studies: When a Child Discloses Abuse
- Handout #30 Case Study Role Plays

Overhead

TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

- Overhead #13 When a Child Discloses: Discussion Questions

**Instructions:**

This section will:

- Review types of disclosures caregivers may hear.
- Consider what a caregiver must do when she hears a disclosure.

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When abused children begin to feel safe, they may reach out to someone they trust by telling them about the abuse that has occurred. There may be little bits of information or even hints from the child. Sometimes the child will pour out the whole story all at once.

Sometimes this information will constitute a “new disclosure,” one which was not the original reason for the child coming into care. At other times, the information is “additional” and supports the original reasons for the child coming into care. Regardless, both the “new disclosure” and the “additional” information should be reported to the child’s worker.

Review Handout #27, “How Children Tell Us.”

Using Handout #28, “Steps to Take When a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect,” briefly review the 11 tasks for caregivers.

**Exercise:**

Choose a case study from Handout #29, “Case Studies: When a Child Discloses Abuse

Role play the scenario out in your mind.

Answer the following:

1. What would it be like being the child?
2. What would it be like hearing the disclosure?

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Ask yourself what supports you can put in place for yourself so that you can continue to respond to children when they disclose.

Remember the difference between “new” and “additional” information and the need to report to the child’s worker.

**Summary Remarks:**

When a child discloses, our immediate reaction is a key factor in helping the child tell the information. We need to be calm,

#### TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

focused, and available to the child. Follow the 11 steps in the Handout #28, "Steps to Take When a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect," remembering to help the child tell you enough to establish that abuse did occur and to help support the child. It is essential this information be recorded and shared with the child's worker as soon as possible.

Handout #31 Suggested Resources provides you with further sources of support.

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Children and youth in care need to experience a relationship with someone who is absolutely crazy about them. They have experienced a lot and do not need to carry the stigma of "damaged goods." Caregivers need to focus on the young person's strengths and look for ways to create opportunities for him to build on these.

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