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## Session II

### **Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can describe elements necessary for an effective caregiving environment.

### **Materials:**

Handout

- Handout #17 Components of the Core of Care

Overhead

- Overhead #9 A Good Place to Be

### **Instructions:**

We introduce the topic by reviewing the contexts or environments in which human beings live (family, neighbourhood, community, society). This section explores what an effective caregiving environment is and some ideas for creating one. Research indicates that the one of the first things a child in care wonders when the door to a caregiver's home opens is, "Will this be a good place to be?"

### **Exercise 1:**

Refer to Overhead #9, "A Good Place To Be," and draw a similar grid on a sheet of paper. Brainstorm specific examples for each column.

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**Exercise 2:**

Think of a time in your life when you received nurturing care or when you had the sense that you really counted at that particular moment. Take a few minutes and jot down what gave you that sense of being personally cared for and cared about.

Personal experiences reflect what have been called the “components of the core of care.” For children who are experiencing care, both the physical setting and relationships within that setting make up the components of the core of care.

Refer to Handout #17, “Components of the Core of Care.” The components are interrelated and all of them are necessary to the nurturing care of children.

**Summary Remarks:**

Effective caregiving environments create conditions in which children feel safe and nurtured, provide opportunities to take risks and to learn, buffer stress, and create a climate of reliability and trustworthiness. These environments involve all members of the caregiving family, including natural children. If a child experiencing care senses that he is somehow in the way or unwanted, it may be difficult to establish a relationship.

There are a number of ways to establish and maintain effective caregiving environments, many of which participants know and practice. Think of ways you have worked to create a “core of care” in your environment and refer to Handout #17.

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### 3. SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ESTEEM AND PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR)

#### **Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can describe how to support the development of positive self-esteem and pro-social behaviour in children and youth.

#### **Materials:**

Handouts

- Handout #18 Encouragement
- Handout #19 Self-Image, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem
- Handout #20 Constructive Feedback
- Handout #21 Pro-social Behaviour
- Handout #22 Strategies for Positive Parenting
- Handout #23 Guidance Strategies

Overheads

- Overhead #10 Self-Image, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem

Other

- IALAC sign (I Am Loveable and Capable)

#### **A. "I Am Loveable and Capable"**

#### **Instructions:**

There are many tools and strategies for guiding children. Positive parenting focuses on developing self-esteem, promoting positive relationships and pro-social behaviours, as well as preparing children for responsibility.

#### **Exercise:**

Depending upon their backgrounds and experiences, some participants may find this exercise upsetting. Advise participants of this and let them know that there will be an opportunity to debrief the exercise.

Ask for a volunteer to come up and hold the IALAC sign (they don't have to say anything).

Use Sidney Simon's IALAC (I am Lovable and Capable) and write this down on a sheet of paper.

**Scenario:**

Brian (or any name that is appropriate), age 11, woke up one school morning and looked at his pajama top. He saw a neon sign. It flashed on and off, IALAC. Brian knew at once that this meant "I Am Lovable and Capable." He dressed and went off to the kitchen. He was looking forward to his day.

Before Brian could speak, his sister, Molly, said, "You pea-brain (rip off a corner of the sign) what did you do with my jacket?"

"Nothing," Brian said.

"Man," whined Molly, you're such a jerk." (rip)

"Brian, where is your backpack?" asked his mom.

"Oh no, I left it at school," said Brian.

"Brian," said his unhappy mother, "You ought to know better. Why can't you use your brain?" (rip)

"But Mom," Brian said "I...."

"Don't sass me back," said his mom. "You are such a smart mouth." (rip)

Brian saw his sister smirking and whispering "Smart mouth, smart mouth." (double rip)

By the time Brian left for the school bus, half of the IALAC was ripped. On the bus, Missy Burns said, "Brian you're dumb (rip) and a cry baby." (rip). Jenna, who Brian thought was his best friend, laughed each time. (triple rip).

In the first period, Mrs. Smartzolla asked Brian to put a homework problem on the board. Brian forgot a division sign in the formula. "Brian," Mrs. Smartzolla moaned, "how can you be so careless? I've told you a thousand times." (rip)

In language arts, Mr. Thomas barked at Brian for getting the lowest score on the vocabulary quiz. (rip)

By the end of the day, Brian went home with a very small IALAC sign. He was very upset.

The next day, Brian woke up to find IALAC on his pajamas, but it was very small. He hoped today would be better. He wanted to keep his IALAC so much.

Make a list of what you can do or say to increase children's sense of IALAC.

The examples are ways of encouraging the development of self-esteem in children. Refer to Handout #18, "Encouragement."

## **B. Self-image, Self-concept, and Self-esteem**

### **Instructions:**

Use Handout #19, "Self-Image, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem," and Overhead # 10, "Self-Image, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem," to define terms.

Competence or a sense of mastery comes from doing something successfully. Success comes from working towards something, from seeking challenges, and from trying to solve problems. It does not come from praise for doing well and criticism for not doing well. It comes from an internal sense of mastery rather than from evaluations of accomplishment from others.

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Control or a sense of power comes when the child has a sense that she has some influence on what happens in her life. This involves a sense that "I am capable."

Worth or significance to others happens when children like themselves and have a sense that others like and accept them for who they are. "When a child feels good, valuable, and well-liked, the child develops positive self-esteem."

Research about resilient children -you may want to refer to work by Wolin, S.. [www.projectresilience.com](http://www.projectresilience.com).

In addition to guiding and supporting children to develop a sense of self, caregivers also need to encourage them to care for and about other people. Developing a concern for others is called "pro-social behaviour."

Describe categories of pro-social behaviour using Handout #22, "Pro-social Behaviours."

In order for a child or youth to develop these behaviours he must be capable of:

- cognitively telling the difference between how he is feeling and the feelings of other people.
- emotionally responding to another person.
- behaving in helpful, cooperative, and generous ways.

The "Child and Youth Development" module can be referred to for information about the cognitive, emotional and behavioural development of children and youth.

Very young infants pick up on the emotional states of caregivers and research indicates that children can demonstrate pro-social behaviours at two years of age. The attachment to a primary caregiver seems to have an effect on the development of pro-social behaviours.

Having the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural abilities to do something does not mean that a child will do it. Caregivers must teach a child to behave pro-socially as many children and youth-in-care may be developmentally delayed in this area due to missed or interrupted opportunities to acquire such behavioural skills.

**Exercise:**

Refer to Handout #22, "Strategies for Positive Parenting". The three categories presented—promoting positive relationships, promoting self-esteem, and preparing for responsibility.

What pro-social behaviour does each parenting strategy support. For example, demonstrating constructive conflict resolution supports cooperating.

It is important for caregivers to model the behaviours that we want children to do; to coach by telling children what we want, rather than what we do not want; and to provide opportunities for children to develop these behaviours through cooperative games and activities. Review Handout #23, "Guidance Strategies," which provides another listing of appropriate guidance strategies for you to consider.

**I A L A C**  
**“I Am Loveable and Capable”**

#### 4. WORKING WITH ANGER AND AGGRESSION

##### **Learning Outcome:**

The caregiver can describe how anger and aggression develop in children and youth and can articulate strategies to help children and youth manage these feelings and behaviours.

##### **Materials:**

Handouts

- Handout #24 The Stress Response Cycle
- Handout #25 Self-Talk
- Handout #26 When a Child is Angry
- Handout #27 Aggression
- Handout #28 Addressing Aggression
  
- Handout #29 Defusing Yourself

Overheads

- Overhead #11 Coaching Strategies When Aggression is an Issue

##### **A. Stress and Anger**

##### **Instructions:**

People often have problems working with anger and aggression because of their own past experiences, concerns for their own safety and that of the child, or because anger often occurs unexpectedly and they are not prepared for it.

Consequently, we do not take the opportunities presented when children have been angry or aggressive to explore ways to de-escalate situations and to coach children in alternative ways to express themselves.

Prevention is a crucial part of working with anger and aggression. Caregivers have a responsibility to be aware of factors that may contribute to children and youth becoming angry. For example, deaf children may become angry because they don't understand what is being said to them. Some children may have poor emotional and/or behavioural control because of organic brain damage or other factors beyond their

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control, so the focus needs to be on managing or minimizing the outbursts.

**Exercise:**

Think of a time when you felt angry. Observe your facial expressions, body posture, etc. when thinking of the situation.

**B. The Stress Response Cycle**

**Instructions:**

Refer to Handout #24, "The Stress Response Cycle," and review the phases below in relation to supporting children when they experience anger.

1. The **trigger phase** is the event that sets things off; a child feels threatened and his body goes into action to meet the threat.

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2. The **escalation phase** is when the child's body prepares to fight, flee, or freeze. The breathing rate and heart rate increase, blood pressure rises, muscles tense, voice gets louder, and eyes change shape (steely look, brows fall). Restraint, at this juncture, is usually not a good idea.

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3. The **crisis phase** is when we take action. Collaboration responses may not be effective because the child's ability to reason decreases. This is not the time to try to problem-solve with a child.

4. The **recovery phase** happens when the child has done something and her body starts to recover. This takes time.

5. The **post-crisis depression phase** occurs when we start to process what happened. The child may feel guilty or depressed.

Anger is just a feeling and feeling angry is OK. What is not OK is abuse and violence. We have a choice about what we do with our anger; the feeling of anger does not have to be acted on.

You may want to use the following anger rule in your homes:

It's OK to feel angry, but it is not OK to hurt others, yourself or property. It can be very scary for children to feel out-of-control, so it is important to let them know that you will intervene to help them. Remember that the intervention is about safety and self-control.

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Refer to Handout #25, "Self-Talk," and remember we sometimes re-experience the incidents in which we experienced anger by the way we replay it in our heads. Our bodies don't know if the event is a replay or reality, so we often respond in ways that keep us stuck in the anger.

Forming a relationship with a child in ways to process the underlying feelings is crucial to working with aggression. Caregivers need to be able to "stand beside children" as they learn new ways to manage their feelings and behaviors. Getting angry or insulting the self-esteem of a child only serves as a wedge in your relationship. It is a feeling and is normal. It is when it gets bottled up that it can become a volcano and explode into aggression towards self, others, and property.

### **Exercise:**

What strategies have you used to de-escalate a young person's anger? Write responses on a piece of paper.

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Refer to Handout #26, "When a Child is Angry," for additional ideas.

## **C. Aggression**

### **Instructions:**

Aggression will be considered next. Have someone in mind as you go through the material.

Refer to Handout #27, "Aggression."

Aggression or "being mad" comes out of feeling frustrated and experiencing an impulse to attack. If we can see the child as being frustrated and lacking impulse controls, then we can respond in supportive ways that coach appropriate behaviour. The frustration most often occurs because attachments to other people are not working. The resulting feelings are rejection, a sense of loss, and feeling put down. If we respond by isolating the child through time-outs, expulsions from school, or withdrawing love, then we risk making the situation worse. With aggressive children we need to find ways to walk beside them as they find ways to move from being stuck in their frustrations with life.

Children who show aggressive behaviours tend to have a difficult time expressing their feelings of loss and grief, often do not have the words to describe what they are feeling and do not seem to have a sense of self and what is happening inside for them.

So what does a caregiver do? Refer to Handout #28, "Addressing Aggression."

It is important to form a relationship with the child and to coach in words that don't insult the child. It is OK to feel frustrated. You are modeling how to handle it. You are putting a name to what is happening. This is the time to use the skills you looked at in the "Communication and Self-Awareness" module, such as active listening and open questions. Create opportunities in

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which the child can feel safe enough to be vulnerable.

The North Wind and the Sun were arguing over who was the stronger. They decided to settle their dispute by seeing who could be the first to get a traveler to shed his cloak. The North Wind tried first. With all the gust he could muster, he blew down so furiously upon the man that the man swirled around like a leaf spinning through the air. But all the while the man held onto his cloak all the tighter.

Next it was the Sun's turn. He cast some gentle rays at the man, causing him to feel just the slightest bit too warm. The man soon unfastened his cloak. Then the Sun gradually increased his rays, causing the man to hang the cloak loosely across his shoulders. The Sun continued to gradually increase the warmth until the man, with a great sigh of relief, threw his cloak off and continued on his journey in great comfort. (Source Unknown)

Conclusion: warmth brings down defenses.

It is important to address the sources of frustration. This is where guiding strategies such as managing the environment can help. Perhaps the situation is beyond the child's developmental coping capacities.

Review Overhead #11, "Coaching Strategies When Aggression is an Issue."

Caregivers need to coach children in ways to handle frustration. This involves looking at what the child is experiencing and encouraging the child to use words to express what is happening. This may also mean inviting the expression of sadness. Children who are in care have experienced a number of losses. They may use anger and aggression as ways to protect themselves. Expressing sadness may leave a person vulnerable. Sometimes "coaching" is better done after the emotions have been defused. Coaching in the moment is best done when the coaching technique(s) have been explained to and accepted by the child

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prior to the incident. Physical closeness (if invited and appropriate) can be helpful.

It is also important to coach the child to accept responsibility for his actions.

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#### **Summary Remarks:**

One of the first things we must do when we are in a caregiving relationship with children who are displaying angry or aggressive behaviour is to defuse ourselves. It is important that we move emotionally toward children rather than away. Refer to Handout #29, "Defusing Yourself."

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#### **5. CLOSURE**

##### **Materials:**

Handouts-Review the following:

- Handout #30 Guiding Behaviour Summary
- Handout #31 Suggested Resources

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