



Institute to  
**Transform**  
**Child Protection**

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# Relationship Building as a Foundation for Reasonable Efforts

## Parent Attorneys and Case Workers

### Common Ground:

- Challenging and rewarding work
- We are drawn to the work to support children and families
- Reunification as a shared goal most of the time
- Ability to establish trusting relationship with clients is key to success

### Barriers:

- Limited Opportunity to Connect
- Adversarial Relationship in Court

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-35/december-2016/changing-the-child-welfare-landscape--tips-for-parent-attorneys/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-35/december-2016/changing-the-child-welfare-landscape--tips-for-parent-attorneys/)



# Overview



Trauma Stewardship



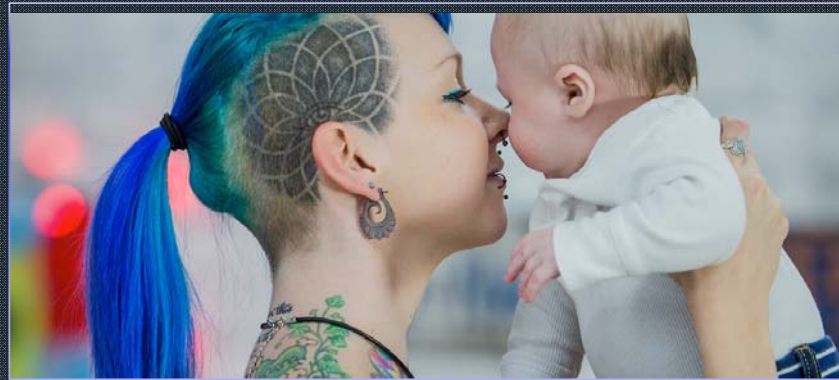
Relationship Development  
as a Basis for Providing  
Reasonable Efforts



Practical Strategies for  
Developing Relationships

# Trauma Stewardship

Term used to describe the overall practice of caring for oneself in order to remain effective at — and avoid negative effects of — caring for others.



<https://traumastewardship.com>

# Trauma Stewardship

Individual

Organizational

Societal

# Supporting Your Work Force

When people perceive their organizations to be supportive, they experience lower levels of vicarious trauma

Front line workers are caught between what they are being asked to do and what they can do

Front line workers carry a heavy burden of feeling disliked by many people they interact with

What do you have in place to support them, where can you do more?



Families Need to be Healed, Not Fixed

# How to Take A Healing Approach

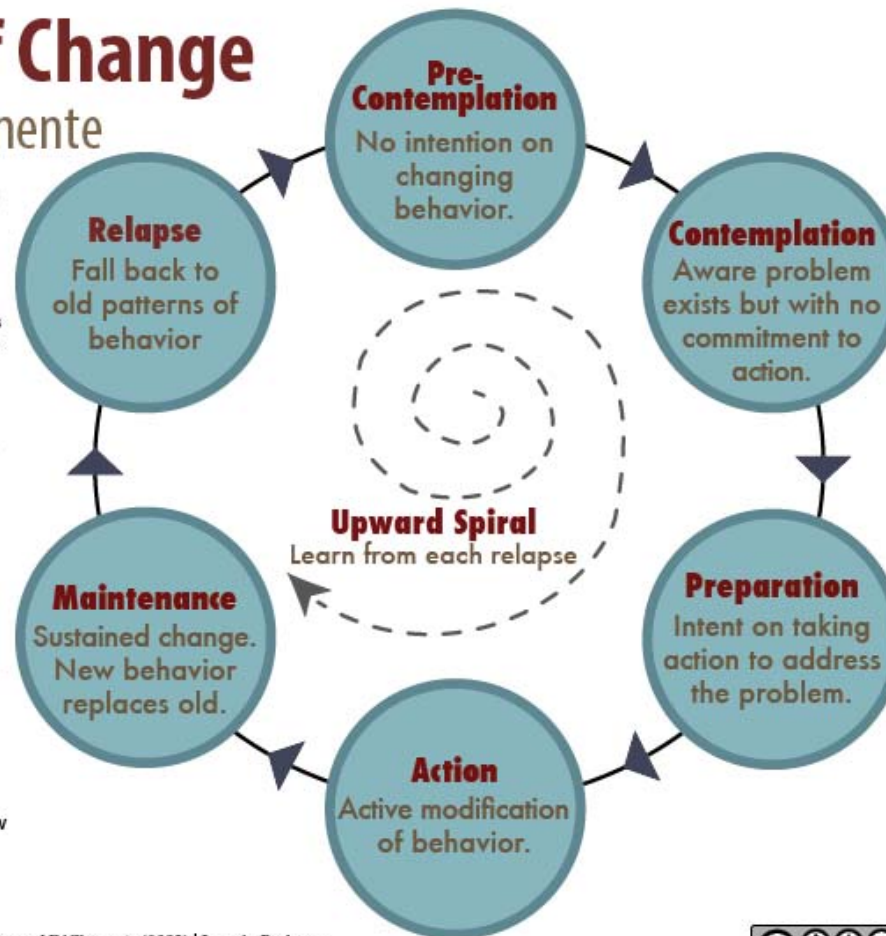
	Focus on and highlight the family's strengths
	Recognize parents are overwhelmed, often by circumstances outside of their control
	Prioritize family health and well-being
	Acknowledge it is hard to ask for/accept help
	Reduce shame and blame



# The Cycle of Change

## Prochaska & DiClemente

- **Precontemplation:** A logical starting point for the model, where there is no intention of changing behavior; the person may be unaware that a problem exists
- **Contemplation:** The person becomes aware that there is a problem, but has made no commitment to change
- **Preparation:** The person is intent on taking action to correct the problem; usually requires buy-in from the client (i.e. the client is convinced that the change is good) and increased self-efficacy (i.e. the client believes s/he can make change)
- **Action:** The person is in active modification of behavior
- **Maintenance:** Sustained change occurs and new behavior(s) replaces old ones. Per this model, this stage is also transitional
- **Relapse:** The person falls back into old patterns of behavior
- **Upward Spiral:** Each time a person goes through the cycle, they learn from each relapse and (hopefully) grow stronger so that relapse is shorter or less devastating.

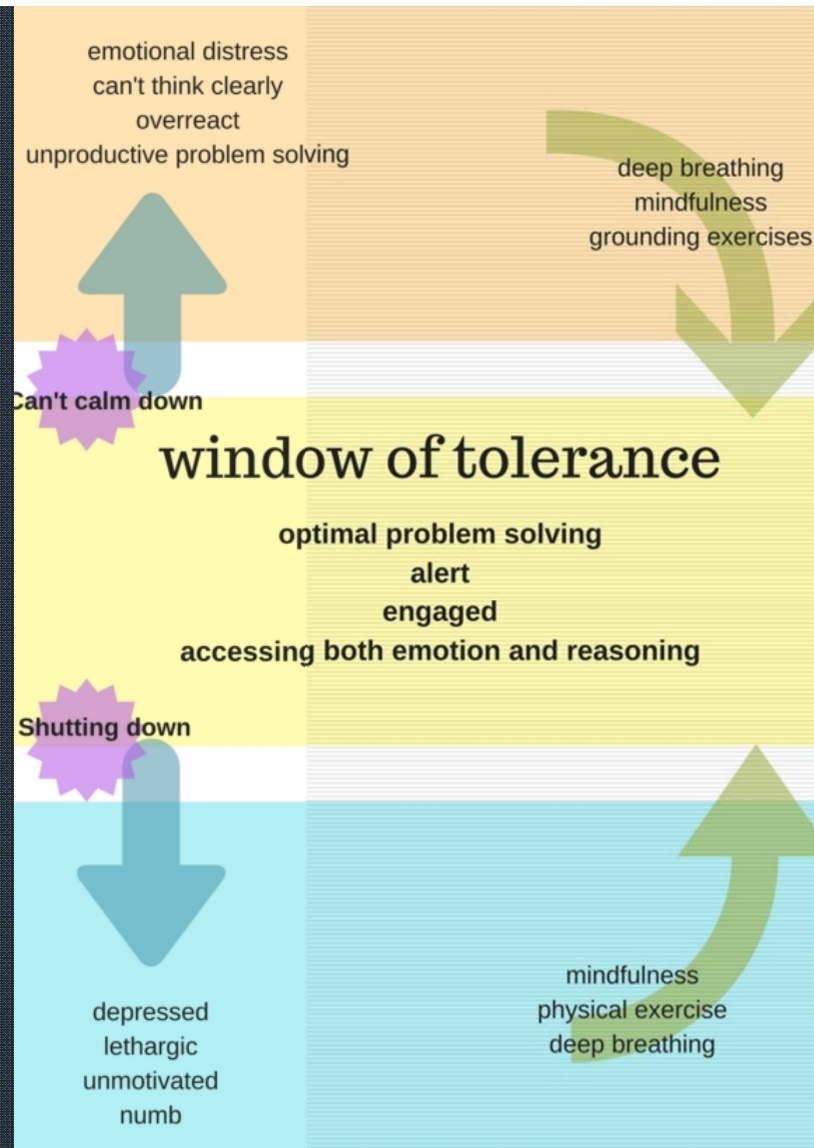


The Cycle of Change  
 Adapted from a work by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) | Ignacio Pacheco  
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# Recognize the Impact of Trauma

- Trauma disengages the executive function of the brain.
- When people experience persistent trauma “act before you think” becomes a rule for survival.
- Regulation is about maintaining and regaining equilibrium in the face of stimulation.





## Strategies for Building Relationships

- Implement Principles of Trauma-Informed Care
  - Safety
  - Trustworthiness and Transparency
  - Peer Support
  - Collaboration and Mutuality
  - Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
  - Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues



## What Helps

- Providing a human connection:
  - Make eye contact,
  - Be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication (body language, vocal tone, and pacing),
  - Balance business with connection
- Be transparent about your preparation and decision-making process
- When possible, offer choices
- Gauge understanding
  - Ask “clean-up questions”



## What Helps

- The belief that establishing safe, authentic and positive relationships can be corrective and restorative.
- Interactions that express kindness, patience, reassurance, calm, acceptance and an understanding of trauma.
- Asking ourselves “what happened to this person?” instead of “what’s wrong with this person?”.
- Continually seeking feedback from clients. This starts with a conversation and shared understanding about rights and responsibilities.
- Helping clients regain a sense of control over their daily lives by keeping them well-informed, providing opportunities for them to make decisions, maintaining transparency.



## Strategies for Building Relationships

- Before You Create a Case Plan:
  - Be Clear About Visitation Plan
  - Be As Liberal with Visitation and as Transparent as Possible
  - Offer Compassion and Understanding
  - Listen First
    - Ask: What Do You Need to Help Heal Your Family?
  - Provide Supportive Resources



# Strategies for Building Relationships

- When You Create a Case Plan
  - Make it a Collaborative Process
  - Offer Choices
  - Encourage Attendance of Other Supportive People
  - Make it Concrete, Specific, and Measurable
    - When do things need to happen?
    - What steps need to be taken?
      - Will you make a referral or does the parent need to call?
      - What are the phone numbers of the service providers?
    - How will you and the parent know what success looks like?



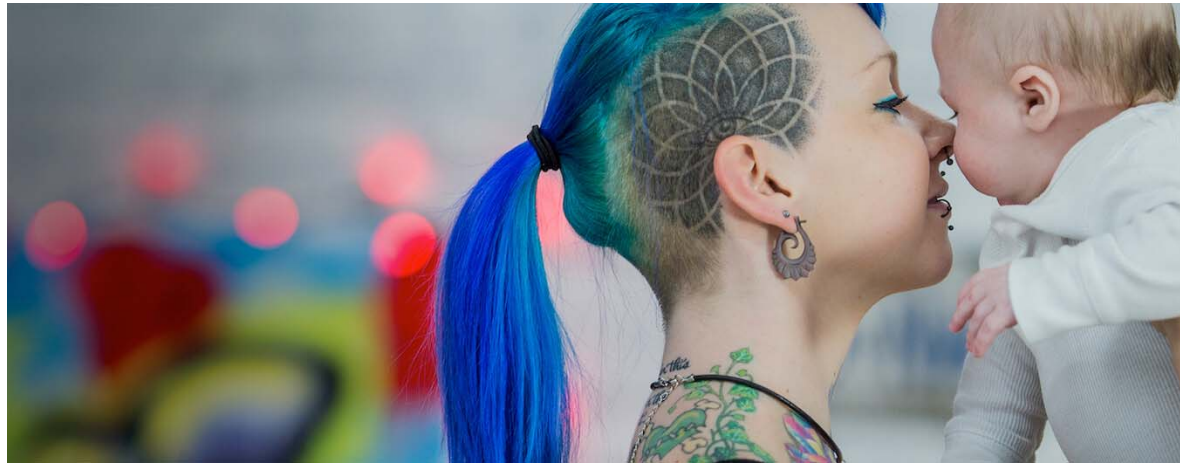
## Strategies for Building Relationships

- Throughout the Case
  - Actively and Intentionally Recognize Positive Progress
  - Frame things in the positive
  - Check-in with the parent about what is working for them
  - Ask parents “what do you need to heal your family?”



## When Things Don't Go As Planned: What Helps

- Recognize Your Role When a Parent Becomes Dysregulated
- Know You Don't Deserve to Be Treated Poorly AND Step Away Before You Escalate a Situation
- Consider a Change of Case Worker When a Relationship Feels Beyond Repair



When You Invest in the Relationship, a Parent Will Be in a Better Position to Accept Your Help!