



TRAUMATIC STRESS INSTITUTE

The Role of Support Staff in Trauma Informed Care

You may be the most important person in this child's life. You may be rebuilding his or her brain in your interactions. When you do interact with the child, your job is to change this child or family member's template or expectations about other people. The client has learned that people hurt them. You can help them learn that some people don't hurt them. Some people are kind, trustworthy and like them.

In order to offer the most powerful change to this client:

- Be pleasant and kind.
- Learn about the child's interests and follow up on them.
- Involve the child in meaningful work and in contributing to others.
- Do not keep secrets with the child. If the child tells you anything important, tell his Treatment Team and tell him that you are going to do so.
- Do not tell the child that you are going to adopt him, take him home, become his mentor, or anything like that. If any thoughts like that occur to you, do NOT say anything to the child but instead talk to your supervisor and the Treatment Team to see if it is possible.
- Do not do anything with the child outside of what is normal and arranged by the team. If you think of something, such as giving the child a gift or making an incentive plan with him, ask the team BEFORE you mention it to the child.
- We can only treat the children and families as well as we treat each other. So be a positive, pleasant team member. Assume good intentions on the part of other staff. Try to help each other whenever possible.
- Teach the child skills that you know if you get a chance (example: knitting).
- Say hello whenever you see the child. If you know of a neutral or positive event in his life, ask him about it. Do not talk about problems unless child brings them up.
- Compliment child whenever possible.
- If the child acts out remember it is about his past and not about you. Stay calm and regulated or leave the area if you can.
- The stories and experiences of these children will affect you too. Make sure you have someone to talk to about vicarious traumatization, and be alert for its effects on you. Take care of yourself and each other.

Remember that you have the most important job in the world. You can change a family's life through supporting the people who provide their therapy. You can change a child's life through your interaction with him or her. Your job is essential!