



BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

MAY 2023: ENGAGING IN SELF-CARE

The ABCs of managing self-care during interactions.

A

AWARENESS

Bring attention to physical, psychological, and emotional safety. Plan for the contact with your agenda, your hopes for the interaction and any anticipated barriers. Consider what you may need to say or do if/when challenges present themselves. Check in with yourself to ensure you can start from a calm and constructive place.

B

BREATHING, BODY AND BRAIN

Breathing and mindfulness techniques decrease tension. Easiest tool is breathing through your nose, filling your lungs, and breathing out slowly. Calling attention to breath can decrease the physical signs of panic. Slow, steady breathing when you start to feel your fight, flight, or freeze senses kick in allows time for your brain to process the information around it to come up with the best response.

Body posture can change the feelings during challenging conversations. If you can stand and move rather than sit you activate the thinking part of the brain. Another mindfulness technique with the body is called “anchoring”. Concentrating on a physical sensation, feet on floor or squeezing a pressure point, helps to distance yourself from the fearful feelings.



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B

BREATHING, BODY AND BRAIN (CON'T)

Brains get triggered in challenging conversations. This causes your heartrate to increase, hotness under the skin, even tears when the person across from you is crying. If we get lost in the emotion, we can be consumed by taking on another person's feelings. Saying or repeating a mantra such as "this isn't about me" can keep you grounded in your own self rather than letting your mirror neurons guide the conversation and your own feelings.

Don't forget when strategies seem to be unsuccessful there's another "B". Take a Break. Whether it's stepping away or outside to make a phone call or rescheduling for a different day, time, or location, the professional's safety and well-being are important to making the partnership work and be effective.

C

CONNECT BACK TO THE GOAL OF THE INTERACTION

With all that occurs in child welfare and the plethora of emotional and challenging conversations, it's easy to get off track. When the interaction doesn't seem to be going as smoothly as you hoped, or you've found yourself feeling stuck, it's OK to just stop talking and reiterate the common goal. Listening and validating is key but as this happens you can re-direct by re-stating the direction you want to take as partners.



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REFLECTION ON CONTENT

Think back to a conversation that was challenging and did not go as you hoped. Was there anything you could have done differently that may have had a positive impact? Is there anything from the ABCs of Self-Care that might have helped?

ACTION ITEM (PICK ONE OR ALL THREE)

Give taking a moment to breathe a try when you start to feel panic creep in.

Find what pressure point helps you feel anchored (see acupressure job aide).

Create a mantra if you don't already have one. What can you say in your mind to bring you back to self when you're feeling swept up in the conversation and losing focus.