

TCI – Module Four Intentional Use of the Self



How adults use self in developing relationships with young people helps to overcome adversity.

Adults' intentional use of self, their level of emotional competence, and their relationships are key to effectively working with children and young people. How adults use self in developing relationships, helping young people learn and practise skills, facilitating activities, setting boundaries, reflecting on practice, and intervening in stressful situations is at the heart of change. Adults are not only helping children to grow and develop, but to thrive when they offer young people to fully participate in activities and to contribute to others.

Conscious and effective use of the self requires mastery in several key areas of practice including assessment skills, self-awareness, co and self-regulation skills, attunement, relationship building, communication skills and self-care. Adults must be motivated to provide the support young people need to successfully navigate through stressful events and to learn from those events in a way that builds self-efficacy.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to an understanding of how ones values, beliefs, perceptions and thoughts influence ones interactions with young people. Everyone has a unique way of relating to young people based on personal background, values, and beliefs about people, experiences as a caregiver; the influence of colleagues and organisational culture and climate.

Self-Awareness



- Knowing our own attitudes, values, and beliefs about children and how they influence our behaviors
- Understanding our own cultural values, fears, and beliefs
- Understanding how our previous life experiences can influence current behavior
- Knowing our beliefs about trauma and pain-based behavior



Adult’s beliefs about pain-based behaviours can have a strong influence on their actions and reactions. How does the adult see the young person’s behaviour? Is it difficult or challenging behaviour?

Personal experiences can enhance or detract from one’s ability to be empathetic and objective.

Self-Regulation

Skills needed to self-regulate include (a) the ability to consciously focus attention, (b) awareness of one’s own physical and emotional state, (c) the ability to manage one’s own emotions and behaviours, and (d) the ability to draw on memory and experience to adapt effectively in the present situation. The adult’s goal in handling stressful situations is to assess and address the young person’s needs, be aware and manage the effects the young person may be having on others and understand the role the environment is having on the young person. Adults must do this while staying in charge of their own emotions.

Self-Regulation



Ability to consciously focus attention



Awareness of our own physical and emotional state



Skills to manage our own emotions and behavior



Ability to draw on memory and experience to adapt effectively in the present situation

Self-Care

Working with young people who have not developed emotional regulation skills can have a detrimental effect on adults’ mental health and physical health as well as their professional performance. Adults who have good self-regulation skills have many productive and socially appropriate ways to cope with stress. They exercise, cry, relax, problem-solve, listen to music, talk to friends along with many other methods of self-care. If adults do not engage in self-care, they may become counter-aggressive and withdrawn.



Relationship Skills and Attunement

Attunement is being aware of a young person's emotions and responding with language and behaviours based on the young person's emotional state. It is sharing the emotional experience through verbal and non-verbal communication and expression. A warm, trusting, responsive, developmental relationship with a young person is foundational for the young person to grow, develop and thrive. To develop relationships with young people, adults need to be able to

- (a) Listen and engage the young person,
- (b) 'tune in' to what the young person is saying and feeling,
- (c) be aware of the feelings that are being evoked,
- (d) respond to the young person, and (e) be attuned to how the young person is experiencing them.



Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) Student Workbook 7th Edition. Refer to Module One pages S14 – S16.