LAVING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Harm that has come to children in the context of early adverse experiences needs to be healed in nurturing, caregiving relationships. Traditional parenting and discipline techniques often do not achieve this. Therapeutic parenting strategies address the emotional issues and developmental challenges that often drive behavior problems.

First, clinicians need to help parents understand why their children behave as they do and adjust any unrealistic expectations. As parents understand their child’s developmental challenges, they can reframe discipline as teaching coping and self-regulation skills.

Common Dynamics in At-Risk Families

Think of a family whose child is at risk of being placed outside the home.

Evaluate which of the following dynamics were present in this family:

- Severe power struggles
- Difficulty connecting/empathizing with child
- Marital tension
- Sibling conflicts
- Mother takes brunt of child’s anger
- Parental burnout and isolation

How might consideration of these dynamics guide your work with the family?

Practice Models to Address Complex Trauma

The therapeutic parenting strategies in Lessons 2 and 3 are based primarily on TBRI and ARC. Here is a brief overview of each model:

Empowering Principles

→ **Ecology** (felt safety, predictability, transitions, balancing nurture and structure)
→ **Physiology** (safe touch, discover child’s sensory

See page 2
Addressing the Needs & Capacities of Parents

Both of these models stress the need for parents to come to terms with their own history, particularly their own parenting and attachment style. Parents could benefit greatly from developing self-awareness as to their own self-regulation capacities in difficult interactions with their child.

As with Masha’s adoptive mother, some parents fear rejection by the child and are hesitant to respond affectionately for fear of being rebuffed. Others like Masha’s father struggle with being too rigid and harsh.

Review the resource, Assessing Attachment-Readiness and Capabilities in Prospective Adoptive Parents.

While this resource was designed for assessing pre-adoptive parents, it is useful for addressing parental issues in treatment. Apply this in your work with an adoptive or foster parent.

Choose a family whose child is struggling with very challenging behaviors. Apply one of these two treatment models to this case, and jot down your ideas for addressing each component of the model. If you have not read an article in the Resources on this model, please do so first.
Addressing Deficits in Brain Functioning

Remember that, because of the impact of trauma on brain neurobiology, many evidence-based treatments that rely on cognitive abilities have been shown to be ineffective with children experiencing deprivation and complex trauma.

Lesson 4 introduces the Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics, by Dr. Bruce Perry.

Addressing the Needs & Capacities of Parents

“This model allows identification of the key systems and areas in the brain which have been impacted by adverse developmental experiences, and helps target the selection and sequence of therapeutic, enrichment, and educational activities.”

Dr. Bruce Perry

Review the article, *Application of the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics© (NMT) in Maltreated Children.*

Reflect on the case of James in this article.

- Have you worked with a youth with such challenges?
- If so, how did you approach treatment with this youth?
- Based on your understanding of this model, what might you have done differently?