

Trauma Responsive Interactions for Crisis Center Volunteers

Please do:	Please don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get eye level with child or lower (brain calms when eyes look down). Lower your voice. Listen without judgement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...talk while standing over a child. This indicates power over and not power with. It can lead to the child having more anxiety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate each child's feelings, "I can imagine that you might be feeling..." They may need help sorting out their feelings. Do your best to lean in while maintaining a neutral empathic and caring stance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...dismiss a child's feelings or tell children, "Don't cry, it's going to be all right." Allow children to have and own their feelings. Really we don't know if it's going to be all right or not - or what that even means for any particular child. Don't ever lie.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage child in Rhythmic Activities and Movement – walk with the child as you are able; around the room, around the building, down a hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...stop children from moving, unless they are being unsafe. Movement can be a method for children to sooth themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw Pictures – have blank paper and crayons available. Coloring books for all ages are helpful too. Color and draw with the child. Ask children, "Will you tell me about your drawing?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...use judgement words about children's drawings, colorings or behavior. No 'good' or 'bad' or 'nice.' Just state your observation(s) and invite children to share.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have different textures to fiddle with; smooth, soft, flexible brushes, play dough, polymer clay. If child is willing, help to them breathe into their belly slowly. Demonstrate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...always sit or talk face-to-face. Sitting, or walking, side-by-side may feel safer to children (and adults). The child also does not have the pressure of maintaining eye contact or having to look away.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be Prepared – have the above suggested materials ready for calming activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...be unprepared. None of these suggestions may be effective in helping a child regulate during a crisis – in which case the best thing you can do is offer empathy, be attentive and ensure safety.

Reflect ~ Honor ~ Connect

- If feelings are shared, **Reflect** back to the child, with compassion, what you heard
 - *"I can see that you're upset. I hear you saying that you feel ... by how (what) ..."*
- Honor** the courage it takes to share
 - *"Thank you for sharing your feelings with me. I know it can be difficult to talk about something that is so..."*
- Connect** the child with safety, support and empathy.
 - *"I'm wondering if there is something I can do to help you feel safe while we're here together?"*