

# SURVIVE & THRIVE

AT HOME TOGETHER



**e(x)traordinary parenting for out-of-the-box kids**

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**YOU CAN SURVIVE  
AND THRIVE!**

Years ago, we were parenting two newly-adopted children, both with significant trauma-related needs. At the time, our children required a high level of support and our whole family became highly stressed. We had just begun learning about the impact of developmental trauma and we had limited resources and access to support. We were overwhelmed and pretty much on our own. We lived in isolation... much as we all are living right now.

We learned how to do things differently and got our family through the very roughest and most isolated days. We kept it simple, stayed connected with each other and tried our best to be kind. We found that when we could do that...we really did survive and thrive. We were not perfect. The kids had hard days and we had them too. When hard days happened, we made repair, tried again, and moved forward. Our greatest lesson was learning that our kids do not need us to be perfect. They need us to be gentle with ourselves and with them; and to worry less about DOING and more about BEING.

## **RESPONDING TO ISOLATION**

The way that we connected with and supported our own children became our roadmap for parenting and family life. With the closing of schools, public entities and social distancing becoming the norm, families are facing the challenges of parenting in isolation. New tools are needed, especially for parents with children who have experienced trauma.



## THE R.I.S.E.\* MODEL

### ★(Relational Integrative Supportive Experiences)

Our family survived and thrived during our season of stress and isolation. Our way of life and our approach to helping our children is scientifically based. Our model includes tools for parents that help children deal with isolation and change, while staying hopeful and connected. Our model offers a simple, structured routine that builds relationships, self-regulation (being in control of one's feelings and actions) and resilience (one's ability to bounce back or recover from difficulty).

Our tendency is to structure each day around the things on our "to do" lists. Our model gives families a new way to set priorities at home. A plan that puts the child's self regulation and resilience (bouncing back) at the top of the "to-do" list helps the family function better on a day to day basis. Children who struggle the most need predictability and reassurance from parents in order to feel safe. Before a child's brain can move to tasks such as learning and cooperating, they must first feel safe and manage stress. Children who have experienced trauma need their parents to set the course for the day. Once I really leaned into that truth, our family got happier and healthier and life got a whole lot easier for all of us.

A goal of our model is to decrease chaos and help children build a tolerance for structure. Children with trauma-related needs require on-going support to do this. Sometimes chaos can look like disobedience or defiance. Science tells us trauma can cause children's brains to crave chaos and avoid structure. This is a by-product of toxic stress in early childhood.

Right now, we are all living with stress and isolation.

The valuable lessons my family learned back in 2006 are helpful for children with trauma-related needs today. We learned how to relieve stress and decrease uncertainty for our children. We also found that the strategies we used were helpful for all children (and the adults in the household)!

This model transformed our family. We hope it can help your family to survive and thrive!



# ***SURVIVE AND THRIVE***

## **LEARNING, GROWING & BEING**

These tools are for everyone! This packet was created for families caring for children with trauma related needs but we encourage you to use the tools you find here with your whole family. Please stay in touch as we continue to connect, provide additional tools and build community. Let's survive and thrive together!

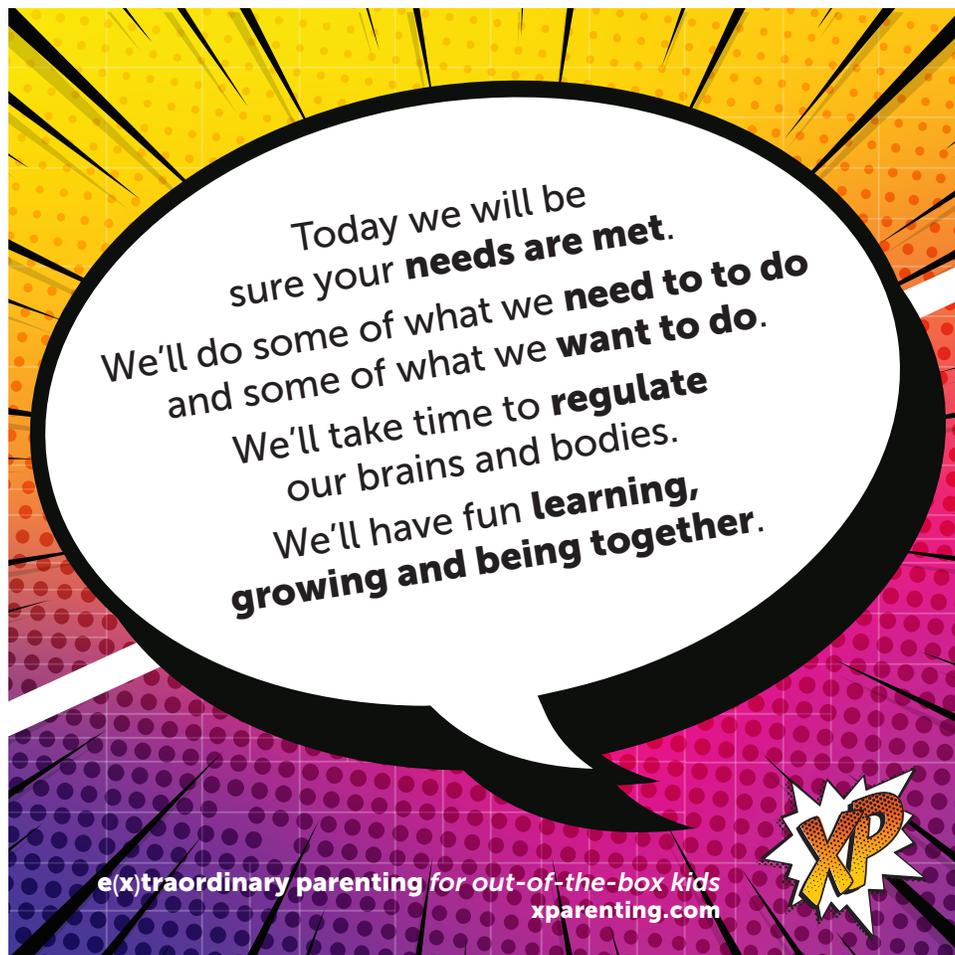
Stay tuned on Instagram and Facebook and find us on the web at [www.xparenting.com](http://www.xparenting.com). We will be hosting group discussions to explore the schedule, what's working and what's not...and to share the journey together.

I look forward to getting to know you and to building a new kind of parenting community!

*Tif*



Print and cut out this reminder.  
Tape it somewhere  
(like your refrigerator!)  
you can see it every day.



# **SURVIVE & THRIVE**

## **A Roadmap**

We have developed  
3 tools to help your family  
survive and thrive

### **THE DAILY ROUTINE**

*(Fear and Scarcity vs. Security)*

The daily routine is a basic structure to meet basic needs. This tool:

- Reassures children that their needs will be met
- Decreases uncertainty
- Makes self care a priority
- Creates a sense of felt safety

### **THE "TO-DO" LIST**

*(Chaos and Uncertainty vs. Predictability and Balance)*

The to-do list provides a rhythm for the day, balances essential and desired tasks, provides tools for self-regulation and helps families reflect and remain connected while getting things done together. This tool:

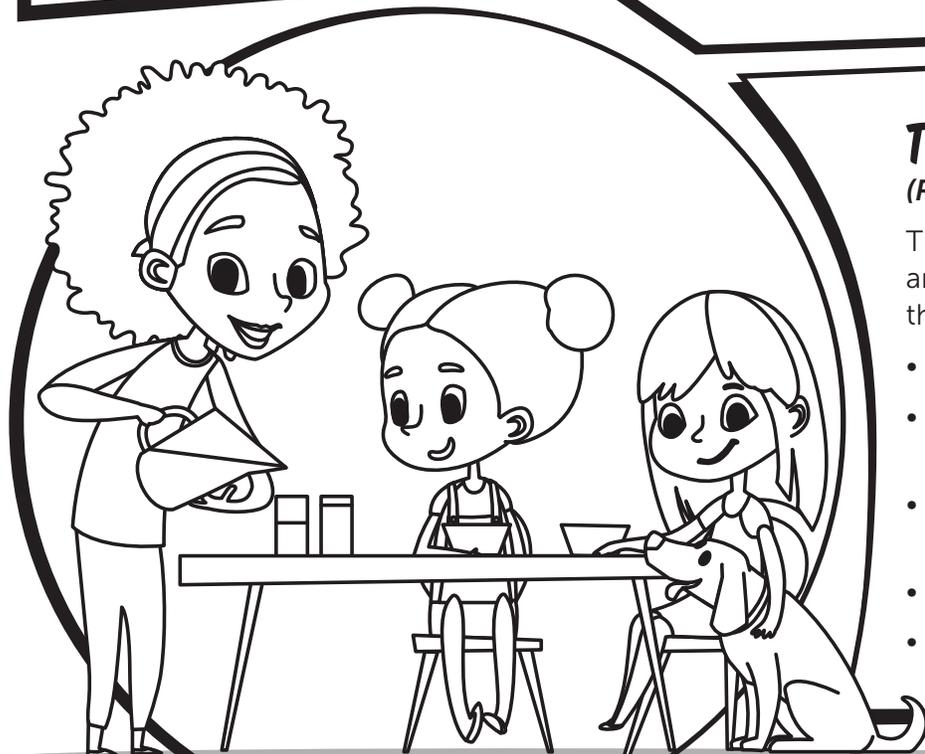
- Prevents/regulates spiraling behaviors
- Encourages family collaboration and connection
- Helps with problem solving
- Moves the child from "me" to "we"
- Helps parents respond, not react to behavior
- Builds tolerance for structure through repetition

### **THE SOMEDAY LIST**

*(Rigidity vs. Flexibility)*

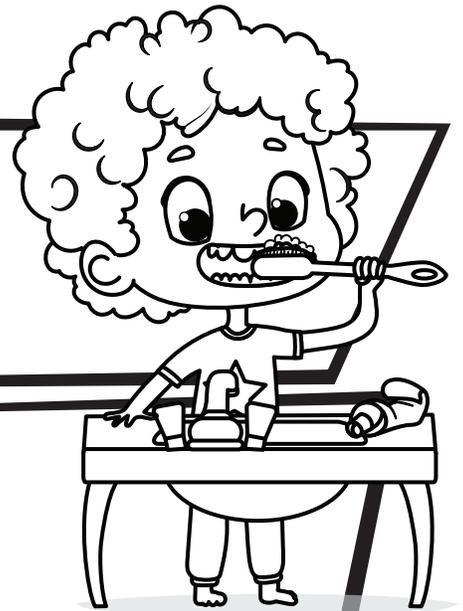
The someday list prevents distractions and provides a "wish receptacle" for things that cannot be done TODAY.

- Decreases conflict over the word "no"
- Maintains the relationship between parent and child
- Decreases impulsivity and helps children learn to wait
- Increases hope and resilience
- Keeps the child in the "here and now"



# DAILY ROUTINE

**WAKE UP**



**GET DRESSED**

**BREAKFAST**

**LUNCH**



**DINNER**

**BED TIME**

# TO DO LIST

## NEED TO

- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_

## WANT TO

- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_



## REGULATION BREAKS

- Hydration
- Protein
- Joint Compression
- Deep Pressure
- Mindfulness
- Rhythm
- Proprioception
- Blowing
- Sucking

## CONNECTION CHECK-IN

Did we...

- ✓ Prepare and enjoy a meal together today?
- ✓ Get outside together today?
- ✓ Tell each other stories today?
- ✓ Play together today?
- ✓ Work together today?
- ✓ Learn something about each other today?
- ✓ Learn something from each other today?
- ✓ Experience something new today?
- ✓ Think something was funny today?

SOMEDAY WE WOULD LIKE TO...

★ \_\_\_\_\_

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*"The way the mind organized its own functioning..."*  
-Daniel J. Siegel

*"The brain's ability to sense and respond to the needs of the body. Specialized 'thermostats' that monitor and function within our internal and external worlds"* -Bruce D. Perry

## **REGULATION**

The ability to experience and maintain stress within a person's window of tolerance. Generally referred to as being calm, focused or relaxed.  
This term is used by literally every scientific discipline.

## **DYSREGULATION**

The experience of being outside of a person's window of tolerance. Generally referred to as being stressed out, or in a state of distress. (Taylor et al. 1997)

## **REGULATING ACTIVITIES**

The following are categories of regulation activities. I have first described the TYPE of activity, what it does for the brain and why it's helpful. Then I have listed ideas to try at home.

Remember, the idea is not to pressure yourself or your children with doing all of these every day, right away. Instead, try to gradually sprinkle, incorporate them in at your own pace, with the goal of doing SOME regulating activity every couple of hours as you move through your day.

The idea is to integrate a variety of Regulating Activities in dose responses (2-15 minute spurts) throughout the day is the GOAL. They should be fun, playful and stress relieving for everyone.

Also remember, these activities are great for everyone—even adults!

## **JOINT COMPRESSION**

Restores a child's sense of control when a child feels out of control. It helps them feel grounded, providing deep abrupt stimulation when they feel chaotic and out of control physically and otherwise. Improves body awareness and organization. Helps children figure out where they are in space. Once the body is aware, it becomes more secure and organized in movement and thought.

### **REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE JOINT COMPRESSION**

- **Bone Jarring Activity** – Jump Rope, Jumping up and Down, Stomping in general
- **Trampoline** – Trampolines can be great but are often too soft for highly dysregulated children. If you notice your child becomes more dysregulated (fast moving, disorganized, not calm) with trampolines, they may need more input than the soft landing of a trampoline can provide.
- **Gymnastics** – the hard landings in gymnastics are great joint compression activities.
- **Pogo Stick** – I recommend one for any child I work with, as soon as they can use it.

- **Jump Squats & Burpees** – As long as they are fun activity, not a forced activity.
- **Big Jumps, Jumping Jacks** (same as above, within relationship, in fun, never forced)
- **Stomp Rockets** – This is a GREAT toy for regulation and one of my favorite toys ever!

## **DEEP PRESSURE**

Helps muscles and tension to relax and increases feelings of security, can soothe the nervous system, as long as it's done within a positive relational experience and not forced. Helps moderate anxiety, provides a dopamine release, increases body awareness for those with a sensitive nervous system.

*Note: Deep pressure activities are best before sleep, upon waking or at times of rest (while watching movies, reading books, listening to stories or music, circle time)*

### **REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE DEEP PRESSURE**

- **Baby Burrito** – Wrap up in a blanket, provide pressure while wrapping, tuck edges, have child stand up and walk around wrapped up like a “baby burrito.”
- **Bed Time Squeezes** – Child snuggles into bed in any comfortable position, covers to neck (or comfort level), caregiver squeezes as hard as child feels comfortable, starting with feet, all the way up the body to shoulders,
- **Weighted Blankets** – Highly recommend weighted blankets for sleeping and resting activities. Now easily available at Walmart and Target or Amazon and even through schools or OT
- **Weighted Vest** – We made one by zipping rolls of pennies into the pockets of a sweatshirt. This can help with body control. Again, as long as kids are ok with and enjoy it.
- **Brushing Protocol** – This is an amazing at home support. Ask your OT about brushing protocol.

## **PROPRIOCEPTION**

Feeling grounded, knowing where your body is in time and space. People with proprioceptive deficits have difficulty understanding where their body is in their environment. They may be restless and seek sensory input (attention / chaos) both physical and otherwise or they may avoid situations because they cannot tolerate the input.

### **REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT HELP WITH PROPRIOCEPTION**

- **Hop Scotch**
- **Hanging from Monkey Bars** – (balance is a part of proprioception)
- **Jump Rope**
- **Yoga Ball or Wobble Stool** – (feet flat on the ground, feel center of gravity)
- **Box at My Feet** – place a stool, box or crate at the foot of your child's chair at home and school so their feet are never dangling. This helps them stay in the chair. It helps them feel grounded. You'll want a hard box / crate that gives them solid input.
- **Pushing Heavy Things** – Pushing the grocery cart or wheelbarrow.
- **Tug of War**
- **Pulling and Pushing Activities** – Vacuuming and mopping
- **Swimming** – THE BEST for proprioception when I am working with a new client with this area of challenge, I get them in the water as soon as I can.

- **Gummy Bears** – (Or something with that consistency) kept in the refrigerator, and given when it's time to focus on a task is very helpful. The hard chewing can really help with focus.  
*Tip: Sour gummies for waking up (alert)*
- **Bean Bag Chairs** – Sleeping bags, tents that surround the body help with grounding too.
- **Swings**

## **INTEGRATION**

The ability to engage multiple areas of the brain. Blowing and sucking activate the trigeminal nerve which also activates the vagus nerve, resulting in full nervous system reset and a more integrated brain state. Blowing and sucking activities are primary activities for interhemispheric integration and support binocular functions (eye teaming), light sensitivity, sound sensitivity, articulation, bowel and bladder control, tongue and lip control for articulation, facial muscle tone for nonverbal communication, and more.

### **REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT HELP WITH INTEGRATION**

#### **Blowing:**

- **Breathing Activities**
- **BellyCoaster**
- **Ball Blow Pipe**
- **Wooden Boat Balloon**
- **Rocket Balloons**
- **Balloons** – Blow them up, toss them around. I keep them handy in all forms all over the house and in the car.
- **Cotton Ball Races** – Blow cotton balls across table
- **Kazoos and Harmonicas**

#### **Sucking:**

- **Silly Straw**
- **Yogurt or Applesauce** – take a straw, punch it through the top of a single serve yogurt or applesauce and “drink” yogurt / applesauce through straw.
- **Sour Lollipops**
- **Sucking Noodles**
- **Dime Travel** – Trace a dime on a piece of paper, wash dime, then use a straw to move the dime from circle to circle on a piece of paper.
- **Put a Bubble in your Mouth** – Make a big bubble in your mouth and hold it.

## **RHYTHM / CROSSING THE MIDLINE**

*“The only way to move from these super-high anxiety states, to calmer more cognitive states, is rhythm. Patterned, repetitive rhythmic activity: walking, running, dancing, singing, repetitive meditative breathing – you use brain stem-related somatosensory networks which make your brain accessible to relational (limbic brain) reward and cortical thinking.” -Dr Bruce Perry*

*“Rhythmic activity within relationship is, in my experience, the most effective way to both stave off an escalation and to get back into connection following an escalation or relationship break.” -Tif*

Sudela-Junker

## REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE RHYTHM

- **Name that Tune** (my fav with teens)
- **Tongue Drum** (any drumming)
- **Lummi Sticks**
- **Twister**
- **Musical Chairs**
- **Dance Party**
- **Hand Clapping Games**
- **Zumba**
- **Music Lessons**
- **Dance & Freeze**

## **MINDFULNESS**

The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.

*"...Mindfulness is simply being aware of what's happening as it's happening."* -Jon Kabat Zinn

*"Mindfulness has never met a cognition\* it didn't like."* -Dr. Dan Siegel.

\*Cognition is defined as the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. The ability to slow the mind, allow it to integrate, allows cognition to happen.

## REGULATION ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT AND TEACH MINDFULNESS

- **Car Wash** – When my son was little and having an off day, I would get a bunch of quarters and take him to the carwash and let him wash the car for hours. It was the best reset EVER! I started keeping quarters in hand all the time.
- **Listening to Music** – ANY music can cultivate mindfulness. Even music that matches the chaos inside can help regulate the brain. *"Yes, Hip Hop heals..."* -Dr. Bruce Perry
- **Five Senses** – Works well with all ages. Close your eyes and have kids first say 5 things they hear, then 4 things they see, then 3 things they smell, then 2 things they taste, then 1 something they feel outside of their body and 1 something they feel inside of their body.
- **Trauma-Informed Yoga**
- **Coloring**
- **Nature Bracelets** – Make a bracelet out of duct tape, sticky side up. Take a quick walk and find treasures in nature to stick to your bracelet.