

Protective Family Coping Resources

Exploring the Foundations of SFCR



Effects of stress & trauma on family processes

- Increases distress in children and caregivers
 - Irritability, dysregulation, detachment
 - Increased distressed with re-exposure
- Increases individual distress which affects family subsystems
 - Intimate partner, parent-child, sibling
- Erodes constructive family coping resources
 - Structure is usually associated with chaos, few routines, & organization
 - Low in nurturance & high negativity
 - Reactive & avoidant and sense of hopelessness



Altered Schemas*

- Family schemas become consistent with traumatic exposures
 - biases or distortions in family appraisal and inferencing
 - distorted rules, beliefs, and world views

*may increase individual family members
vulnerability to PTSD when exposed to trauma
(Weingarten, 2004)





Traumas' Impact on Families

Optimal family functioning can be negatively impacted when families experience chronic exposure to trauma(s) and environmental stressors.

Theory and research demonstrate that all levels of the family system are impacted by trauma.

Favorable outcomes are highly dependent upon the availability of and access to assessment and treatment practices that are trauma-informed, family-centered, and target all levels of the system that are impacted.

Families with Complex Adaptations to Trauma

- Too many families are exposed to accumulated traumatic circumstances.
- Complex adaptations to trauma in families are defined by the intensity, duration, chronicity, predictability, or toxicity of the accumulated trauma, and by the nature of the family's response.
- Those families whose strengths have been overwhelmed by their accumulated traumatic stressors exhibit distress and disrupted family functioning.



What is SFCR?

- SFCR is a **trauma-focused, multi-family**, skill building intervention. SFCR is designed for families **living in traumatic contexts** with the goal of reducing trauma related symptoms and **increasing coping resources** in the family system to **prevent relapse and re-exposure**. SFCR **increases the protective function** of the family by building coping resources necessary to help families boost their sense of safety, function with stability, and regulate their emotions and behaviors.













- Family Ritual and Routine Theory
- Systems and Relational Theories
- Family Stress and Resource Theories
- Family Resilience

Theoretical Backdrop of Protective Family Coping



Six Protective Resources

- Deliberateness
- Structure and Sense of Safety
- Connectedness
- Resource Seeking
- Co-regulation and Crisis Management
- Positive Affect, Memories, and Meaning



Deliberateness

- *Coping schema: problem-focused, preventive*
- *Related theories: family ritual*



- Deliberately planning for family and what your family would be like and following through on those plans

‘Planful Competence’ –
“tendency to exert planning in
relation to key life decisions”
Rutter, 1999, p. 131

- Keeping problems separate from family life

Making life choices

Forethought as to the possible course of family life

Future orientation

Planning, problem solving, and follow through

Maintaining rituals and routines regardless of what else is happening in the family



Deliberateness Skills

What is Deliberateness?

- Early research on family rituals (Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1988)
- Agency (i.e., capacity to lead fulfilling lives) (Graham, 2011)
- Tied to executive function (EF), regulation and mindfulness (Deater-Deckard 2014; Miyake et al, 2000)
 - Emotion and cognitive control capacities (i.E., Planning, decision-making, avoiding distractions, setting priorities) (crandall et al, 2015)
 - Attentional control (i.E., Sustained attention in the face of potential distractors)
 - Effortful or inhibitory control (i.E., Inhibition of prepotent responses in service to an alternative goal)
 - Working memory
 - Cognitive flexibility



Life Choices



- Normative family timeline
- Planning, choices, and purpose
- Belief in family and each family member to reach goals

Things Get in the Way

- Identifying what gets in the way
- Taking control
- Anticipating problems and preventive coping
- Problem solving



Problem-Solving

- Preventive
 - Anticipatory
 - Flexibility
- Collaborative
 - Negotiation
 - Consensus seeking
 - Brainstorming

“Deliberate planning and follow through, which often requires effective problem-solving, focuses attention on the here and now, creates a sense of efficacy, and provides opportunities for success”.

(Figley & Kiser, 2013, p. 105)





Structure and a Sense of Safety

- *Coping schema: joint problem solving, role clarity*
 - *Related theories: family ritual and routine, attachment*
- Predictable and stable social-ecology within the family
 - adapting to unpleasant certainty is easier than adapting to uncertainty (Graham, 2011)
 - Insulation from danger

Establishing order and regularity in daily family life

Establishing rules and limits

Rapid stabilization of family functioning

Preventive routines that allow a degree of control over the uncontrollable

Attunement with and communication of safety needs



Structure and Safety Skills

Daily Routines

- Accomplish tasks in order to meet basic needs
- Provide structure
- Clarify roles
- Stipulate rules
- Establish boundaries around who is part of the family
- Support family communication and cohesion
- Establish predictability

“This is who we are,
this is the way we do
things.”



Stabilizing Family Functioning

“The stress potential of life events is most clearly seen in its ability to disrupt family routines and add to daily hassles”.

(Fiese & Wamboldt, 2000, p. 410-411)

- Restoring family functioning to pre-trauma levels
- Stabilizing and strengthening family routine, roles, leadership
- Maintaining discipline and normal expectations



Safety or Proximity Maintenance

Preemptive
biobehavioral
system when
aroused

Child behavioral
system

- ⑩ Visual checks, sharing interesting sights
- ⑩ Approaching, signaling distress, reaching for pick-up, cuddling, clinging

Parent behavioral
system

- ⑩ Watchfulness, protective behaviors, closeness
- ⑩ Boundaries and limits



“Family” Proofing

- Establishment of rules, maintaining discipline and normal expectations for behavior (limits)
- Adequate monitoring and supervision
- Removing dangerous persons, places, things
- Limiting reminders
- Develop safety routines
- Teaching stress inoculation skills
- Collective experience of regulation



Connectedness

- *Coping schema: social, collaborative*
- *Related theories: family ritual, attachment, resilience*



- Close, stable relationships
- A sense of belonging
- Nurturing and taking care of

Setting family as a priority and maintaining this commitment even in the face of adversity

Collaborative coping to increase interdependencies

Enjoyment of shared experience

Healthy communication

Shared beliefs and values



Connectedness Skills

“Because interdependence is not just the fact that things are related but also that, therefore, they are devoid of a totally autonomous, independent existence”.

Matthieu Ricard — Happiness as Human Flourishing, The On Being Project



Connectedness: A Biological Imperative

“The fittest may also be the gentlest, because survival often requires mutual help and cooperation”.

(Dobzhansky, T. (1962). *Mankind evolving*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press)

- The body’s need to co-regulate biobehavioral state through engagement with others.
- Connectedness is the ability to mutually (synchronously and reciprocally) regulate physiological and behavioral state.
- Connectedness provides the neurobiological mechanism to link social behavior and both mental and physical health.





a Pelican Original



Child Care and the Growth of Love

John Bowlby



Someone Has My Back

- Attachment
 - “Internalization of an enduring capacity to regulate and thereby generate and maintain states of emotional security” (Schore, 2001).
- Safety or Proximity Maintenance
 - Preemptive biobehavioral system when aroused.
- Confidence in Protection
 - Basic protective contract between caregiver and child (Goldberg, Grusec, Jenkins, 1999).
- Working models of self and self in relation to other
 - Dynamic mental structures that an individual may use to derive strategies for action.

Spirituality

- Experiences that share ...
 - a perceived dissolution of the boundary between self and other.
 - a sense of union with something larger than oneself (James 1902; Yaden et al. 2017).
- Parietal cortex is frequently linked to spirituality
 - This brain region contributes to attention, impulse control, planned reasoning, sensory processing, and spatial reasoning.



Resource Seeking

- *Coping schema: social, collaborative*
- *Related theories: social support, resource*



- Strong social support network
- Increasing availability of resources
- Efficient use of available resources

Helping the family identify who they can rely on

Involve others in their family life especially in times of stress

Ask for and accept assistance when needed

Give to others when the opportunity arises



Resource Seeking Skills

People Resources

We cope within a social context (Bandura 1989, Cahill & Foa, 2007; Monson & Friedman, 2006).

Strong positive relationships with extended family and friends are important indicators of well-being and family resilience.



Resource Seeking

- Garnering support from significant others outside the nuclear family.
- Monitoring the quality and quantity of social relationships including help in the selection of positive friends/activities.
- Participation of both parents and children in an active community support network.



- Resources = objects, conditions, personal characteristics, energies
- Individuals/families try to obtain, retain, and protect valued resources.
- Loss of resources contributes to further loss.
- Individuals/families with fewer resources are more vulnerable to further resource loss related to stress and trauma and vice versa.

Conservation of Resources Theory

(Hobfoll, 1989, 1998)



Impact of Resource Loss Within the Context of Stress and Trauma

- Rapid resource loss results in acute stress.
- Resource loss is a predictor of PTSD, general psychological distress and intrusive thoughts.
- First priority is stopping/slowing resource loss, followed by efforts to begin resource gain.
- Families experience resource loss as happening faster and more strongly than resource gain.

(Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis & Jackson, 2003; Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993; Hobfoll, Tracy & Galea, 2006)



Resource Gain

- Focusing on increasing the following resources leads to improved outcomes for families:
 - High self-esteem
 - Sense of mastery
 - Optimism
 - Intimate support
 - Higher socioeconomic status
 - Good problem solving ability

(Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993)



Co-regulation and Crisis Management

- *Coping schema: cognitive, emotional, behavioral*
- *Related theories: family stress, resource*



- Encourage collective experiences of regulation
- Flexible appraisal of stressors, crises, and solutions
- Match coping resources to the demands of current stressors

Define family comfort zone during interactions

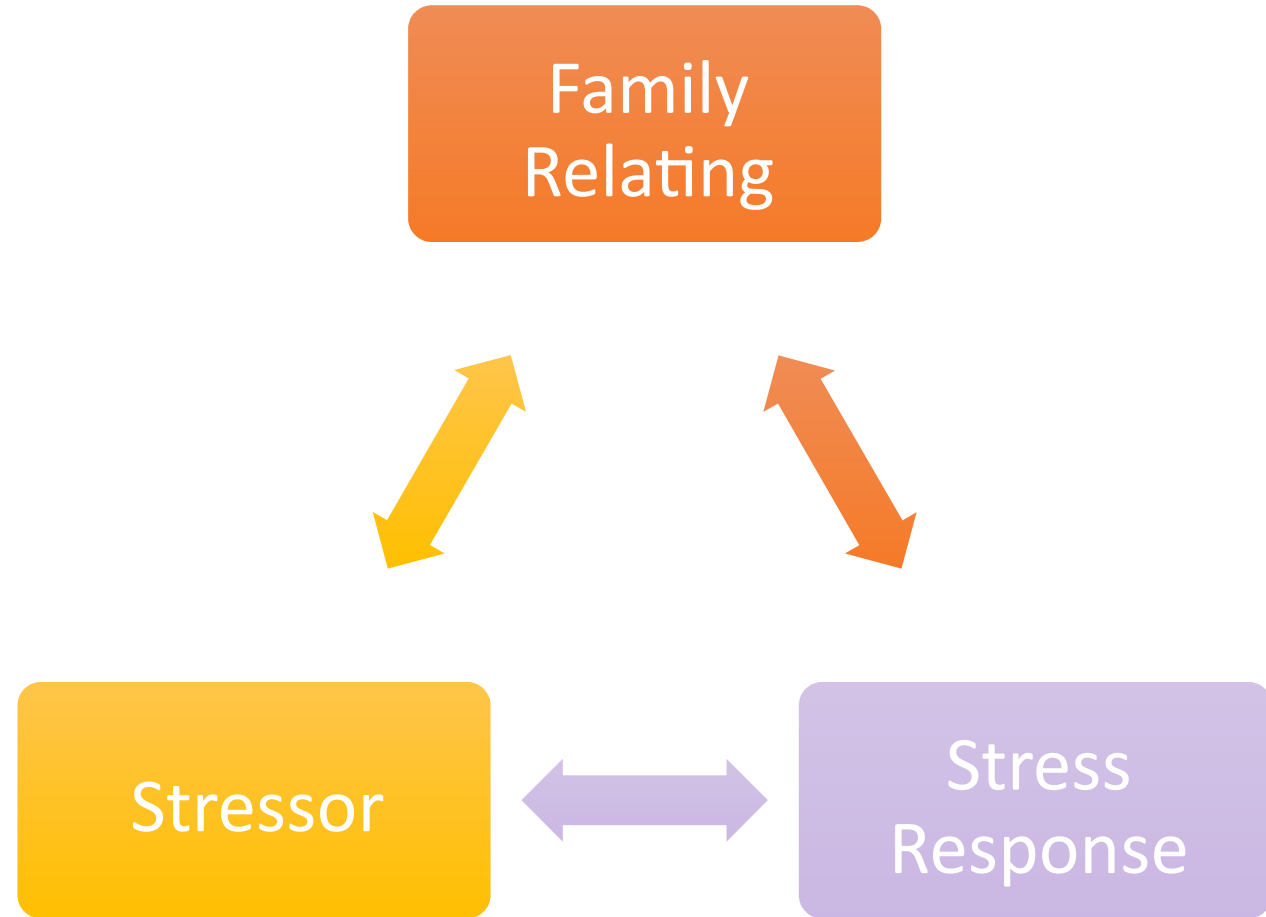
Read each other cues, listen to each other, and contain emotional expression within a safe range

Build stress reduction skills



Co-regulation and Crisis Management Skills

Social context influences the stress response through physiological and cognitive processes



Co-Regulation

“The challenge for parents is to regulate the home environment as best they can while also regulating themselves and helping regulate their children”.

(Deater-Deckard, 2014)

- Process

- Sensitive parenting relies on good self-regulation (*Bridgett et al., 2015, 2017; Deater-Deckard, 2014*)
 - executive functioning (EF) including attentive behavior
 - scaffolding
 - redirection
 - emotion coaching

- Family Context

- Regulation processes run in families as individual differences are likely to be altered as a function of the broader family context (Blair, 2010; Deater-Deckard 2014).
- Biobehavioral synchrony requires the dynamic coordination of behavior, affective states, and neurobiological responses across parents and children during family interactions (Feldman, 2012).
- Family Environment Psychophysiology interaction framework (Abaied et al 2018; McQuade & Breaux 2017)
 - Biological sensitivity to context (BSC) model
 - A parent’s stress physiology can either support or hinder parental responsiveness and parenting behaviors.
 - A child’s stress physiology can either protect or make them vulnerable to parent emotion socialization, parenting strategies.



Crisis Coping

ABCX Family Crisis Model

A = stressor event

B = family's resources for meeting stressor demands

C = family's appraisal of the event

and

X = crisis precipitated by interaction of ABC

(Hill 1958)



Positive Affect, Memories, and Meaning



- *Coping schema: cognitive, emotional, collaborative*
- *Related theories: resilience*
- Sharing positive exchanges filled with expressions of laughter and positive affect
- Connecting family and happiness
- Making sense of life events by evaluating them in the context of shared beliefs and worldview
- Building and clearly communicating a coherent and hopeful understanding of life events

Enacting rituals, through joining metaphor with symbolic action

Play, touch, and stimulation of the senses

Storytelling and narration

Laughter

Shared belief system and worldview

Spiritual beliefs and gratitude



Positive Affect, Memories and Meaning Skills

Happiness

- Matthieu Ricard defines happiness as a skill, “not as pleasurable feeling but as a way of being that gives you the resources to deal with the ups and downs of life and that encompasses many emotional states, including sadness”.
- “Happiness is not about feeling like everything’s great, but about recognizing our inner resource of self trust and our connection to others that keeps us from feeling depleted by tough emotions and experiences”.
- Happiness is “taking in joy, and being nourished by it”.

(Happiness Is an Arm of Resilience from The On Being Project)



What Makes Us Happy?

- “Someone is happy when his plans are going well, his most important aspirations being fulfilled, and he feels sure that his good fortune will endure”. (John Rawls)
- Having and fulfilling life goals (e.g., giving priority to family time, altruistic activities) are associated with happiness. (Headey, Muffels & Wagner, 2010)
- People are happier when:
 - They trust others
 - Participate in the community
 - Feel safe
 - Express and practice their faith or religion



Memories



Activated memory is conscious

- “Because consciousness is linked to the executive function of attention, it has the capacity to inhibit autonomic responses generated through perceptions and affects that are linked to implicit memory. Information processing may occur out of awareness such that solutions subsequently become available to consciousness”. (Harris 1998, p. 160)



Memories as Mental Event Representation

- Memory develops by guiding the way new information is incorporated into interpersonal schemas (Lynch, Cicchetti 1998).
- Mental event representation
 - Mental models that catalogue experience tagged to roles, actions, goals, recipients of actions.
 - Constructed, checked, adapted, and called up in similar situations.
 - Necessary for capacity to respond, reflective self-awareness, intersubjectivity, perspective taking, future planning.

(Harris 1998)



Meaning Making

Family Schemas

- Stable, meaningful patterns of organizing information which allow efficient appraisal and response. (Dattilio, 2005; Reiss, 1987)
- Develop through repeated interaction within the family unit – they shape cognitions, emotions, and behaviors related to family life.
- Translate into enduring values and views about the way the family understands and interacts with the world.
- Support the family's co-creation of meaning by defining beliefs about what is “comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful”. (Bradley & Corwyn, 2000, p. 352)



Meaning Making

- Model for processing discrepancies between appraised meaning of the trauma and world view, beliefs, values, and goals.
- Meaning making processes include reappraisal, accommodation, assimilation, strengthening or reaffirming global world views.
- Made meaning is the end result of these processes.
 - Making sense
 - Acceptance
 - Understanding “why”
 - Looking for the positive
 - Changed identity
 - Altered beliefs and/or goals
- “The quality of the meaning-making attempts and the meanings made is at least as important as the quantity”. (Park, 2010, p. 290)



Developing a Shared Meaning

“Meaning is not a stable entity but an outcome of relational negotiations in a particular context”.

(Penn 2001, p. 44)

- Building a solid base
 - Family spiritual identity
 - Shared worldview
 - Family historical legacy
- Why bad things happen...
 - Hope/optimism
 - Spirituality
 - Control
 - Problem-solving



Group Structure

- 2 hours
- Group rituals
 - Open: Welcome, review rules, give thanks for food, check-in, review schedule, ritual
 - Close: Give thanks, positive feedback, homework, check-in, closing ritual
- Family activities
- Break out groups
- Homework



Overview + Goals

- Module 1: Routines & Rituals
 - **Telling Family Stories:** Encourage sharing between family members
 - **Ritual Family Tree:** Introduce concepts of routines and rituals; discover unique heritage
 - **Family Diary:** Implementing routines & structure



Overview + Goals

- Module 2: Using Routines to Cope
 - **Feeling Safe 1 & 2:** Relaxation, increasing sense of safety, increase parent's ability to help child calm
 - **People Resources:** Identify social networks
 - **Life Choices:** Deliberate planning
 - **Spirituality:** Meaning in their lives
 - **Things Get in the Way:** Build problem solving skills
 - **Celebration:** Good things happen too, increase positive affect and experiences

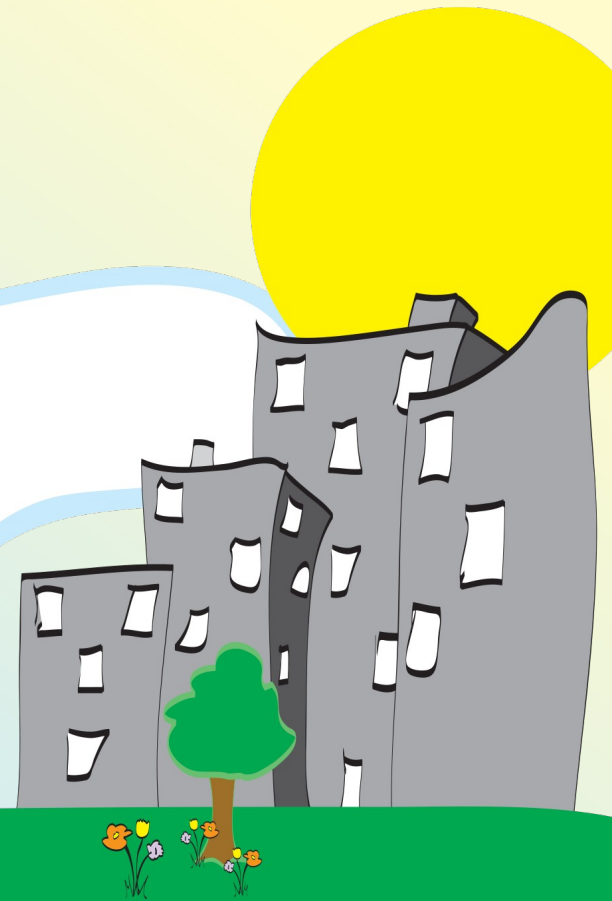


Group Activities



SFCR[®]

Strengthening Family Coping Resources



In truth a family is what you make it. It is made strong, not by the number of heads counted at the dinner table, but by the rituals you help family members create, by the memories you share, by the commitment of time, caring, and love you show to one another, and by the hopes for the future you have as individuals and as a unit.

Marge Kennedy and Janet Spencer King

The Single Parent Family (1994)



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