



TRAIN-THE-TRAINER TOOLKIT

WELCOME

We are excited to have you on board with our Blue Star Cares Caregivers Team to help with the delivery of our Blue Star Cares Avatar-based Caregiver Training Program. This manual will outline the Caregiver Training Program and help guide you in preparing to facilitate your own in-person or virtual training with Caregivers in your local community.

The Caregiver Training Program will last approximately 4 hours. It is an interactive and engaging training and will cover several topic areas, including stress, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and communication, among others.

The training can be conducted in either an in-person setting in which you train a small group of caregivers in a physical location. In this format, you'll need to be sure to have access to the internet and a way for the caregivers to be able to interact individually with their peers. You may use tablets, laptops, or desktop computers to facilitate the avatar interaction. For the virtual trainings, the caregivers meet in an online classroom and are able to visit the avatar link to complete the avatar interaction on their own. Be sure to have everyone mute their microphone and pause their video while going through the avatar interaction.

We will outline the different tools and techniques to help make your training successful and have included various tips and tricks to ensure the best possible workshop!

If you have any additional questions as you're going through the training, please contact the Blue Star Cares team at: bluestarcares@bluestarfam.org Additionally, visit our website at <https://bluestarfam.org/resources/family-life/blue-star-caregivers/blue-star-cares/> for more information on the program.

Thank you for your support of caregivers! We hope that you enjoy the Train-the-Trainer program and the Blue Star Cares Avatar-based Caregiver Training Program.

Sincerely,

The Blue Star Cares Team



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TRAINING FORMATS: IN-PERSON TRAINING

PREPARATION FOR TRAINING SESSION

Here are a few of the tasks that will need to be accomplished prior to the start of the training.

- Look for a facility centrally located for your audience & within your budget
- Plan several dates and times that could work for flexibility
- Secure a facility location for on-site training with a large conference room and room for childcare if needed
 - ☐ Possible locations include: Easter Seals, Stephen Cohen Center, USO
- Check and be sure the facility has the following or be prepared to provide it yourself:
 - ☐ Wifi connection
 - ☐ TV with computer hook-up or screen to view training slides
 - ☐ White board
 - ☐ Dry erase markers
 - ☐ Tables and chairs
 - ☐ Tea, coffee, water available
- Provide parking availability and cost if any
- Create map and directions and possible use of signs to direct attendees
- Approval of facility manager or building coordinator
- Visit site before if possible to coordinate and prepare the environment
- If on a military base then coordinate, prior to the training, access for all attendees
- Coordinate childcare services if needed
 - ☐ Possible childcare services include: sittercity.com, Nanny Poppinz

SUPPLIES

- Caregiver Toolkit PDF
- Laptops or tablets (attendees bring their own or you supply them)
- Training PowerPoint slides
- Pens
- Journals (composition notebooks)
- Whiteboard
- Dry erase markers
- Name tags
- Sign up capability for Blue Star Families membership
- Candy & snacks (chocolate is always a big winner)
- Beverages, water
- Food (make sure catered services can access the site)

SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT

- Minimize distractions of people walking by or into your training area
- Turn off or leave in a basket all cell phones
- Remove excess garbage, storage, or unneeded items (remember that this is a professional training event)
- Use tables to encourage writing and note taking
- Set up the tables with the following at each attendees location:
 - ☐ Toolkit
 - ☐ Pens
 - ☐ Journal
 - ☐ Name tags
 - ☐ Water bottle (cups spill and create problems)
- On the tables for all to access:
 - ☐ Candy/snacks
 - ☐ Extra pens
- On a table at the back for access during the training:
 - ☐ Laptops or tablets (use these only during the Avatar training or they can become a distractor to the attendees)
 - ☐ Other books, training materials, resources, etc.
- Have the food delivered to the back of the room or into another prepared room if possible, thus eliminating the distraction of the food coming in
- Place the instructor at the front and off to the side
- The size of the group will determine whether the instructor will need to sit or stand
- Casual attire lends to a learning and interactive environment
- Be conscious of your timing as you will need to cover all the material within the time allowed

TRAINING FORMATS: VIRTUAL TRAINING

START OF THE TRAINING

Here are a few of the tasks that will need to be accomplished prior to the start of the training.

- Plan several dates and times that could work for flexibility
- Secure a virtual site with the option to have multiple attendees participate
 - ☐ Possible sites include: Zoom, Skype, Google Drive, GoToMeeting, etc.
- Check and be sure the site has the following:
 - ☐ Site invite
 - ☐ Chat box
 - ☐ Capacity to see multiple attendees at the same time
 - ☐ Trainer Mute capability
 - ☐ Trainer Record capability
 - ☐ Enough capacity for number of attendees
- Visit site before if possible to coordinate and prepare the environment signs to direct attendees.

SUPPLIES

- Send the following materials to participants prior to training:
 - ☐ Caregiver Toolkit PDF
 - ☐ Journals (composition notebook)
 - ☐ Organizational pens, etc.
- Laptops or tablets (attendees provide their own)
- Training PowerPoint slides
- Whiteboard
- Dry erase markers

SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT

- Place the instructor so that minimal distractions occur behind them during the training
 - ☐ Minimize distractions of people walking by or into view during your training
 - ☐ Remove excess garbage, storage, or unneeded items that may distract attendees during the training
- Ask each attendee if they have the following available during the training:
 - ☐ Caregivers Toolkit
 - ☐ Pens
 - ☐ Journal
- Verify audio and visual connections with each attendee
- Load the PowerPoint slides so everyone can see them
- Casual attire lends to a learning and interactive environment
- Be conscious of your timing as you will need to cover all the material within the time allowed

TIMING OF THE TRAINING

AGENDA (4 HOURS)	TIME
Check In & Registration (In-person training)	10 mins
Welcome & Introductions	10 mins
Let's Get to Know Each Other Activity	15 mins
Research Overview	10 mins
Navigating Through Problems (w/Lunch)	45 mins
Types of Problem Solvers	15 mins
Regulating Your Emotions	15 mins
SSTA	15 mins
Self-Care	15 mins
10 Step Problem Solving	15 mins
Communicating with Others	10 mins
Motivational Interviewing Principles	15 mins
Avatar Interaction	30 mins
Conclusion of Training	5 mins
Group Discussion and Feedback	15 mins

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

In April 2009, a group of military spouses came together across the country, using social media tools, with the goal of making a difference in the lives of all military families. The group determined that to be successful in addressing the most pressing challenges and concerns of those living the military life, they needed real data. Since 2009, Blue Star Families has executed an annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey, the results of which not only shape our own organizational initiatives, but are regularly cited and adopted by lawmakers, policy makers, the media, and other military and veteran service organizations.

MATERIALS

Military-Connected Caregivers Toolkit

You were sent a Caregivers Toolkit manual. Please have this with you as you go through this training. We will be referring to it often.

PowerPoint Slide

See the Resources section for a link to the PowerPoint slide.



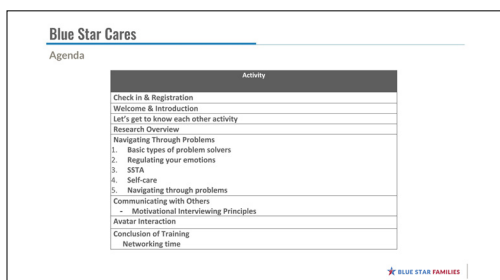
OPENING REMARKS

Although there are minor changes to in-person and virtual training sessions, the following provides a basic outline of what to do and say during the training:



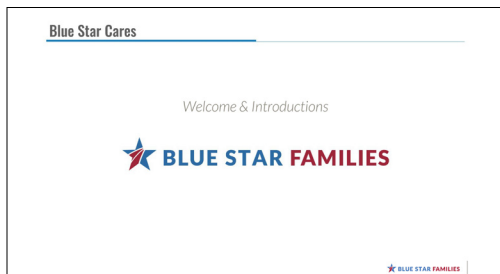
Slide 1

Start by welcoming the caregivers to the training and thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend. Make sure each caregiver has a name tag on, as well as you.



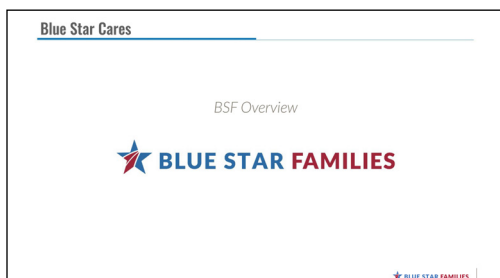
Slide 2

Share with the caregivers what this training will look like by going over the Agenda with them.



Slides 3-4

Introduce yourself and share a little bit about yourself. During this time you are setting the stage for caregivers to feel comfortable with you. This is also the time to go over any housekeeping items.



Slides 5-11

(TOOLKIT PAGES 1-4) This information covers Blue Star Families and the background of Blue Star Cares. You may also use this time to discuss your role in the Caregiver community (if applicable).



Slides 12-14

(TOOLKIT PAGES 5-6) Do the Funny Icebreaker Questions activity on page 6 of the Caregivers Toolkit. Follow the instructions from page 5. This helps everyone to get to know each other and loosen up a bit before the training begins.



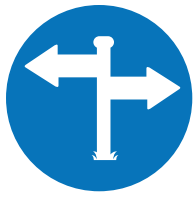
RESEARCH OVERVIEW



Slides 15-23

(TOOLKIT PAGES 7-11) Discuss the types of Caregivers, their many roles, the impact they have as Caregivers, challenges, and what Caregivers can do.

- We want this training to be very interactive. You can ask the caregivers who is a paid caregiver and who is an informal caregiver by show of hands.
- Ask the caregivers what else they might add to the list of challenges.
- Ask the caregivers what positive aspects of caregiving they have experienced.
- We stress positive thoughts throughout this training. This is very important! The discussions among caregivers can sometimes bring on negative words/thoughts, so keep it positive!
- Ask if anyone would like to share a challenge they have faced or are currently facing.



NAVIGATING PROBLEMS

CONTENTS OF SECTION:

- Contains a series of strategies that will teach you skills that can help you deal more successfully with the stress and problems associated with transitioning into new caregiver roles.
- Can also help you enhance your skills as you continue to move forward in your caregiver journey.

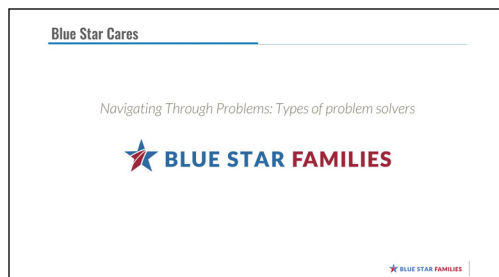


Slides 24-27

These slides are an overview and a transition to the next section focused on problem solving. Use this time for a break, to cover the items on these slides, and to make sure the attendees know there are resources out there, to include those in the room or virtually, that can help them as they look to solve their problems.



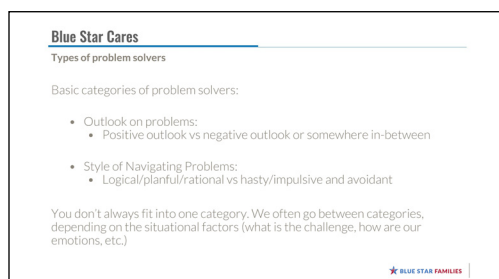
TYPES OF PROBLEM SOLVERS



Slides 28-31

(TOOLKIT PAGES 13-17) As you go through the discussion on problem solving, use the questions to help bring out interactive answers and more involvement from the attendees.

- Share your own as needed, yet this time is where you can really pull out the awareness of problems in all our lives, that we have ways to address them, and that we can be problem solvers throughout the rest of our lives.
- Help them give examples of problems they may have experienced on the way to the training, the steps it took to get there, and possible emotions they may have felt if they experienced this scenario.
- This is another great opportunity for engagement by asking them to share some of the steps they took to attend this training.



Slides 32-33

There are 3 categories you will talk about: positive, negative, and in-between. **With the reminder that one doesn't always fit into one category.**

- If someone views a challenge as a positive, they may look at it as: opportunities; it was meant to happen; or that sometimes it may take time to solve those problems.
- If someone views problems as negative, the problems can be a threat, they can get in the way of us solving the problem, or they can make us feel frustrated and overwhelmed.
- Then there is the in-between outlook. Most of us fall in this category. Problems can make us feel overwhelmed, but we can also see opportunities for making a positive change.

Blue Star Cares
Types of problem solvers: Style of navigating problems (Toolkit pg 20)

Logical/planful/rational	Hasty/Impulsive	Avoidant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take time to understand the problem Set goals List multiple solutions Monitor Progress Evaluate the results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rush through solving problems Quick to react Do not think through the consequences Not very often a reasonable approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid problems Shift blame to others Do not think through the consequences Not very often a reasonable approach

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Slide 34

These 3 categories represent the style in which people approach problems.

- Logical/planful/rational planners tend to understand that it takes time to solve a problem. They usually set goals and brainstorm multiple solutions. They will often check in with their goals and see if they are making progress. When the problem has been solved, they will think about their results. Did it work? What could I have done better? What were the challenges I encountered?
- Hasty/Impulsive people tend to rush through looking for a quick solution. They are usually quick to react. They may not think of what the consequences could be. Their solutions are often not a reasonable approach.
- Avoidant problem solvers avoid their problems. They may shift blame to others to avoid solving the problem themselves. They often don't think about the consequences and they don't approach the problem in a reasonable manner.

Blue Star Cares
Journal Activity

In your workbook, answer the following question:

What is your goal for this training?

Think about some of the problems that you experience, how you react to these problems, how you respond to problems, how you solve problems, and where you would like to make positive changes.

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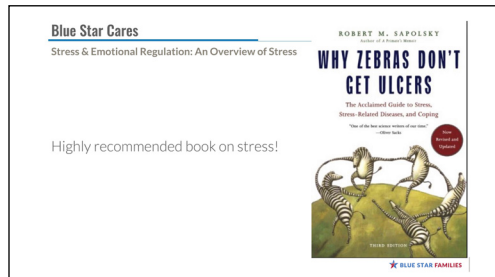
Slide 35

ACTIVITY - It's time for an activity in the toolkit. This can be found on page 22 of the toolkit. They can journal on page 22 about how they usually solve problems and how they could improve those skills. Then they can write what their goal is for this training. You may ask them if they would like to share their goal for the training with everyone.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

SLIDES 36-69:

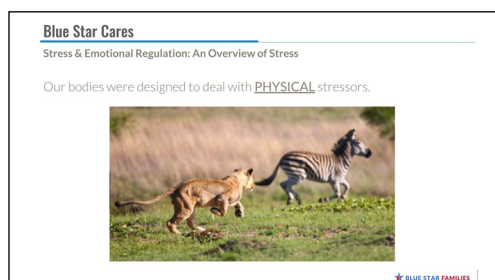
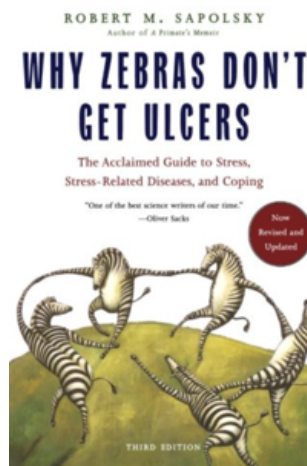
- Toolkit page 18-This section will be the longest to cover.
- Involve the caregivers in these slides and activities. These slides are meant to be humorous!



Slide 38

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers is a great book we recommend for all Caregivers. It deals with stress and what it can do to our body. It can be found at your larger book chain stores or you can even find a free PDF copy to download online.

- Use the wording on the slides to increase discussion, help bring clarity to what they are going through, and how to deal with their emotions and stress.



Slide 41

"The interesting thing is our bodies were designed to deal with PHYSICAL stressors, such as this zebra being chased by a lion. The flight or fight part of the brain is activated when the lion starts to chase the zebra. It chose flight! Look at the zebra running away from a threat! Smart zebra!"

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress

Stressors =

demands made by the environment that upset balance or homeostasis, affecting physical and psychological well-being and requiring action to restore equilibrium

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 42

This is the definition of a stressor. Read that slide aloud yet don't discuss what it means as you will explain it with the next slides.


Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress

Homeostasis

The body is always trying to balance itself:

- Body temperature
- Blood sugar
- Remove waste
- Etc.

A stressor knocks you out of balance.




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Slide 43

Gives an overview of homeostasis. "Homeostasis is something you may remember from your high school biology class. It's when your body tries to balance itself. Your body is always working. It regulates your body temperature, blood sugar, it's removing waste, your heart is beating, your lungs are filling with air and using that oxygen for your body. But when you have a stressor, it knocks everything out of balance."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress



When physically attacked, there is a physiological imbalance...


The body works to replace and fix all the broken pieces... lots of hormones are released

Slide 44

"When you are physically attacked, there is a physiological imbalance. Your body will work to repair anything that is physically hurt, and a lot of hormones are released, like adrenaline."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress

- Our bodies were designed to experience stressed in response to life-threatening situations – like having to fight or run away from predators.
- When stressed, our bodies:
 - Increase blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate
 - Supply blood to key muscles
 - Release chemicals – adrenaline!
 - Dilate pupils – see better
 - Release glucose (sugar) & fat = energy



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Slides 45-47

These slides describe what occurs to our bodies during physical and psychologically stress.

- "Why does your body respond the same way to a physical stressor as it does to a psychological stressor?"
- It can't tell the difference. Your body just knows something is not right, there is an imbalance and it needs to be fixed.
- That imbalance occurs because of your emotions and responses to a situation."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUJpae1i3PY>
<https://youtu.be/sPS7GnromGo?list=PL295d3B9E60E5F30F>

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Slide 48

Show two YouTube videos. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUJpae1i3PY> These videos will show the caregivers a little bit more about stress. The second video is the author from Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers. He has dedicated his life to researching stress. <https://youtu.be/sPS7GnromGo?list=PL295d3B9E60E5F30F>

Blue Star Cares
Activity

How Stressed Are You? (Toolkit pg 23)

In the last month...

1. How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. How often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
4. How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. How often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. How often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. How often have you been angered because of things that were out of your control?
10. How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Slides 49-50

Everyone will now take the quiz on page 19 of the Toolkit.

- Give them about 10 minutes to do so.
- After the quiz is taken, please review how to score their quiz with them. This explanation can be found on page 20 of the toolkit as well as slide number 50.
- You can prompt some discussion and interaction between the caregivers by asking them to share their score if they feel comfortable.

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: An Overview of Stress

Why does your stress level matter?

- Stress can lead to:
 - Illness – diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure
 - Fatigue
 - Aging
 - Reduced ability to care for others

What can we do?

- Learn emotional regulation!

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Slide 51

"Why does your score matter? Why does your stress level matter? Because stress can lead to several problems in your body and in your mind. So what can we do? We can learn to regulate our emotions."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: Activity

Emotional regulation: the ability to manage and respond to an emotional experience.

Activity: (Toolkit pg 26)

- Think about a difficult situation that you recently experienced while you have been a caregiver. In your Toolkit, write down that experience. How did you feel? What did you do to overcome the stressful experience?
- Note: not all of the stress you experience has to be associated with caregiving. Most people experience stress from all aspects of life. Stress is accumulated over a lifetime and when it piles up, it can be overwhelming!

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Slide 52

Complete the activity found on pg 22 of the Toolkit.

- We often use emotional regulation strategies to cope with difficult situations on a regular basis without even thinking about it.
- There are, however, both positive and negative coping strategies. Healthy coping strategies can help diffuse overwhelming emotions and allow you to have a better awareness of what may have led to the emotional experience.
- Take 5 minutes and think about a difficult situation that you, as a caregiver, had recently. How did it make you feel? What did you do to overcome that stressful experience?
- It does not have to be about caregiving. It could be something like the dog next door was barking too much and it was driving you crazy.
- Go ahead and write about it in your toolkit on page 22.

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation

Cycles of Emotion

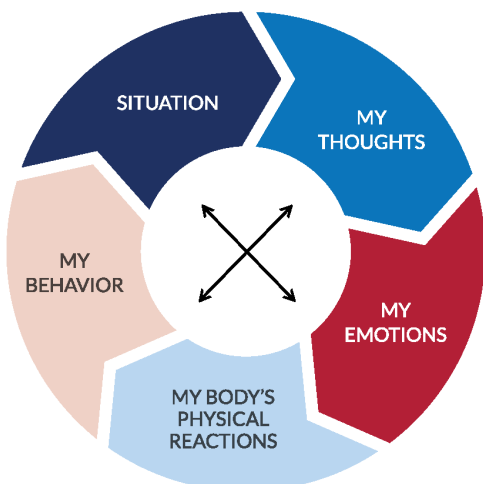
1. Event/situation
2. Thoughts about the situation
3. Emotions – good or bad
4. Physical reaction – or not
5. Behavior – positive or negative
6. Follow-up situation

The way we interpret our thoughts & emotions will determine how our body responds.

Slide 53

This graphic is very helpful in explaining the cycles of emotion and can be found on page 24 of the toolkit.

- We talked about stress and how when we experience something that we perceive as some sort of threat, our body responds. So, there is some situation – something that occurs – whether it is something that is real or something that we think is bad or otherwise harmful.
- When you experience a difficult situation, the way you interpret your emotions will determine how you respond and behave.
- If you go into a problem and interpret it as negative, you will feel negative emotions. This will cause you to have unhealthy behaviors which can create unhealthy physical reactions.
- Just like the graphic is a circle, it will just keep repeating until you make a choice to change that cycle.




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Stress & Emotional Regulation

Situation

- When we experience something – we may or may not perceive it as a threat.
- Sometimes, even just **thinking** about something can lead to stress – it doesn't even have to be real.

We experience many different potentially stressful situations every day!



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Slide 54


"The first part of this cycle is the situation. It could be a situation that feels like a threat, or it may not. Sometimes just thinking about something can lead to stress. It doesn't even have to be real."

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Stress & Emotional Regulation

My thoughts

- We have certain thoughts about that situation.
- Those thoughts can be positive or negative.
- Do we perceive it as a threat?

That situation is only a stressor or challenge if we perceive (think) it to be.



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Slide 55

"Next in the cycle is your thoughts. You will experience thoughts about the situation you are experiencing. These could be positive or negative thoughts. Does it feel like a threat? It's only a stressor or challenge when we think it is."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation

My emotions

- Based on our thoughts, our mind begins processing emotions.
- These steps happen very quickly – often nearly simultaneously!
- This is where we try to focus ahead of time with self-care and stress reduction. Sometimes this comes after the body's physical reactions – after you're already feeling stressed.

If we are not prepared to calm our emotions, our bodies can experience physical reactions – feeling stressed.



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Slide 56


"Then come your emotions. Once we have thought about the situation, our mind begins to process emotions. This all happens very quickly. Therefore, it's so important to focus on self-care and stress reduction ahead of time, making it a part of our daily life. If we don't practice stress reducers and self-care, our bodies can experience physical reactions-feeling stressed."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation

My body's physical reactions

- Once we have formed thoughts and emotions, our body begins to respond physiologically.
- If the situation is processed as a threat, then hormones release and the stress response begins.
- If the situation is not processed as a threat, then our body functions normally.

Our bodies automatically start the stress response if we think something is stressful.



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Slide 57

"Your body is the next part of this cycle. If the situation feels like a threat, your body will release hormones and the stress response begins. If the situation doesn't feel like a threat, your body will function normally. Our bodies automatically feel the stress response if we think something is stressful."



Blue Star Cares

Stress & Emotional Regulation

My behavior

- The stress response automatically gets us ready to act. That's why it's easy to be hasty/impulsive.
- But, it can be negative behavior.
- So, we can regulate our emotions before we get to this step.
- We can also apply problem solving skills before we get to this step.

```
graph TD; S[SITUATION] --> T[MY THOUGHTS]; T --> E[MY EMOTIONS]; E --> B[MY BODY'S PHYSICAL REACTIONS]; B --> BE[MY BEHAVIOR]; BE --> S
```

When stressed, it's easier to act impulsively because of the hormones released. This is why we should try to control our emotions and/or learn to problem solve.

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Slide 58

“Last is your behavior in this cycle. When you are stressed, it’s easy to be hasty/impulsive. It can quickly turn to negative behavior. You need to learn to regulate your emotions before you get to this step. How do you do that? You can apply problem solving skills before you get here.”

Blue Star Cares

Types of problem solvers: Style of navigating problems -- REMINDER

Logical/planful/rational	Hasty/impulsive	Avoidant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to understand the problem• Set goals• List multiple solutions• Monitor progress• Evaluate the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rush through solving problems• Quick to react• Do not think through the consequences• Not very often a reasonable approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid problems• Shift blame to others• Do not think through the consequences• Not very often a reasonable approach

★ BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 59

“Let’s go back for a minute and review the style of navigating problems with problem solvers. We discussed Logical, Hasty, and Avoidant. Are there any questions or comments before we move forward?”

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Stress & Emotional Regulation

How do we actually regulate our emotions?

- Paying attention to our mind and body
- Breaking the (negative) cycle of emotions

To break the cycle: You need to find what works best for you. There is not a one-size-fits-all strategy.

Breaking the cycle

- SSTA Technique – a way to calm your mind and body so that you can effectively solve problems

STOP

SLOW DOWN

THINK

ACT

★ BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 61

“But how do you regulate your emotions? Let’s talk about the SSTA Technique. It’s a way to calm your mind and body so you can focus and solve problems.”

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: SSTA Technique

STOP
SLOW DOWN
THINK
ACT

Where do we begin?

- **Stop**
 - Stop. Notice how you're feeling and what you're thinking.
- **Slow down**
 - Give your brain and body a chance to calm down.
 - Take a break. Step away. Get out of the situation – get time you need.
- **Think** – focus of the following section – problem solving
 - Process what is happening. What is happening? Why? What can I do to calm down? How can I resolve the problem?
- **Act** – focus of the following section – problem solving
 - Implement your solution.

A strategy to help control emotions then solve problems. BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 62

Where do we begin?

- The first step in SSTA is **Stop**. Notice how you are feeling and what you are thinking.
- Next, you want to **Slow down**. Give your mind and body time to calm down. Take a break. Get out of the situation. Take the time you need.
- Then **Think**. Think about problem solving. Ask yourself what is happening. Why is it happening? What can you do to calm down? How can you work towards resolving the problem?
- Lastly, **Act!** Implement the solution you came up with."

S STOP

S SLOW DOWN

T THINK

A ACT

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: SSTA Technique

STOP
SLOW DOWN
THINK
ACT

S STOP

Recognize you're stressed and be ready to stop and slow down.

- You're in a stressful situation or a difficult conversation. Your thoughts are racing. Your emotions are bubbling. Your body may be responding. But, before you act, STOP and think about your thoughts and emotions.
 - How is your body feeling?
 - How is your mind feeling?
 - How are your emotions feeling?
 - How is your behavior changing?

This can be the hardest part.

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 63

"Let's go in a little deeper with each step of SSTA. First is **Stop**.

- You know you are stressed and you are ready to stop and slow down. Your thoughts may be racing, and your emotions may feel unstable. Your body might be responding. Increased heart rate, your blood pressure is up.
- But, before you act, you need to stop and think about your thoughts and emotions
- Ask yourself: How is my body feeling? Did my heart rate start to race? Did my breathing increase? How is my mind feeling? Is it clouded? Is it racing with several thoughts? What emotions am I feeling? Negativity, positivity, threatened? How is my behavior changing? Did I become angry?"



Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: SSTA Technique

S SLOW DOWN

- Slow down your mind and body.
- What are the things that help you to relax?
 - Deep breathing, yawning
 - Visualization
 - Meditation
 - Praying
 - Exercising
 - Cleaning

Use your stress reduction techniques to slow down and calm your mind and body.

STOP
SLOW DOWN
THINK
ACT

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 64

"After you stop, you want to **Slow down**.

- Slow down your body and mind. Do some activities that help to slow down. Do some deep breathing, meditate, pray, go on a walk or even clean.
- Using stress reduction activities will help calm your body and mind."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: SSTA Technique

T THINK

You've stopped and slowed down, now...it's time to think.

- What happened? What's the problem/situation?
- What do you want to accomplish? Goals?
- How can you solve the problem?
- Which are the best of those options and most likely to have a positive outcome?
- Make a plan.

This is where problem-solving really begins – once you have regulated your emotions!

STOP
SLOW DOWN
THINK
ACT

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 65

"Now you can **Think**

- Think about what happened. What was the problem or situation? What do you want to set as goals for solving this problem or situation? How do you go about solving it? What are the best options that would have a more positive outcome.
- Then make a plan. This is where problem solving really starts, once you have regulated your emotions."

Blue Star Cares
Stress & Emotional Regulation: SSTA Technique

A ACT

- Carry out your plan.
- Monitor how things go as you carry it out. What's working or not working?
- Evaluate the situation. How'd it go?

Make it happen!
You can do it!

STOP
SLOW DOWN
THINK
ACT

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 66

"Last, **Act!**

- Carry out that plan you came up with when you were thinking.
- Ask yourself what is working and what may not be working. How did it go?"

Blue Star Cares
KEY POINTS

SSTA has 4 steps

- 2 to help you regulate emotions
 - Stop – recognize that you're stressed and be ready to slow down
 - Slow down – calm your mind and body
- And 2 to help navigate through problems
 - Think – think through the problem and make a plan
 - Act – carry out the plan

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 67

"The SSTA has 4 steps. Two to help you regulate your emotions; stop and slow down. And two to help you navigate through problems; think and act."



SELF-CARE RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

CONTENTS OF SECTION

- Self-care looks different for every individual. Some individuals prefer to do something on their own, whereas others desire spending time with close friends. It's important that you know what works for you and to have a few stress reduction on skills that you can use when needed.
- Self-care not only involves the activities you engage in but also your: INTEREST and PERCEPTION of self-care, connection to PEERS, and COMMUNITY, and work-life BALANCE.

For an effective training we turn off the PowerPoint presentation for a part of the next section that discusses self-care techniques.

Video clip on practicing self care: <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/My-Movie.mp4>

"Before we continue, I'd like to walk you through Blue Star Families website at www.bluestarfam.org and show you how to access valuable resources."

- "We will use our cell phones and do this exercise together."
- "Once on the website we scroll down to Access Resources Now! Tap, and then scroll down to The Family Life Section and tap Caregiving."
- "Here we are able to walk through caregiver specific resources available to them: Caregivers Empowering Caregiver social events, Operation Family Caregiver, BS Cares, Digital resources and free apps when available."

Turn the PowerPoint back on for the rest of Self-Care.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

CONTENTS OF SECTION:

- Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing your attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training.

Blue Star Cares
Self-Care: Relaxation Techniques

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing your attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training.

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 69

Mindfulness

- “How to do it: Mindful Meditation couldn’t be simpler: take a seat, pay attention to the breath, and when the mind wanders, return. By following these steps, you can get to know yourself up close and personal.”
- Share various mindful meditation apps and ask Caregivers which ones they have experienced, which they liked and why.

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Self-Care: Relaxation Techniques

Headspace Memberships—Free for Members!

HEADSPACE
TREAT YOUR HEAD RIGHT

Meditation has been shown to relieve stress and anxiety, improve sleep and even eating habits. With over 6 million users in 190 countries, the Headspace app will teach you this valuable life skill in just 10 minutes a day.

Subscriptions normally cost \$155.40, but for our members it's completely free. To sign up for your free subscription, click on the button below to get started.

GET YOUR FREE MEMBERSHIP

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 70

Share information about Headspace as it has a foundational layer that can be built upon and is tailored to meet individual needs and also has an app for children.

- Prior to your training session familiarize yourself with a basic mindful meditation session using the headspace app until you feel comfortable presenting the same technique.
- Walk through a mindful meditation session together for about 10 minutes.
- Afterward, discuss how this felt and if they did or didn’t like it.
- “There are many self care activities out there and the key is finding ones that best meet your needs and you actually enjoy doing! There’s no one size fits all or right or wrong answers!”

JOURNALING



Slide 71

Journaling

- Each caregiver should have received a plain composition notebook prior to the training session.
- These notebooks can be decorated later with family pictures, quotes, or things that inspire the Caregiver and make this journal special to them and something they would want to write in consistently. Examples of decorated journals can be shared, and perhaps a Caregivers Empowering Caregivers event or Coffee Chat can be organized to create them.
- Before beginning the journaling prompts ask each caregiver to write a letter to a friend that has been experiencing a difficult time.

Some questions to stimulate what they write may include:
What would you say to encourage them?

Give them 4 minutes to complete this exercise on the first page of their composition notebooks. Caregivers are free to share what they have written.

Explain that as Caregivers we have nurturing spirits and like to help others, but often we're not as kind, patient, loving, and forgiving with ourselves.

Caregivers are asked to re-read this letter to themselves the next time they have a bad day, and replace their friends name with their own.

- Share the journaling prompts shared on page 49 of the Toolkit:

I feel....

Today, I want...

If I am honest with myself, I am...

My thoughts about caregiving...

How I want to care for myself....



- Ask each caregiver to pick a writing prompt that speaks to them and write and give them 4 minutes
- Caregivers are invited to share the prompt that spoke to them
- They are also invited to share what they wrote if they want to
- Writing can be a good way to calm the mind and untangle complex problems
- Some caregivers choose to journal through art and pictures verses words. Others like to write poetry. Again there are no fixed rules and finding the thing that helps calm and center you is the goal.



Blue Star Cares

Self-Care: Relaxation Techniques: Activity

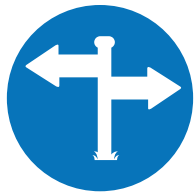
Answer the following questions in your Toolkit:

- How often do you take time for yourself? This does not have to be hours; it can be as little as five minutes.
- When you take time for yourself, what do you do? List as many activities as possible.
- What are some things you wish you had additional time for?
- What are some resources that would be beneficial in accomplishing your self-care needs?

★ BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 72

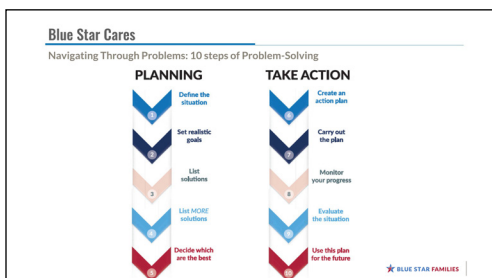
“Self-Care looks different for everyone. Let’s take a minute to go through an Activity on page 50 of the Toolkit and identify your self-care needs.”



PROBLEM SOLVING

CONTENTS OF SECTION:

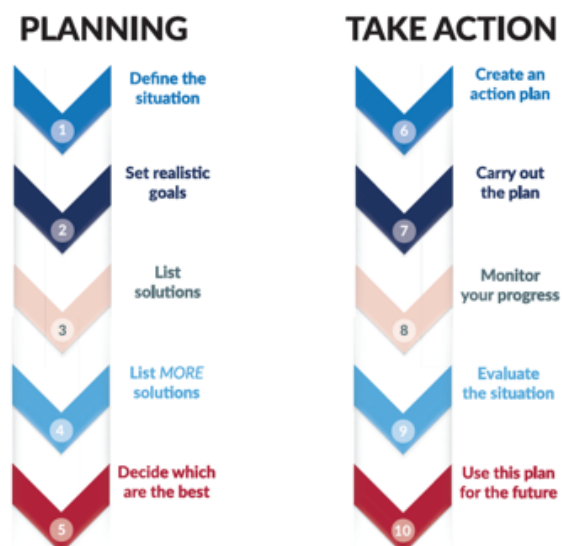
- This section will describe steps of planful problem solving to help you think how to solve various problems and challenges that you may experience as a military connected caregiver.
- Problem-Solving Video: <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/holahola.mp4>

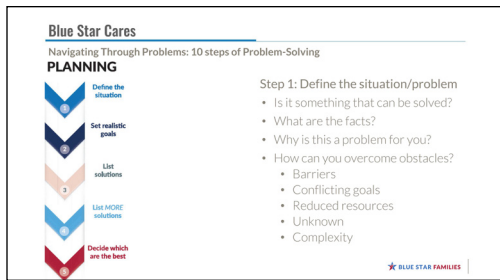


Slide 74

“This is the 10 Steps of Problem-Solving. Over the next 9 slides we will break down the process and explain how each step can benefit each of us as we struggle with problems and challenges. Pages 29-34 in the Toolkit provide a more detailed explanation.”

- “These problem-solving skills can be applied to almost any of life’s problems, including relationship problems, financial problems (such as limited income or unemployment), medical or physical problems (such as a service-related injury), emotional problems (such as stress or anxiety), or transitional problems (such as relocating). The challenges that we experience in life, whether positive or negative, can create stress. Our caregiving responsibilities can add to this stress. However, the way that we react to the stress will impact the outcome. Navigating through problems and using problem solving skills can help us successfully adapt to changes and experience more positive outcomes.”

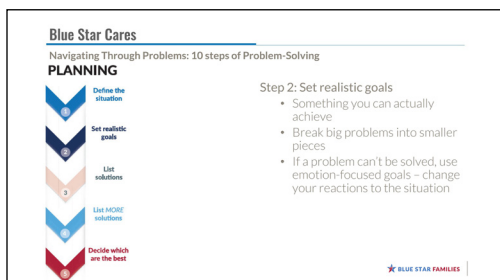




Slide 75

Step One - Define the Situation/Problem

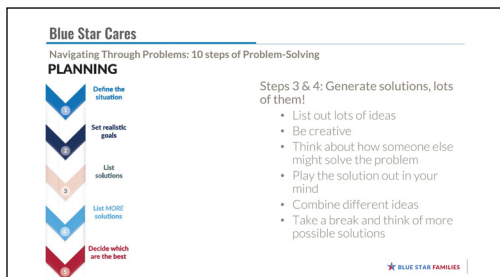
- “Try to answer questions about: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- When you’re listing out the facts, be sure to list everything – don’t ignore facts because they don’t align with how you might want to solve the problem.
- Many problems have solutions. However, it’s not always easy to get to the solution – there may be roadblocks in the way. Some of the different types of obstacles that might get in the way of solving a problem include: barriers, conflicting goals, reduced resources, unknown, complexity of the problem, emotional difficulties.”



Slide 76

Step Two - Set Realistic Goals

- “After defining the problem and looking at the entire picture to get all of the facts and identifying obstacles to helping you solve the problem, you can set realistic goals about solving the problem.”



Slide 77

Step Three & Four - Generate Solutions, Lots of Them!

- “Once you have set a realistic goal that you can achieve, it’ll be time to start brainstorming possible ways to solve the problem. A few things to keep in mind when thinking about possible solutions include:

List out lots of ideas to solve the problem

Be creative

Think about how someone else might solve the problem


Play the solution out in your mind

Combine different ideas

Take a break and think of more possible solutions”

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

PLANNING



Step 5: Decide which is the best

- Rate the solutions
- Consider which help meet your goals
- Consider the consequences – short and long-term
- Think about whether or not you can actually do it
- Think about the impact on yourself and others

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Slide 78

Step Five - Decide Which is the Best

- Now that you have a list of possible solutions, it's time to start judging!
- Compare the possible solutions against each other and think about the positive and negative consequences of each option.
- Decide which is best for you."

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

TAKE ACTION



Step 6: Create an action plan

- Write/think out your action plan
- Map out what will happen
- Motivate yourself to get ready to carry it out
- Consider getting help from someone

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Slide 79

Step Six - Create an Action Plan

- "With the best possible solution, it's time to think through how you're going to put it into action.
- You may also find it helpful to think about a back-up plan – what to do in case a given possible solution or sets of options do not work. This could involve selecting your second and third best options – or using a combination of the best options."

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

TAKE ACTION



Step 7: Carry out the plan

- Practice
- Then, take action

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Slide 80

Step Seven - Carry Out the Plan

- "After stepping away from the problem or challenge, calming your mind and body, defining the problem, setting realistic goals, generating possible solutions and then a few more possible solutions, weighing your options, and creating an action plan, it's now time to carry out the plan!"

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

TAKE ACTION



Step 8: Monitor your progress

- Think about how things are going
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- Did things go as you thought?

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Slide 81


Step Eight - Monitor Your Progress

- "You are carrying out your action plan – great work!
- But now, you have to monitor the situation as you're carrying it out and evaluate the consequences of the plan.
- When you listed positive and negative parts of the proposed solution, are you now finding those to be correct or were you a little off? Did your solution go as planned?"



Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

TAKE ACTION



Step 9: Evaluate the situation

- Troubleshoot the outcome – what did or didn't you do?
- SSTA to calm down?
- Define the problem correctly?
- Realistic goals?
- Can the problem be changed?
- Generate enough solutions?
- Correctly weigh pros and cons?
- Carry out the plan to the best of your ability?

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Slide 82

Step Nine - Evaluate the Situation

- “Did your proposed solution go as planned? Did you meet your goals? What went right and what went wrong?”
- Depending on your answers, it may be helpful to go back and re-apply some of the planful problem-solving steps. But, don't give up! It may take repeated attempts to successfully resolve a problem. Make sure your goals are realistic and focused on something that you can change.”

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: 10 steps of Problem-Solving

TAKE ACTION



Step 10: Use this information for the future

- You survived!
- Use the information for future challenges
- Be aware that sometimes you might need additional help
- Know when to seek professional help

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Slide 83

Step Ten - Use This Information for the Future

- “You survived navigating through a problem! It's time to reward yourself – whether or not you were able to successfully resolve the problem.
- You put in the time and effort to create a plan to help navigate through a problem and that's worth rewarding.”

Blue Star Cares
Navigating Through Problems: Activity

Activity (Toolkit pg 41)

This problem-solving worksheet is like a road map that can help guide you through your problem. This worksheet will walk you through the ten steps of planful problem-solving. This activity is for practice and you can consider an easier problem as you work through this worksheet.

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slide 84

Go through the Activity on page 37-40 in the Toolkit.

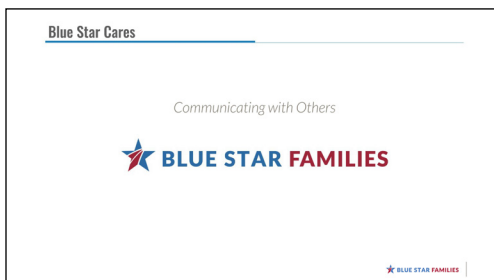
- “Now that we understand the steps of Problem Solving let's generate some problems we may be facing that we'd like to work on together as a group.” If the group gets stuck you could share these ideas: finding time for self-care, communicating better with family members, planning healthy meals.
- “It's important to remember that we only have control of ourselves, and can't change anyone else.”
- After you have generated some ideas as a group vote on the one they'd like to tackle. This can be a very interactive activity. Have fun!



COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

CONTENTS OF SECTION

This section focuses on improving communication strategies and helping you to navigate difficult conversations, whether it is with your wounded warrior, caregiver peers, professionals, or other important people in your life.



Slides 85-86

Communication is important.

- As a caregiver, you are often the voice of your wounded warrior. You are often the voice at appointments. You want to make sure you are prepared for the appointments.
- If you are given a chance to meet with policy makers, it's important to have your thoughts and opinions well-rehearsed to communicate in an effective manner.
- You may connect with other caregivers and want to communicate to them how things are going.
- You will interact with your family and your wounded warrior's family and communication makes it easier to talk about everyday things you may be experiencing so they can better understand.
- You also need to communicate with your wounded warrior.
- Having difficult conversations with them is something you must often do. Communication is key in reducing stress, getting help, and helping others.



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Communicating with Others

What is motivational interviewing?

- A strategy that can help you communicate better with others.
- Often used by health care professionals, but can also be used in your everyday life.

5 Principles of Motivational Interviewing (MI)

1. Express empathy
2. Go with the flow
3. Develop discrepancy
4. Avoid confrontation
5. Supporting self-efficacy



Slide 87

“One great way to communicate with others is motivational interviewing. What is that? It’s a strategy that can help you communicate better with others. It’s often used by healthcare professionals, but you can use it in your everyday life as well!” **PAGE 53 OF THE TOOLKIT**

- There are 5 principles of Motivational Interviewing we will discuss.
 1. Express empathy
 2. Go with the flow
 3. Develop discrepancy
 4. Avoid confrontation
 5. Supporting self-efficacy

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Communicating with Others

Why is this important for you?

- Stress comes from many different sources.
- If you can communicate better with others, then it can help relieve some of the stress.
- It can help you to ask for help – a top challenge for caregivers.
- It can allow us to help others – our peers, other caregivers.
 - Not only do we need help, but we also need to be able to help others solve their problems and work through challenges.
 - This can improve your self confidence and overall well-being.



Slide 88

“Why it’s important for you?

- As we know, stress can come from many different sources. Home life, marriage, traffic, doctor appointments.
- By being able to communicate with others better, it can help relieve some of those stresses.
- It can help you ask for help. This is a huge challenge many caregivers experience. If you can communicate with others, asking for help becomes easier.
- It can also allow you to help others. Our peers, or other caregivers. Not only do we all need help from time to time, but we also need to be able to help others solve their problems and help work through those challenges.
- Over all, it can improve your well-being!”

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Communicating with Others: 5 principles of MI

Expressing empathy

- Empathy – understanding how someone else is feeling, but NOT necessarily feeling the same way (sympathy).

How do we do this?

- Show them that you’re listening – reflective listening.
 - Summarizing what you think they are saying.

Examples

- “It sounds like...”
- “What I hear you saying is that...”
- “It seems as if...”
- “On one hand, ... and on the other...”

Show that you’re
Listening.



Slides 89-90

“Express empathy. Show that you are listening. You could say “it sounds like, “what I hear you saying is that”, it feels as though”. If you go to page 59 and 60 in your toolkit, it shows you some examples in the blue highlighted squares.”

Blue Star Cares
Communicating with Others: 5 principles of MI

Make suggestions to help them think through things.

Go with the flow

- Being positive and allowing someone to get it all out, even if you don't agree, as it helps them to develop their solution. You may, however, need to provide some guidance.

How do we do this?

- Don't tell them what to do or that something is wrong or that you disagree.
- Instead, make suggestions or provide guidance or allow them to think through things.

Examples

- "What would your life be like if you..."
- "On one hand... and on the other... What do you think is causing?"
- "It sounds like... How will...help?"

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slides 91-92

"Go with the flow. It's often easy to play devil's advocate, or say "yes, but...", however this principle encourages you to go with the flow. Let them develop their own solution, but with your empathetic guidance. Say things like, "What would your life be like if you...", "so it sounds like....How will that help...?"

Blue Star Cares
Communicating with Others: 5 principles of MI

Help them realize the mismatch.

Develop discrepancy

- Help them to think through the situation and identify conflicting information, thoughts, and feelings. Help them realize the mismatch.

How do we do this?

- Help them think about what they are doing now and how it can lead them away from their goals. Think about the long-term and how to get there.

Examples

- "If you changed, how would it be different than it is today?"
- "How would you like things to turn out in a year from today?"
- "What are some of the good things about...?"
- "What are some things that you'd like to change about...?"
- "It sounds like... How will...help?"

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slides 93-94

"Develop discrepancy. It's important to also help others find their mismatch. When the other person recognizes that their current actions plan them in conflict with their values or interfere with the accomplishment of the goals they identified, they are more likely to increase their motivation to make life changes. You could say, "If you changed, how would it be different than it is today?", or, "What are some good things about...."

Blue Star Cares
Communicating with Others: 5 principles of MI

Be supportive.

Avoiding confrontation

- Don't argue or become angry with them. This can lead to defensiveness, which will lead to them closing up and not solving their problems.

How do we do this?

- Be supportive.

Examples

- "How do you imagine things would be if..."
- "A lot of people are concerned about changing their..."
- "Most people would feel this way in your situation. They want to..., but it's difficult."
- "A lot of other caregivers are concerned about..."

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slides 95-96

"Avoid confrontation. You really want to try to avoid confrontation. It may lead to defensiveness. It creates new challenges if you are creating arguments. Some things to say might be, "That must be difficult for you. How do you imagine things would be if...", or, "Most people would feel this way in your situation. They want to..., but it's difficult."

Blue Star Cares
Communicating with Others: 5 principles of MI

Focus on their strengths.

Supporting self-efficacy

- Help them to believe that they can succeed at something and achieve their goals.

How do we do this?

- Focus on their skills and strengths - highlight positive factors about them.

Examples

- "How do you feel about these changes you've made?"
- "How were you able to do that?"
- "You've shown a lot of [strength, courage, determination, commitment, etc.] doing that!"
- "It is clear that you're really trying to change."
- "With all of your challenges, it's amazing that you've been able to..."

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Slides 97-98

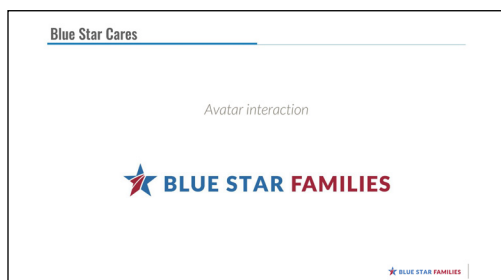
"Supporting self-efficacy. This is the part where you want to remain positive. Encourage them. Help highlight their skills and strengths. Examples could be, "How were you able to do that?", "It seems you are working hard, how have you been able to do that?"



INTRODUCTION TO AVATAR?

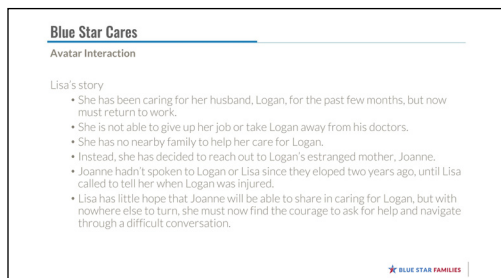
CONTENTS OF SECTION

Part of this training program involves the use of an avatar interaction to allow you to apply the knowledge learned from this toolkit and to develop skills. Virtual humans, or avatars, in the context of this training, refer to an animated human with a pre-programmed brain that is able to engage in simulated conversations with a user and present in an emotionally responsive manner.



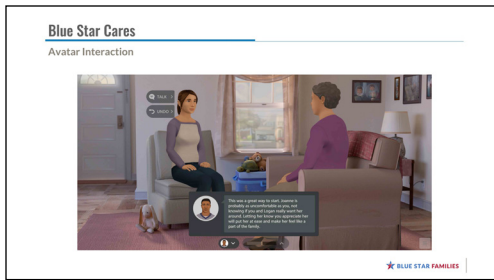
Slides 99-100

“Avatars have a huge benefit to help people in their everyday life. It is more accessible for people that may be in a rural area or areas hard to reach. It is not bound by time or location. You use it anytime, anywhere. It’s a safe environment to practice skills you may need help with. It gives you immediate feedback to increase your engagement in the learning process.”



Slide 101

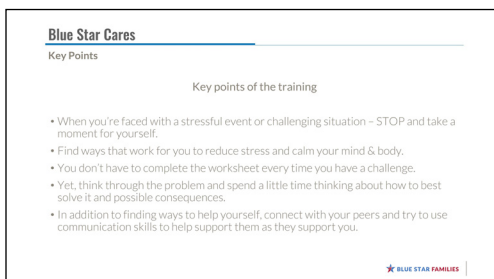
“Let’s talk about what you’re going to be experiencing. The story of this character. Lisa has been caring for her husband, Logan, for a few months, but she now must return to work. She is not able to give up her job or take Logan away from his doctors. She also has some very familiar challenges that many of you may experience. She has no nearby family to help her. She now must reach out to Logan’s mom, Joanne, and ask for help. Lisa doesn’t have the best relationship with Joanne. They haven’t spoken in a couple of years after Lisa and Logan eloped, until she had to call Joanne and tell her Logan was hurt. Lisa has little hope that Joanne can help care for Logan, but she has nowhere else to turn. She must find her courage and ask for help and navigate through a difficult conversation.”



Slide 102

Have each person using the avatar wear headphones or be in separate places in the facility so there are no distractions.

- “Here’s an example of what the Avatar will look like. As you go through, you will choose answers that YOU would choose when having this conversation.
- You will receive feedback as you go along! At the end of the Avatar, you will also be presented on feedback on areas you may need to work on when asking for help.”
- The program takes about 20 minutes to go through. After they have all finished, you can then ask them what they thought about it and open it for sharing.

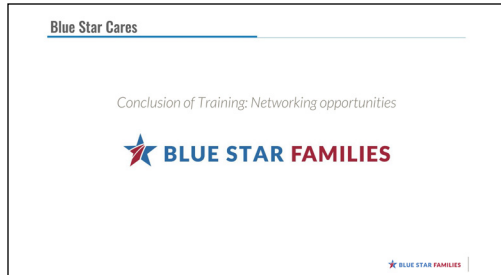


Slide 103

Once you get everyone back from the avatar training, review with them the key points of the training.



WRAP UP TRAINING



Slides 104-105

Bring the training to an end by thanking the attendees and reminding them this group is a great networking resource for each of them. Let them know about the upcoming surveys at 3 & 6 month marks after the training.



Slide 106

"If you have any additional questions or the training please contact Sherrie L. Wilcox at bluestarcares@bluestarfam.org"

Group Discussion & Feedback

This is a critical aspect of the training and important to not be rushed through. Let the group talk and provide feedback, listen and take notes, don't defend or explain anything - just let them speak and know that what they say is important to you.

RESOURCES

1. PowerPoint Presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/13o26_ZQ5bWWCOMyXv_5iWUcixfMdk8myqDO7fYtJeug/edit?ts=5aafbd25#slide=id.p3

2. Video Clip on Stress:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUJpae1i3PY>

3. Recommended Reading: *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* by Robert M. Sapolsky

https://www.amazon.com/Why-Zebras-Dont-Ulcers-Third/dp/0805073698/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1522239214&sr=8-1&keywords=why+zebras+dont+get+ulcers+3rd+edition

4. Video on the Author of *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*:

<https://youtu.be/sPS7GnromGo?list=PL29543B9E60E5F30F>

5. Self Care Video Clip:

<https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/My-Movie.mp4>

6. Problem-Solving:

<https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/holahola.mp4>

7. Headspace Guided Meditation App:

<https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>

8. Avatar:

<http://secure.kognito.com/courses/bluestar/>

user: bluestar

pw: kognito123

